

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Council Housing

Council Housing Asset Management Strategy 2024 – 2029



Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Alignment and coordination of the asset management strategy to corporate objectives.....	1
1.2 Strategy aims and objectives	3
1.3 Demand and sustainability	4
2. Stock profile, localities, archetypes, and condition	7
2.1 Stock distribution	7
2.2 Age profile of the stock	8
2.3 Main archetypes	9
2.4 Sizes of the dwelling stock.....	11
2.5 Non-traditional and specialist stock	12
3. Stock condition	14
3.1 Introduction	14
3.2 The current stock condition survey	14
3.3 The need for accurate data and a new stock condition survey	16
3.4 Decent Homes Standard and delivery of planned improvement works.....	16
3.5 Other key stock investment, asset management and service delivery achievements	18
4. Future investment requirements.....	20
4.1 30-year stock condition profile	20
4.2 Stock investment profile 2024/5 – 2028/9.....	21
4.3 Energy performance of the stock	22
4.4 Risk management.....	26
4.5 Adapted properties	29
4.6 Compliance.....	29
4.7 New regulatory framework and consumer standards.....	31
4.8 Non-housing assets	31
5. Active asset management	32
6. Resident involvement	34
7. Delivering the objectives of this strategy	35
7.1 Ensure homes are fit for purpose.....	35
7.2 Ensure homes are safe to live in.....	36
7.3 Ensure our homes help meet housing needs.	37
7.4 Building for the future.....	37
7.5 Council home buy back	37

7.6 Contribute to social and environmental wellbeing	38
7.7 Reduce carbon emissions & environmental impact.	39
7.8 Ensure there is effective financial control overseeing our work.	40
8. Key targets and objectives to be achieved through the lifetime of this asset management strategy.....	42
Appendix A: Links to other Council strategies and external documents	51
Appendix B: Non-traditional house types, images of typical properties	52
Appendix C: Sample images of improved properties	55
Appendix D: Social Housing demand contextual information and data – April 2024	57
Appendix E: Sample net present value (NPV) evaluation of stock	59

1. Introduction

As a Council we have invested significant financial resources in our social housing stock over recent years and we now need to develop a strategy to maintain the condition of the dwelling stock within the context of the decent homes standard and other statutory requirements. This strategy sets out the vision and aims for the management of our Housing Revenue Account (HRA) assets which include dwellings, garages and their associated sites, communal areas, and other HRA assets.

There is also an imperative to develop the strategy to tackle emerging challenges particularly around future investment requirements, most notably decarbonisation, energy efficiency and thermal insulation standards. The strategy also needs to consider changes in social housing regulatory requirements and other legislative changes and requirements, and finally we need a strategy that takes into account our financial circumstances and overall financial capacity of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

This strategy reflects current established best practice for social landlords to have a detailed understanding of their assets, at a granular level, whilst setting out a framework for how to make best use of these assets in pursuit of housing and wider corporate objectives. This is termed as 'active asset management' to reflect a much more proactive and interventionist approach to investment activities in the dwelling stock portfolio.

This strategy supports this strategic approach of active asset management and demonstrates how we will use this to deliver a range of objectives including the provision of good quality homes for tenants and leaseholders, the provision of sustainable homes and increasing dwellings with good energy efficiency. This is all supported by an underlying principle of obtaining good value for money from assets in both capital and revenue funded works in the dwelling stock.

As well as establishing principles to inform investment decisions, this strategy also sets out the strategic mechanisms which will support effective decision making and delivery.

1.1 Alignment and coordination of the asset management strategy to corporate objectives

Asset management is the management of physical assets to meet service and financial objectives. By applying robust asset management practices and principles we will ensure that our housing stock meets current and future needs, including reviewing and changing the portfolio to meet strategic objectives and planning for investment in repairs and improvements.

Defining the context of asset management also requires the development of a more strategic understanding of assets, and in particular developing modelling techniques to understand 'the asset'. Principles including the return on assets (ROA) and the expected active approach to asset management will need to be developed further over the lifetime of this strategy.

This strategy aims to complement the Council's Housing Strategy and wider corporate objectives. From a high-level strategic perspective, the Council's corporate objectives are incorporated in the [Borough Plan 2024 – 2028](#). There are several clear objectives and success outcomes within the borough plan that are directly related and aligned to this strategy which are detailed below:

- Starting well
 - More children and families being helped at an earlier stage
 - Improved mental health and higher levels of positive emotional health and well-being
- Tackling hardship and poverty
 - Reduced rates of homelessness
 - Increased number of homelessness preventions
 - Reduced use of unsuitable hotels as temporary accommodation
 - Reduced levels of fuel poverty.
- Resilient people living their best lives
 - People living healthier, happier lives at home for longer.
- Opportunity in a fair local economy.
 - High levels of employment.
 - An increase in businesses being created and surviving.
 - Greater awareness of the employment opportunities available locally and pathways to access them.
 - Being a popular destination for learners, visitors, investors and those relocating
- Neighbourhood pride
 - Increase in affordable homes
 - Low crime and anti-social behaviour
 - High levels of tenancy satisfaction with Council-owned and social housing.
- Greener communities
 - Becoming a net zero borough by 2045
 - Public services to move to net zero as soon as possible
 - Residents and businesses producing less greenhouse gas
 - More energy efficient homes and buildings
 - Less waste and higher rates of recycling
 - Improved resilience to the impact of climate change.

This strategy will also assist and support the wider objective as set out in our Housing Strategy:

“We want to make sure that everyone who lives in our borough can find the right home for them. We want homes that meet their needs and we

want homes to rent and buy that are affordable, good quality and support people to live well.”

In 2020 we declared a poverty emergency, developed a Climate Emergency Response Plan and ‘A Fairer Future’ - [fairer-future-strategy-final \(cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk\)](https://cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/fairer-future-strategy-final), 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.

The [fuel-poverty-strategy \(cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk\)](https://cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/fuel-poverty-strategy) developed in collaboration with partners and stakeholders and in consultation with the public recognises 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.”

1.2 Strategy aims and objectives

In addition to the above corporate aims and objectives, this strategy reflects, compliments and supports our vision for all Council-owned housing which states:

“We aim to provide affordable homes of the right type and quality to help meet the housing need whilst also adapting to the changing environment. 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 has six objectives which will oversee the Council’s 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 and environmental impact and finally;
- Ensure there is effective financial control overseeing our work.

In addition to the above, this strategy will also help us to meet the specific pledges detailed in our [Together with Tenants Charter | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#) most notably: your community, quality of your home and finally, your safety.

Further key linkages and alignments are referenced in appendix A.

It should be noted that the strategic objectives and priorities set out in this strategy include a range of objectives that will impact significantly on the HRA business plan particularly in relation to any financial headroom within the business plan.

Importantly, as the objectives are achieved and the performance of stock improves, particularly from a thermal efficiency and energy efficiency perspective, tenants' and leaseholders' experience of the housing service provided will see significant beneficial changes.

In the longer-term, we will also seek to develop approaches to replace or improve uneconomic or obsolete housing stock and related assets, ensure investments provide good value for money and long-term sustainability.

A start has been made in developing financial performance information (referred to as net present value or NPV) on dwellings, with indicative values around some key elements of our housing stock already in place.

This basic valuation needs to be expanded further to provide a net present value (NPV) assessment for all our stock, in line with current UK best practice in the social housing sector. This NPV methodology will enable us to further develop an active asset management approach to stock investment decisions, which will assist us to identify properties which could be potentially unviable in the short and medium term.

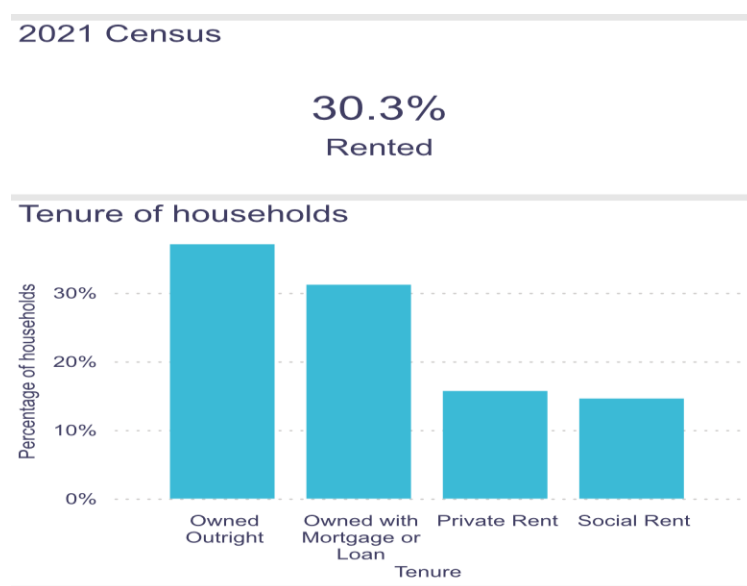
In the medium term this methodology will be further developed into a stock sustainability model bringing together not just the financial performance of the dwelling stock but also wider social, economic and environmental factors into evaluating the longer-term sustainability of our homes. This model will assist in enabling us to prioritise future investment into dwellings that provide the greatest long term stock sustainability.

1.3 Demand and sustainability

The unitary authority of Cheshire West and Chester covers approximately 350 square miles and is the fourth largest unitary authority in Northwest England. The borough is home to a population of c.362,000 comprising c.155,000 households living in 164,000 dwellings.

According to insight and intelligence data, 30.3% of households live in rented accommodation and this is shown in more detail in table 1 below:

Table 1 - Household tenure for Cheshire West ¹



¹Source - <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/your-council/datasets-and-statistics/insight-and-intelligence/borough-and-ward-profiles/state-of-the-borough/housing>

Table 1 shows that around 15% of households are occupying private rented accommodation and a similar 15% of households occupy social rented accommodation. Within this 15% of households, a significant proportion of households live in the social housing dwelling stock provided by the Council. Council owned dwelling stock comprises c.5,300 dwellings.

More detailed stock profile information is provided in section 2 of this strategy.

There is high demand for affordable rented accommodation, with 6,698 applicants on the housing register as of April 2024. This is an increase on the previous year of 248 applicants and equates to a 4% increase in demand for social rented housing when compared to the previous year. Certainly, through the lifetime of this strategy, a reduction in demand for social rented housing provided by the Council cannot be anticipated.

Headline demand information is as follows:

- There is significant demand for one and two-bedroom accommodation with 3,558 applicants requiring one bedroom accommodation and 1,865 needing two bedroom accommodation;
- 1,823 of current applicants have a statutory preference;
- 13% of applicants are aged under 25 and 11% are over 65 years old;
- There are increasing levels of homelessness and rough sleeping, and the Council is experiencing more people with complex social housing needs;
- Accelerated asylum processes have resulted in more households living in temporary accommodation (hotels);

- There are major shortfalls in the supply of supported, affordable and private rented housing.

More information on demand for social and affordable housing is available at appendix D within this strategy.

2. Stock profile, localities, archetypes, and condition

Most of our housing stock of c.5,300 properties are concentrated in the areas of Ellesmere Port, Neston and Winsford and comprises homes built between 1900 and June 2020.

2.1 Stock distribution

The amount of stock and its location is depicted in table 2 below.

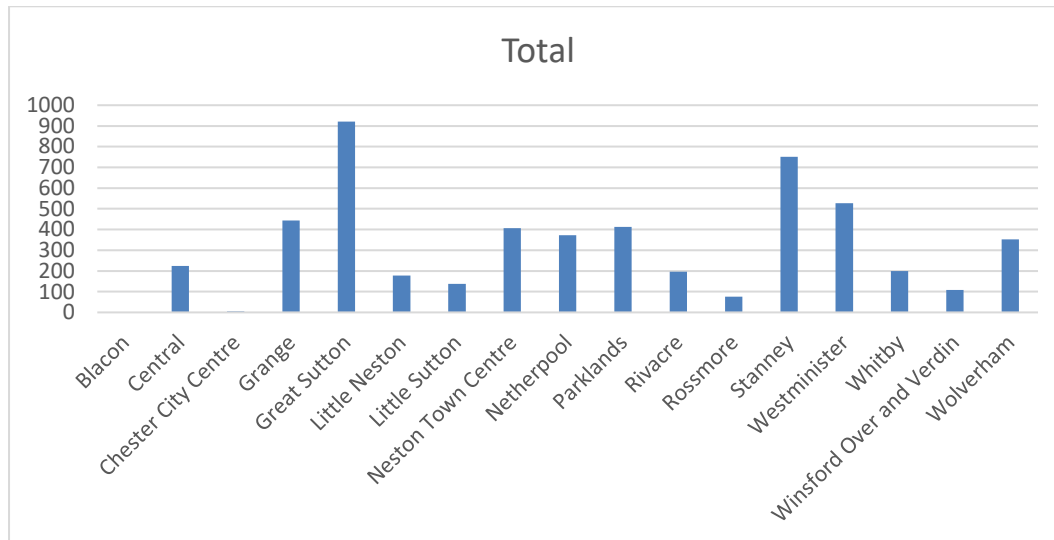
Table 2 – Stock distribution and dispersal

Locality – Chester	Council stock numbers
Blacon	1
Chester City Centre	5
Locality Ellesmere Port	Council stock numbers
Central	224
Grange	443
Great Sutton	921
Little Sutton	138
Netherpool	372
Parklands	412
Rivacre	197
Rossmore	76
Stanney	751
Westminster	527
Whitby	200
Locality - Neston	Council stock numbers
Little Neston	178
Neston Town Centre	406
Locality – Winsford	Council stock numbers
Winsford Over and Verdin	108
Wolverham	353
Total	5,312

Table 2 shows that the dwelling stock is fairly widely dispersed with significant concentrations of stock in the Great Sutton, Westminster, Wolverham and Grange areas.

This dispersal of stock is also shown in chart 1 below.

Chart 1 - Dispersal of stock by locality



2.2 Age profile of the stock

The age profile of the stock is in table 3 and chart 2 below:

Table 3 – Council social housing stock by construction date

Construction date	Stock numbers	Percentage of stock (%)
Pre-1919	51	1.0%
1919 to 1945	620	11.7%
1945 to 1960	2141	40.3%
1960 to 1990	2234	42.1%
1990 to 2020	266	5.0%
Total	5312	100%

Chart 2 – Council social housing stock by construction date

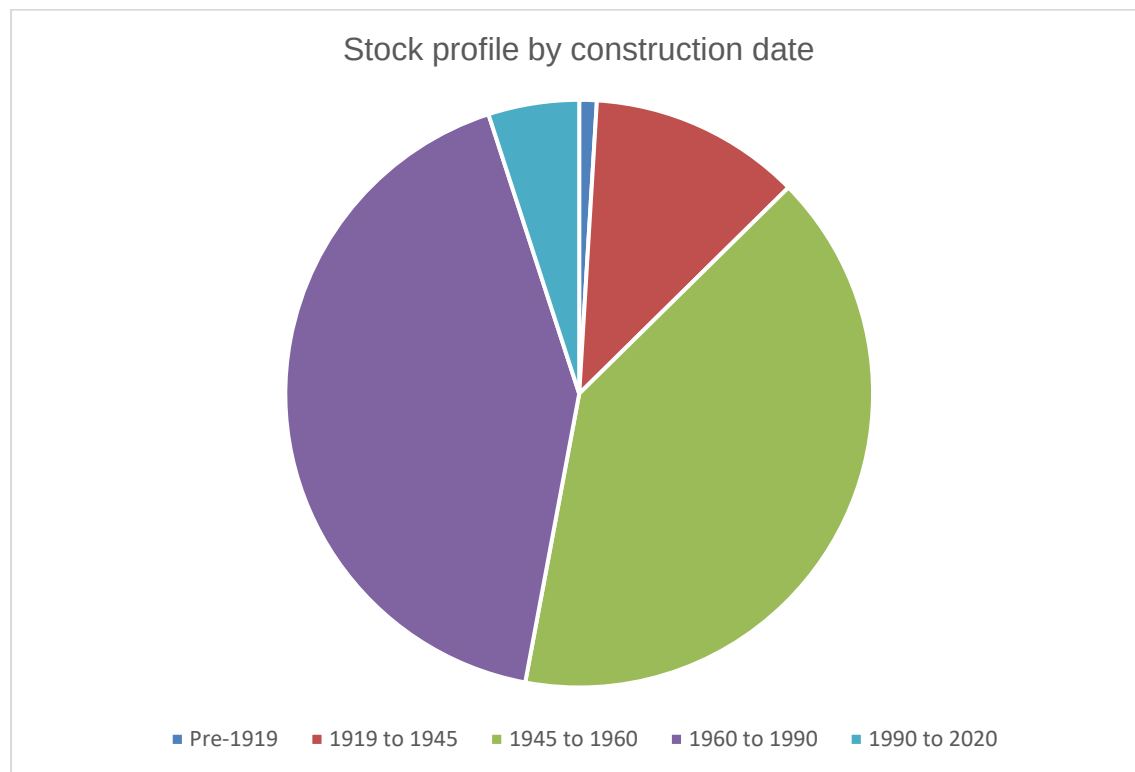


Table 3 and chart 2 above show that the majority of stock, c.82% was built between 1945 and 1990. However, a relatively significant proportion of the stock, approaching 12%, has an inter-wars construction date.

This inter-wars stock is particularly problematic and increasingly will absorb significant proportions of future investment in the dwelling stock portfolio over the lifetime of this strategy and up to 2030. This is because much, if not all, of this stock is likely to be of solid wall construction and will require significant investment to achieve future energy efficiency standards.

It should be noted that some social housing organisations have a policy of disposal of solid wall properties as they are extremely expensive and technically difficult to bring up to a high energy efficiency standard. This is explained in more detail later in this strategy.

2.3 Main archetypes

Despite the Council having experienced significant losses of houses through the right to buy programme over several years, traditional brick-built dwellings still provide the majority of our housing stock portfolio.

An analysis of the housing stock by principle property archetype is shown in table 4 below and in chart 3.

Table 4 – Council social housing stock by principle construction type

Property type	Numbers	Percentage of overall dwelling stock (%)
Traditional brick built	4316	81.24%
BISF	45	0.85%
Cornish	92	1.73%
Hawksley	96	1.81%
Kencast	11	0.21%
Wates	752	14.17%
Total	5312	100%

Note that some of these properties are of non-traditional construction and these are referred to in more detail later in this section of this strategy.

Chart 3 – Council social housing stock by property type (archetype)

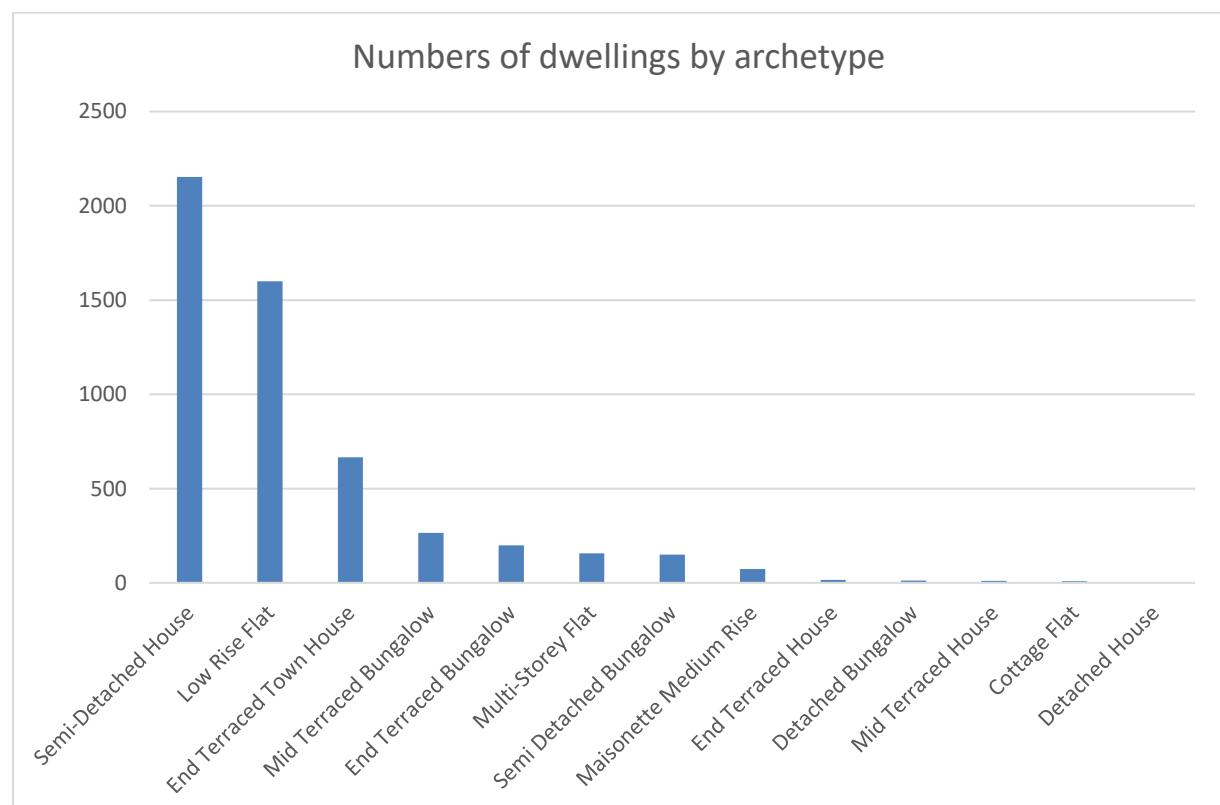


Table 5 – Council social housing stock by dwelling type

Property type	Numbers	Percentage of overall dwelling stock (%)
Semi-detached house	2154	40.5%
Low rise flat	1601	30.1%
End-terraced town house	665	12.5%
Mid-terraced bungalow	265	5.0%
End-terraced bungalow	199	3.7%
Multi-storey flat	156	2.9%
Semi-detached bungalow	149	2.8%
Maisonette medium rise	74	1.4%
End-terraced house	15	0.3%
Detached bungalow	12	0.2%
Mid-terraced house	10	0.2%
Cottage flat	8	0.2%
Detached house	4	0.1%
Total	5312	100%

Table 5 and chart 3 above show that the largest proportion of the stock are houses of various types, detached, semi-detached and end and mid-terraced. These houses of various build forms comprise approximately 53.4% of the overall dwelling stock portfolio. General needs flats comprise approximately 30% of the stock, whilst high-rise flats comprise just 2.9% of the stock, bungalows comprise approximately 7% of the stock.

2.4 Sizes of the dwelling stock

The distribution of dwelling stock by property size using numbers of bedrooms is shown in table 6 below:

Table 6 – Council social housing stock by property type

No of bedrooms	Stock number	Bungalows	Flats	Houses
1	1404	408	992	4
2	1444	122	677	645
3	2342	95	89	2085
4	110		3	106

No of bedrooms	Stock number	Bungalows	Flats	Houses
5	6		6	
6	5		5	
7	1			1
Totals	5312	625	1772	2841

Chart 4 – Council social housing stock by dwelling size

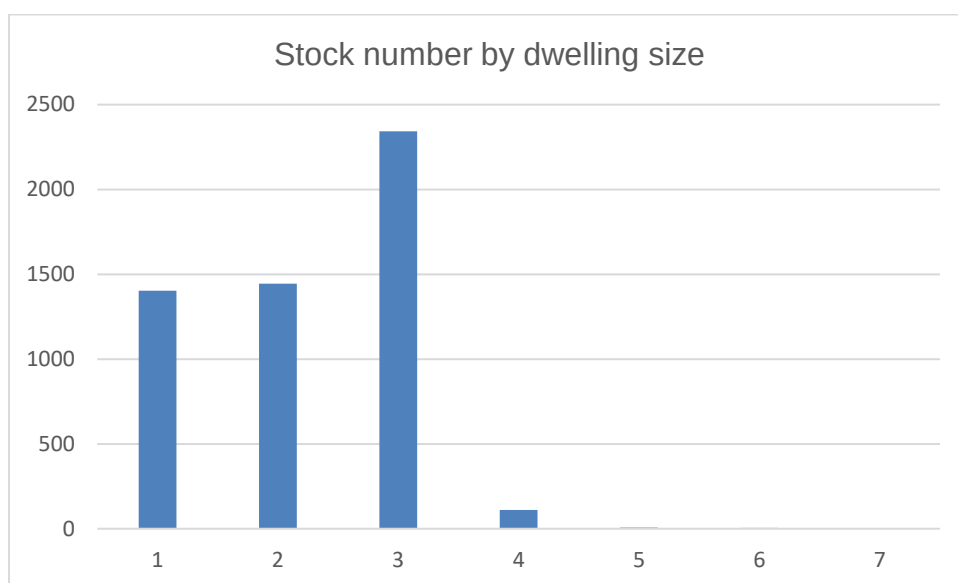


Table 6 and chart 4 show that the largest proportion of stock comprises three-bedroom dwellings with one and two bedroom dwellings being broadly in equal numbers at around 1,400 dwellings each. There are also small numbers of larger dwellings of between four and seven bedrooms.

2.5 Non-traditional and specialist stock

Within the housing stock portfolio, there are relatively significant numbers of non-traditional house/housing types. These properties can present unique, expensive and often unsustainable future investment challenges, as the non-traditional construction types often require expensive, specialist repair and improvement techniques.

These non-traditional properties will in some circumstances undoubtedly present particular challenges in achieving EPC band C by 2030 - an objective that is referred to in more detail later in this strategy.

Table 7 below, identifies the five non-traditional construction types, which when added together, makes up one fifth or 20% of the total stock. There are images of typical non-traditional house types shown by way of example in appendix B.

Table 7 – Analysis of non-traditional properties

Non-traditional property type	No of properties	Proportion of total dwelling stock (%)
BISF	45	0.85%
Cornish	92	1.73%
Hawksley	96	1.81%
Kencast	11	0.21%
Wates	753	14.17%
Total	977	18.77%

In table 7 above, by far the largest proportion of non-traditional stock are described as Wates properties. Overall, these Wates properties comprise approximately 14% of the total housing stock. In total, there are 977 properties which were constructed using non-traditional construction techniques.

There are a relatively large number of Wates properties within the housing stock portfolio. These are pre-cast reinforced concrete (PRC) houses, a relatively common construction method used for the construction of Council housing in the post-Second World War period. These properties have been repaired, replacing the original external concrete panelling, with an external brick skin and cavity insulation, prior to the year 2000.

The other non-traditional property types: BISF, Cornish, Hawksley, and Kencast, collectively comprise approximately 4.5% of the stock, totalling 244 properties. To the best of our knowledge, there are no significant stock investment/asset management issues with the non-traditional dwelling types. Further detailed information about the current condition of the non-traditional house forms will be a priority of the new stock condition survey to be completed by 2026.

Unusually, for a local authority with a significant proportion of stock constructed in the immediate post-war period, we do not have any specialist sheltered housing for the elderly or equivalent, though there are several dwellings designated as dwellings specially for tenants aged over 55.

3. Stock condition

3.1 Introduction

The principal requirement for social landlords is to ensure homes are fit for human habitation as defined by the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018, and that homes/dwellings comply with the current Decent Homes Standard (DHS) and other current statutory and legislative requirements, and local service standards. Further regulatory and statutory requirements are available in appendix A of this strategy.

A decent home, as described by government, is one that is safe, wind and weather tight, warm and has modern facilities. For a social landlord to achieve this aim, any individual dwelling must meet all four of the following criteria:

- It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing
- It is a reasonable state of repair
- It has reasonably modern facilities and services
- It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

More detailed information is included in the [Decent Homes Standard](#).

The current Decent Home Standard is due to be updated, with an improved and updated DHS proposed in the recent Social Housing White Paper. This is due for consultation in more detail shortly. The updated DHS will almost certainly be published during the lifetime of this strategy and the impact of this is likely to have additional impact on the HRA business plan.

3.2 The current stock condition survey

Our main housing management contractor maintains a record of dwelling stock condition data on the 'Promaster' stock condition database. The database is in place, in line with best practice in the sector, to support the management of the investment programme, record and update property condition data and the wider management of the dwelling stock asset base.

Our housing management contractor is required, as part of a wider housing management services contract, to provide a stock condition survey report once every three years. The last stock condition survey was undertaken in 2018 and represented a 15% stock condition survey. Due to operational issues, most notably the national pandemic, a stock condition survey has not been undertaken since 2018. In light of this, the action plan at the end of this strategy makes reference to an aim of carrying out a stock condition survey over the next two years with a completion date by end of March 2026.

It is anticipated that representative meaningful data will progressively become available as the stock condition survey progresses, and that a full stratified sample of up-to-date stock condition data and condition will be available by the end of March 2025.

This will enable more accurate future programming of investment works to be planned compared to current circumstances, with a much higher degree of confidence in the data and with stock condition compared to current levels of confidence. It should be noted that the future investment programme included in this strategy is largely predicated on this 16% sample.

For survey purposes, our stock has been divided into archetypes as listed in the table below, and a 16% sample of each archetype was targeted to form the overall survey sample.

Table 8 – Analysis of surveyed and non-surveyed properties (cloned) from the most recent stock condition survey

Archetype	Surveyed	Cloned	Grand total	Sample size
Bungalow (pre-1965)	68	334	402	17%
Bungalow (post-1965)	51	176	227	22%
Detached House (pre-1965)	0	1	1	0%
Detached House (post-1965)	1	0	1	100%
Flat (pre-1965)	99	436	535	19%
Flat (post-1965)	183	873	1056	17%
High Rise Flat	25	126	151	17%
Maisonette	12	72	84	14%
New build	24	127	156	15%
Semi Detached House (pre-1965)	104	699	803	13%
Semi Detached House (post-1965)	5	35	35	14%
Terraced House (pre-1965)	241	1345	1348	15%
Terraced House (post-1965)	50	453	503	10%
Total	863	4677	5312	16%

Table 8 above shows that for some archetypes, (most notably post-1965 terraced housing) as little as 10% of the full stock archetype was actually surveyed, resulting in higher proportions of particular archetypes' stock condition data being derived from cloned data. This is a major weakness as described in section 3.3 below.

3.3 The need for accurate data and a new stock condition survey

The biggest concern with the current data is that at best, 78% of our stock within a particular archetype is cloned and in general, over 80% of the stock condition data within the stock condition database is derived not from individual surveys but from cloned data of similar dwellings.

The overall methodology used for collecting stock condition data does not now comply with current best practice and with the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing. However, it needs to be recognised that many social landlords find themselves in a similar position therefore, it is imperative that greater robust stock condition data is obtained as quickly as reasonably possible. At the time of writing, the procurement of a new stock condition survey and associated software has now taken place with a contractor due to commence surveying late spring 2024 onwards.

The new stock condition survey, producing up-to-date stock condition data will use industry best standards in line with the current requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing and will place us in a strong position going forward in planning our future investment requirements from 2025 onwards.

The stock condition survey will not be confined to individual dwellings but will also include garage stock comprising approximately 1,400 garage units and common areas, typically within flatted accommodation.

The existing 2018 database has however been updated in an opportunistic and periodic manner, so as planned programmes of work have been completed, the Promaster asset management software has been updated manually to provide an accurate renewal date of recently replaced components, and stock condition data for those individual properties.

3.4 Decent Homes Standard and delivery of planned improvement works

Local authorities and registered providers are required to bring their properties up to, and maintain, to the Decent Homes Standard. At the time of writing this strategy, 99.4% of our housing stock complied with the Decent Homes Standard.

Aligned to the requirement to ensure properties comply with the Decent Homes Standard, significant investment works have been carried out over recent years to ensure high levels of compliance with the standard.

Some good progress has been made in addressing component replacements and other stock improvements, that might otherwise have moved properties from being decent to non-decent, had we not intervened and undertaken planned investment works. Large investment work streams to significant tranches of the housing stock have been delivered.

Table 9 below shows the numbers of dwellings where significant, predominantly capital funded, works of this type, to maintain decency, have been delivered:

Table 9 – Table showing no of properties with key components replaced during 2018-23

Component replaced	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Totals
Re-roofing	138	87	148	0	97	470
Windows and door replacement	110	249	285	302	42	988
New kitchen installation	47	91	0	80	57	275
New bathroom installation	88	81	9	70	43	291
Heating system replacements	290	346	229	248	342	1455
Total dwellings	673	854	671	700	581	

Table 9, above, shows that since 2018/19:

- 470 properties have had their roof replaced
- 988 properties benefitted from the new window and door replacement programme
- 566 properties formed part of the kitchen and bathroom refurbishment programme, and
- 1,455 properties benefitted from the heating installation programme.

Other key works delivered included:

- 196 properties benefitted from a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funded solar panel and external wall insulation project
- Completion of a fire safety programme including sprinklers to high-rise blocks at Joseph Groome Towers
- Neston common area loft asbestos removal
- Delivered a £15m neighbourhood improvement scheme in Sutton Way, Ellesmere Port
- 230 new Council homes have been built in the areas of Ellesmere Port, Neston and Winsford
- Comprehensive review of garage stock which will see demolition and new build housing delivered.

3.5 Other key stock investment, asset management and service delivery achievements

In 2019, a programme of neighbourhood improvement schemes was carried out to several areas, most notably Sutton Way, Ellesmere Port and Churchill Court, Neston. However, further work is needed to address the condition of some of the smaller neighbourhoods that will deliver improvements to desirability and lettability.

A recently formed in-house dedicated building safety team now oversees all the day-to-day management of our high-rise buildings to ensure compliance with all safety legislation.

In 2021, a damp and condensation task force was established, which revised processes to ensure a robust response to any damp and condensation issues identified in our homes.

In addition to the above task force, we have worked with our tenants to develop a new [Together with Tenants Charter | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#) which sets out five key pledges as follows:

- **Communication:** when you access any of our services, we promise that we will keep you informed and give you the ability to tell us what you think of the services you receive, so we can use your feedback to help improve the services we provide to you
- **Responsibility:** When we make a mistake, we promise to be approachable and to take responsibility and put it right as quickly as possible, keeping you informed throughout
- **Your community:** We promise to work with you to help create greener, fairer, stronger communities
- **Quality of your home:** When we maintain your home, we promise that the quality of our work is of a high standard and your neighbourhood is maintained and serviced and remains fit for purpose. We promise to use contractors that deliver a high-quality service and where they use components that these are of a good standard
- **Your safety:** When we carry out repairs and improvements to your home, we promise that your home will be a safe place in which to live, and it forms part of a safe and secure community.

Within each of the above pledges are a set of commitments that we have made that will ensure we deliver on each pledge. An annual report is provided to all tenants that will update them on how we are performing against each pledge as well as providing evidence of how tenants views and feedback have helped change the way we deliver our services.

Good headline key performance, including customer satisfaction:

- 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.

Social housing decarbonisation funding has recently been obtained to improve the energy efficiency of significant numbers of properties. Meaning that relatively small numbers of properties (c.400) will need to be improved to EPC band C after 2026. This represents a relatively modest programme averaging approximately 100 dwellings per annum after 2026 to achieve the EPC band C requirement by 2030. For more information on achieving the EPC band C requirement by 2023, please see section 4.3 below.

4. Future investment requirements

As part of the development of this strategy we have carried out a detailed analysis of the stock condition survey.

4.1 30-year stock condition profile

Headline investment cost and key component area information is that over the 30 years of the stock condition survey, investment requirements as shown below in table 10 will be required.

Current market information, from several sources in the sector indicate that on average, over a 30-year period, a Registered Provider will need to spend c.£33,000 on each of its properties to maintain properties to the Decent Homes Standard (DHS). Were we to use this figure of £33,000 for each of our c.5,300 properties then this would suggest a 30-year capital programme of circa £175 million.

To allow for any unexpected issues arising out of the updated stock condition survey it is considered prudent to increase this figure by circa 20% (£35 million) to give an indicative capital programme of £210 million. This indicative capital programme of £210 million can then be refined as the updated stock condition survey information becomes available.

Table 10 – Table showing 30-year headline investment requirements extracted from the stock condition survey.

Key component area	30-year lifecycle cost £ (2024 costs)
Bathroom replacements	£24.9m
Electrical works including re-wires, consumer unit replacement etc	£18.5m
Kitchen replacements	£51.7m
Roof finish and structure	£22.7m
Window replacements	£19.8m
External doors	£8.5m
Boiler replacements/Heating renewals	£12.7m
Other works to the dwelling fabric	£51.2m
Total	£210.0m

Table 10 above shows that headline expenditure over the 30-year projection of the stock condition database indicates an investment requirement of £210 million. The stock condition database holds more detailed information within these headline key component descriptors. So, for example, the £22.7m re-roofing works includes roof line, structural, roof covering, soffits and fascias, chimney rebuild costs etc.

As part of our forward plan, using emerging data from the new stock condition survey, the opportunity will be taken to undertake a cost and component baseline recasting exercise. This will ensure that the new stock condition database survey data includes up-to-date costing from current cost data and not an inflationary projection forward based on national statistical data (as is the case with the currently presented cost information in Table 10).

4.2 Stock investment profile 2024/5 – 2028/9

At a more immediate level and of direct relevance to this strategy, future investment requirements for the five-year period 2024/25 – 2028/29 (the period of this strategy) have been extracted from the stock condition database. This timescale corresponds with the timescale/period of this strategy.

In more detail, in the immediate five years, current stock condition data indicates that investment requirements of £28.47million are required and these are detailed in table 11. These future investment requirements include some EPC band C works and decarbonisation works (see section 4.3 later in this strategy).

Table 11 – Five-year investment profile 2024/25 – 2028/29

Key component	No of dwellings	Total cost (2024 values)
Bathroom replacements	1138	£2,028,377
Electrical rewires	2593	£6,739,200
Consumer unit replacement	2593	£2,830,464
Other electrical works	5128	£752,960
External works, fencing, boundary walls, gates etc	4246	£5,046,356
External door replacement	493	£440,856
External wall repairs	99	£207,662
Kitchen replacements	509	£1,621,945
Re-roofing works	1358	£4,476,251
Window replacements	155	£347,750
Boiler replacements/heating renewals	1782	£3,357,185
Other works to the fabric of dwellings	5128	£623,805
Total		£28,472,811

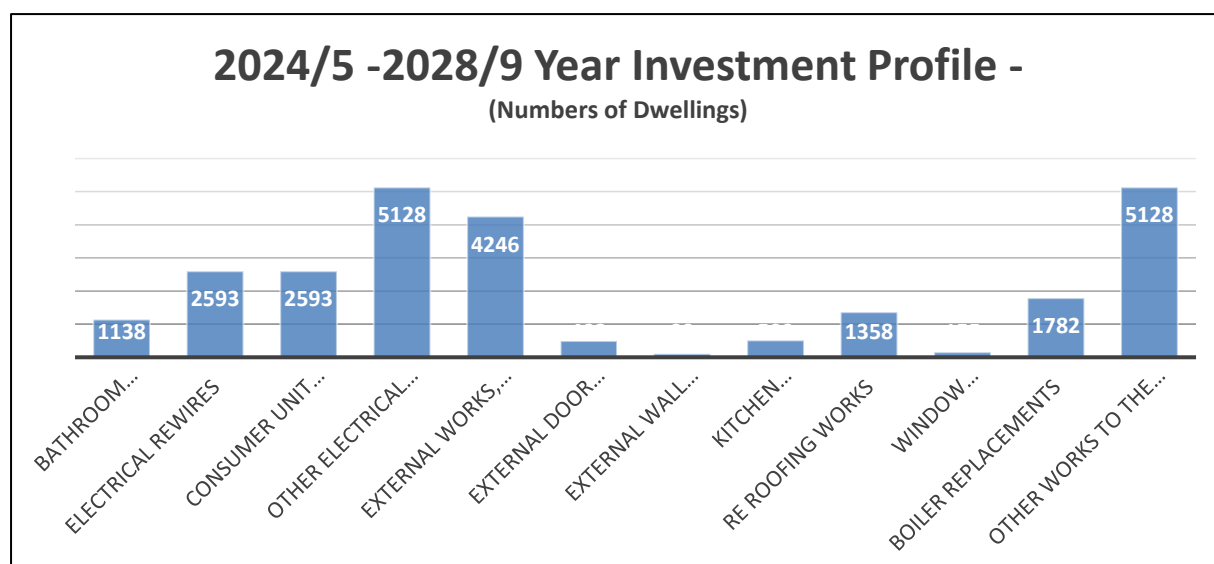
Table 11 shows the number of dwellings requiring these key components and works to be replaced over the five-year term of this asset management strategy.

Current data shown in table 10 indicates a future investment need of £210m over 30 years for all stock investment requirements covering all major components with replacements.

This represents our individual investment requirements per property of a little below £39,600. This is expenditure over a 30-year period and is based on the current stock condition data. Most notably, this does not include the significant investment requirements that will be needed for improving the energy efficiency of our stock and decarbonisation costs as described later in this strategy.

This average investment per dwelling over a 30-year period, is a little higher than the sector norms (and as indicated in section 4.1 above, represents a prudent approach), and as improved stock condition data information becomes available during 2025 upon completion of a 50% stratified sample of the dwelling stock, more accurate data will become available.

Chart 5 – Five-year investment profile showing key areas of expenditure by year and cumulatively.



Note: 'Other Electrical Works' includes works such as CO detectors, external lighting and smoke detectors

4.3 Energy performance of the stock

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.

As part of the Decent Homes programme, we have carried out a range of works to directly improve the overall energy performance of our housing stock. These will include

installation of double glazed PVCu windows, boiler replacement and improve thermal installations, but additional measures are still required.

The 2022 English House Condition Survey showed that the social housing sector had the highest mean SAP rating of all tenures with a mean SAP rating of 70. There was a slight divergence between registered providers (SAP rating 71) and local authorities (SAP rating 70). This has moved the average home in the social rented sector from a band D to a band C. The survey also shows that 44% of dwellings had an energy efficiency rating below EPC C (SAP 69).

Through the [Clean Growth Strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/clean-growth-strategy), the UK government has set a target for social housing providers to attain the minimum rating of energy performance certificate (EPC) C for rented properties by 2035 (2030 for 'fuel poor' households). This is a challenging objective in itself but is relatively a minor task compared to the much more ambitious and challenging aspiration, to make all homes 'net zero carbon' by 2050.

Some energy efficiency information is available for inclusion in this strategy. The stock condition database at present does not hold SAP ratings and this will be an area where improved data and dwelling energy efficiency information will be developed as part of key actions in the action plan around improved stock condition databases and the associated planned stock condition survey.

Reference to chart 6 below and table 12 below show that in total 4,103 properties have an energy efficiency rating of EPC band C or above. There are however 1,279 properties with an EPC rating of D or lower.

Chart 6 – Bar chart showing distribution of dwellings by energy efficiency, EPC rating

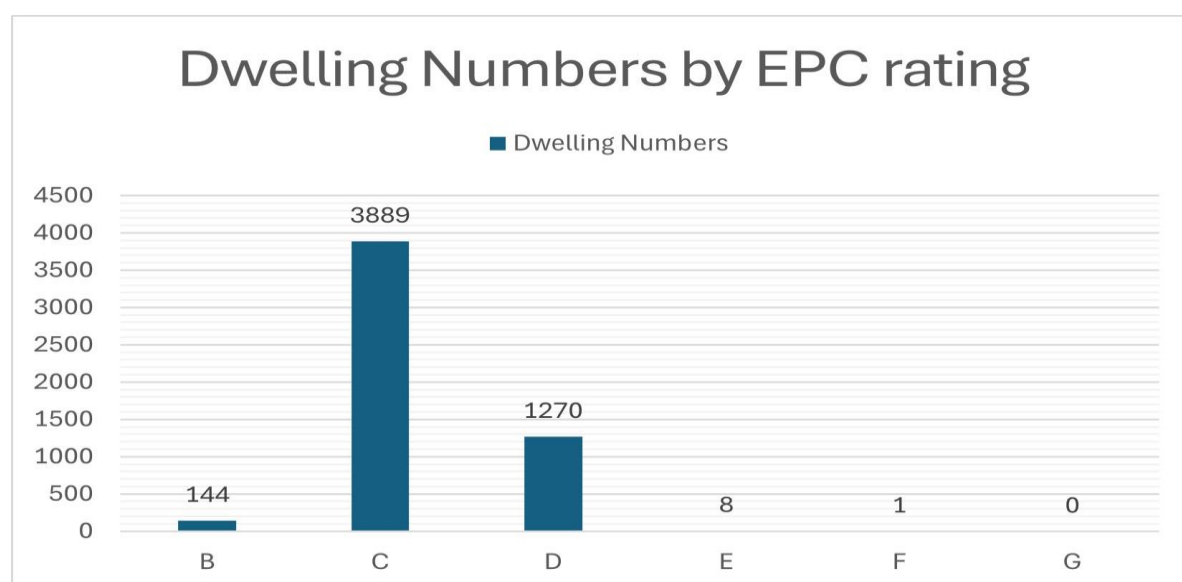


Table 12 – Table showing numbers of dwellings by energy performance certificate rating

Energy efficiency (EPC) Rating	Dwelling numbers
A	0
B	144
C	3889
D	1270
E	8
F	1
G	0

There are therefore 1,279 properties below EPC band C. Recent research estimates for bringing a property up to EPC band C or above are shown in table 13 below.

Table 13 – Table showing indicative costs of improving the energy efficiency of a dwelling type to EPC band C.

Property type	Indicative cost to bring up to EPC band C
One-bedroom flat	£3,700
Mid-terrace	c. £6,400
Detached house	£12,540
Dwelling previously rated EPC band D or below	£9,260

We have been successful in securing SHDF (social housing decarbonisation fund) monies to bring half of our properties up to EPC C plus a further 300 homes by 2026. Upon completion of this SHDF funded programme, there will be around 400 residual properties requiring works to bring them up to EPC band C by 2030.

Work continues to improve our data, to ensure that modelling around future energy efficiency requirements are accurate and that a clear plan can be developed so that all properties are compliant with these EPC requirements by 2030. As part of this strategy, an EPC modelling exercise has taken place which will enable specific targeting to meet these legislative requirements.

The HRA business plan will need to consider the full extent of all financial implications of introducing further energy efficiency measures over the course of this strategy.

Recent research, the '*Cost assumptions for BEIS's energy efficiency modelling*', indicates that a thermal insulation and energy efficiency package involving thermal cladding, upgrading roof void or loft insulation and replacement windows for a typical small semi-detached property or mid terraced property would cost around £19,000 per dwelling.

On the basis of our current knowledge of solid wall properties this alone equates to a required investment of c.£12.7m as part of the achievement of net zero by 2045/2050. Works will also need to be prioritised for properties where residents are identified as being at the greatest risk of falling into fuel poverty.

A specific item in the action plan to this strategy has been incorporated to develop a better understanding of the energy efficiency of dwellings, and to better understand the implications of the range and types of investment required to improve the energy efficiency of the dwelling stock towards net zero.

4.4 Risk management

A detailed risk assessment will be further developed as a supplementary document to this strategy. For the purposes of this strategy potential key risk areas are shown in the risk profile below:

Risk description	Current risk impact description	Current risk likelihood description	Current risk score
Failure to invest in the stock will mean that there is a greater risk of properties not meeting the Decent Homes Standard.	Moderate level of risk exposure subject to regular active monitoring measures. To be mitigated by new stock condition survey, at present future investment is fully funded via the HRA.	Unlikely	4
Failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard and the regulatory framework carries a high risk of reputational loss, potential compliance action by tenants, and regulatory intervention by the Regulator of Social Housing.	Moderate level of risk exposure subject to regular active monitoring measures. To be mitigated by new stock condition survey.	Unlikely	4
Significant gaps in the stock condition survey data and poor data leading to incorrect or inappropriate stock investment decisions. Potential intervention by the Regulator of Social Housing.	Moderately high level of risk exposure subject to regular active monitoring measures. To be mitigated by new stock condition survey.	Probable	9
Lack of access to key stock data and information via the existing management agreement.	Moderate level of risk subject to regular passive monitoring measures.	Possible	6

Risk description	Current risk impact description	Current risk likelihood description	Current risk score
Underperformance, statutory or regulatory compliance is a direct risk to the Council although the service is delivered by an external agency.	Minor acceptable level of risk subject to regular passive monitoring measures.	Unlikely	4
There may be insufficient headroom in the HRA business plan to fund current planned investments which currently do not fully address thermal installation and decarbonisation costs.	Minor acceptable level of risk subject to regular passive monitoring measures. To be mitigated as the council will pursue external funding.	Possible	6
Failures to manage health and safety compliance may put residents, staff and contractors at risk.	Minor acceptable level of risk subject to regular passive monitoring measures.	Unlikely	3
Failures to meet statutory standards can carry penalties and will damage the organisation's reputation, and potentially exposed the organisation to legal action.	Minor acceptable level of risk subject to regular passive monitoring measures.	Unlikely	4
An incorrect scope or poor quality of stock investment will have a key influence on customer satisfaction.	Minor acceptable level of risk subject to regular passive monitoring measures.	Unlikely	4
Poor value for money in asset management will have a major impact on the HRA business plan as stock investment works represent a large proportion of business plan spend.	Moderate acceptable level of risk exposure subject to regular active monitoring measures.	Unlikely	4
Failure to improve stock thermal efficiency will increase the risk of fuel poverty amongst tenants.	Minor acceptable level of risk subject to regular passive monitoring measures.	Possible	6

Risk management table key

		Impact			
		1	2	3	4
		Minor	Moderate	Major	Extreme
Likelihood	1 Unlikely	1	2	3	4
	2 Possible	2	4	6	8
	3 Probably	3	6	9	12
	4 Very Likely	4	8	12	16

A regular process to identify and assess risks (strategic and delivery) will be developed internally and actions agreed to manage risks to minimise impact.

4.5 Adapted properties

There is, at present, no specific adapted properties register or equivalent either as a standalone database, or details of adapted properties included in the stock condition database. The development of an adapted properties register is therefore incorporated in the action plan of this strategy.

We will create an asset register for aids and adaptations which will have strong links into both our allocations policy and our developing approach to asset performance evaluation.

4.6 Compliance

Overall, good compliance is reported in key areas:

- Gas servicing and maintenance
- Cyclical electrical testing.

Over the period 2020 to 2023, high levels of compliance in gas safety and electrical testing have been achieved.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Gas safety compliance	100%	100%	100%
Electrical safety testing	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.

Asbestos

Work is also underway to formalise our strategy to manage asbestos within our stock. We are currently reporting 100% compliance for having completed an annual reinspection survey in communal areas with known ACM's (Asbestos Containing Materials).

Compliance systems in place include:

- All communal areas have up to date asbestos surveys
- Communal areas recorded as having ACMs present are subsequently inspected annually. Where there has been identified that there has been any deterioration to the asbestos material this will be encapsulated or removed and records updated accordingly

- A 'management in-situ' policy with regards to ACMs and we will only remove this material if any area is deemed to be damaged or in poor condition
- An external asbestos consultant provides annual reinspection's to known ACMs in communal areas
- When intrusive works are being planned in a property our service providers will consult our asbestos register/database for information on ACMs within a property and a targeted R&D survey to be carried out
- If ACMs are found to be present an asbestos remediation contractor will remove ACMs prior to works being carried out.

Legionella

- We are currently reporting 100% for having a legionella risk assessment in place where required for communal/shared water
- Legionella risk assessments for properties that contain shared water assets/ communal water are in place
- The Council's policy is for a risk assessment to be carried out every two years in at risk properties
- LRAs are not undertaken on domestic dwelling stock as the overall risk is considered to be very low. Most hot water is from combi boilers in the Council's dwelling stock so, hot water storage does not occur in these dwellings.

Lifting equipment

- The key legislation is the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER)
- We are currently reporting 100% compliance with LOLER inspections and lift servicing
- Six-monthly statutory inspections on all commercial lifting equipment as required by LOLER is in place with a specialist lift maintenance company (MAND PLS) undertaking these inspections
- Monthly servicing on all commercial lifting equipment is also undertaken.

Fire risk assessments

- We are currently reporting 100% compliance of properties that have an in-date fire risk assessment
- Fire risk assessments are completed where required by inhouse qualified and competent fire risk assessors
- The frequency of these fire risk assessments is determined by the risk profile/use of the block/building in question
- Actions generated for remediation as result of a fire risk assessment being completed are allocated to the responsible person where required for completion.

It is anticipated that much of this compliance data will be migrated onto the new stock condition survey database once implemented.

4.7 New regulatory framework and consumer standards

At the time of writing this strategy, the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) had recently set out its new consumer standards for social housing landlords, designed to protect tenants and improve the service they receive. These standards were updated and form part of the enhanced regulatory role for the RSH because of the [Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act 2023 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/12/section/1)

Under the new standards landlords will need to:

- Ensure tenants are safe in their homes
- Listen to tenants' complaints and respond promptly to put things right
- Be accountable to tenants and treat them with fairness and respect
- Know more about the condition of every home and the needs of the people who live in them
- Collect and use data effectively across a range of areas, including repairs.

We will focus on ensuring that our services comply with the [consumer standards](#). All standards are relevant to this strategy, the most immediately relevant standards to strategic asset management are:

- The Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- Safety and Quality Standard
- Tenancy Standard
- Transparency, Influence and Accountability (including tenant satisfaction measures [TSMs])
- Consumer Standards Code of Practice
- Governance and Financial Viability Standard and Code of Practice
- Value for Money Standard and Code of Practice.

4.8 Non-housing assets

Work has commenced to ensure that non housing assets are included within our overall asset management strategy. A comprehensive review of our garage sites has recently been undertaken and our focus over the life of this strategy will be to ensure that our housing estates continue to be well managed and that investment opportunities are considered where appropriate.

5. Active asset management

This strategy recognises the need to introduce a more rigorous and structured assessment of the performance of our stock to assist in decision-making processes around investment and to enable us to adopt intervention mechanisms for underperforming assets. A more strategic and targeted approach to stock investment based on net present value (NPV) therefore needs to be developed. 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. Some work on net present value has already been undertaken.

Reference to appendix A shows that at the time of the example shown, the overall NPV total for the dwelling stock was £171.9m. Average net present value per dwelling was a little over £32,000.

On a purely financial (NPV) appraisal just over 2,000 properties were below stock average with around 450 properties identified as either underperforming or requiring further in-depth investigation. The worst performing properties from an NPV perspective were in Ellesmere Port with the best performing being in Willaston and Neston. These NPV evaluations were carried out in 2018.

We are working towards the development of a stock assessment and evaluation process. This methodology will enable us to evaluate the financial performance of all our stock, alongside other broader measures of neighbourhood and tenancy sustainability linked to our wider social housing objectives.

We will use this appraisal methodology for understanding and identifying the best and worst performing housing assets. The appraisal methodology will use updated stock condition data supported by wider financial and housing management information such as individual property historic and projected responsive repair costs, future investment requirements to bring and maintain properties to the Decent Homes Standard, void costs, rent loss etc. We will also build into the evaluation model a range of the socio-economic factors to ensure that future investment decisions take into account wider stock sustainability issues.

A key output from this, and a clear objective of the asset management strategy action plan, will be an assessment of the performance of all the housing stock including net present values (NPV). Further evaluation of this methodology will be taken as part of this strategy. NPV analysis will enable us to identify stock that is performing poorly, on either a financial or broader socio-economic sustainability basis and alternative options may then be considered.

This analysis will enable us to identify stock that is performing poorly and assist in identifying a range of future options for poorly performing individual or parcels of stock. Options might include:

- Targeted investment

- Conversion or deconversion
- Remodelling
- And perhaps in the longer term:
 - Redevelopment
 - Demolition or disposals.

6. Resident involvement

We put customers at the centre of service development and support a range of tenant meetings and focus groups that ensure customers have the opportunity to comment on services, either in person, or digitally. Incentives and targeting help to ensure that involvement is more representative than has previously been the case.

The Council Housing Management Board oversees the engagement and involvement of tenants and the Board itself has 4 tenant members, sitting alongside councillors and 2 independent members. The Board considers significant strategy and policy changes and has been closely involved in reviewing this strategy.

In addition to the Boards involvement in drawing up this strategy, the wider tenant cohort were also able to provide their views and comments with tenants specifically being asked to comment on the aims and objectives that are detailed in section 7 of this strategy. Of those tenants who responded to the consultation on this strategy, 85% either agreed or strongly agreed with both the aims and objectives.

Resident involvement is underpinned by the ongoing collection of profiling and performance data and benchmarking is undertaken to compare performance with other landlords.

There are a range of other ways for tenants to get involved such as: transactional surveys which are conducted to establish customer satisfaction and obtain feedback and insights at the point of service delivery. Whilst perception surveys on customer satisfaction have been undertaken every two years to inform service priorities from the customer perspective.

7. Delivering the objectives of this strategy

This strategy reflects, complements and supports our vision for all Council-owned housing which states:

“We aim to provide affordable homes of the right type and quality to help meet the housing need whilst also adapting to the changing environment. 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 deliver the above aim, there are 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 and environmental impact and finally
- Ensure there is effective financial control overseeing our work.

7.1 Ensure homes are fit for purpose

Maintaining the quality of our stock remains a core principle behind our approach to asset management and our 30-year business plan reflects this. The plan ensures that our homes meet the requirements set out in the Fitness for Human Habitation Act so 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.

7.2 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 are 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.

7.3 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.

7.4 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.

7.5 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.

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.

7.6 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.

7.7 Reduce carbon emissions and 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. The cost of bringing our outstanding housing stock to the required EPC C rating is approximately £2.3m which is covered in our 30-year investment plan.

Achieving net zero

We have worked closely with Parity Projects which are a specialist ICT platform that models and predicts costs associated with achieving energy efficiency. The modelling indicates that to bring our housing stock up to net zero will require an investment of £160m of which, they have calculated that £60m is already included within our existing capital expenditure programme all of which will be funded by the housing revenue account itself. This means that a further £100m of measures will require funding from other sources most notably the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund which has current terms and conditions of a requirement to match fund. We plan to use the £60m identified by Parity Projects that is already included within the existing capital programme to access a further £60m of funding from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund on a matched funded basis meaning that £120m of the total measures identified by Parity Projects can be achieved. This will potentially leave a further £40m for which funding will need to be identified. Given that any HRA funding will potentially qualify as match funding for Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund purposes, the further ask from the HRA is likely to be £20m.

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
- Encouraging sustainable modes of travel for our homes/tenants
- 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
- Ensure that our new build programme achieves net zero
- Developing a fully costed and detailed net zero action plan by 2026
- 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.

7.8 Ensure there is effective financial control overseeing our work

There is a need for the Council to balance competing demands on its 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.

8. Key targets and objectives to be achieved through the lifetime of this asset management strategy

Objective – strategic asset management	Lead	Target date
Carry out a new stock condition survey with the objective of 100% of the stock being surveyed by December 2026 (2) and a stratified 50% representative sample of the stock (ie, 2650 dwellings) by December 2025 (1). Thereafter (December 2026) implement a rolling programme of keeping condition data robust and up to date. Ensure this is in line with current best practice, regulatory requirements and RICS good practice, and Regulator of Social Housing requirements.	CWAC ForHousing	1. December 2026 2. December 2025
Review the stock condition database and develop a consistent approach to archetypes and other property descriptors.	CWAC ForHousing	March 2025
Develop a detailed understanding of future investment requirements for non-traditional properties.	CWAC ForHousing	March 2025
Develop a comprehensive procurement strategy for future investment requirements over the lifetime of this strategy.	CWAC	January 2025
Develop a strategy to take ownership of stock condition and other key property data with an internal CWAC maintained stock condition database.	CWAC	March 2025
Develop a strategy for achieving EPC band C by 2030.	CWAC ForHousing	Completed
Review the HRA business plan and develop a clear understanding of the headroom for future investment (particularly decarbonisation/energy efficiency).	CWAC ForHousing	Completed
Clarify investment cycles for all key components.	CWAC ForHousing	Completed
Develop an asbestos management policy and strategy.	CWAC ForHousing	January 2025

Objective – strategic asset management	Lead	Target date
Ensure that all non-housing assets such as garages, communal areas, and communal rooms in sheltered housing schemes etc are fully identified and that associated condition information is incorporated into the stock condition database.	CWAC ForHousing	March 2025
Develop an adapted properties register of current and future properties that have been adapted for disabled persons.	CWAC ForHousing	June 2025
Development of a robust and up to date net present value (NPV) assessment of stock.	CWAC ForHousing	July 2025
Develop a wider asset options appraisal methodology to identify best performing and underperforming dwellings to inform future investment planning.	CWAC ForHousing	September 2025
Develop an energy efficiency and stock improvement strategy to focus on reducing the number of properties that fall below band C and increasing the percentage of homes in bands A and B.	CWAC ForHousing	September 2025
Develop an asset management risk register.	CWAC ForHousing	October 2024

Objective 1 – Ensure homes are fit for purpose	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	Completed
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	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	Outcome	Lead	Target
Determine whether a joint venture agreement between ForHousing and the Council can 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	October 2024

Objective 3 – Ensure homes help meet housing needs	Outcome	Lead	Target
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	Completed
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	December 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	May 2026
Carry out a review of 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 housing stock through conversion and adaptation where appropriate.	CWAC ForHousing	August 2026
Bring forward the development of eight 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
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

Objective 3 – Ensure homes help meet housing needs	Outcome	Lead	Target
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	June 2025

Objective 4 - Help contribute to social and environmental wellbeing	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	Completed
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	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	Completed
Liaise with Scottish Power Energy Networks re grid capacities.	Identification of areas where grid capacity may impede installation of renewable technologies, impacting on development and investment plans.	CWAC ForHousing	December 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	March 2025
Increase the amount of energy used in domestic properties produced from renewable sources.	Increasing renewable and low carbon technology in domestic properties.	CWAC ForHousing	June 2025
Ensure all stock achieves a minimum EPC band C rating by 2030.	Work towards decarbonisation of our own housing stock is achieved by 2045.	CWAC ForHousing	March 2030
Keep under review all our current stock condition data.	The condition of our stock is regularly updated.	ForHousing	Ongoing
Explore funding 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 CWAC ForHousing	Ongoing Ongoing

Objective 5 – Reduce carbon emissions and environmental impact	Outcome	Lead	Target date
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 target.	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.	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
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

Objective 5 – Reduce carbon emissions and environmental impact	Outcome	Lead	Target date
Commit to moving away from fossil fuels by exploring options for future proofing homes through adoption of electric vehicles charging, solar etc.	Work towards decarbonisation of 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 and maximising household income.	ForHousing	Ongoing

Appendix A: Links to other Council strategies and external documents

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

[CWAC Borough Plan 2024 – 2028](#)

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.

[Link to CWAC website regarding access to housing](#)

[Regulatory Standards for Landlords, Regulator for Social Housing website](#)

[Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act 2023](#)

[Tenant Satisfaction: Standards, requirements and guidance for social landlords in England on transparency, influence and accountability, including Tenant satisfaction measures \(TSMs\)](#)

[What does it cost to retrofit homes? Publication by Department for Business](#)

[Energy efficiency strategy](#)

Appendix B: Non-traditional house types, images of typical properties



Typical Kencast Precast Concrete House

These are typically detached and semi-detached bungalows with a medium pitch gable roof covered with slates or tile with external walls rendered throughout. This picture shows a typical Kencast detached bungalow.



Hawksley PRC house

Hawksley houses were constructed of prefabricated reinforced concrete (PRC) beams with a brick outer skin.



Cornish houses were built from 1946 through to the 1960s

The construction type uses small panel, lightweight precast reinforced concrete structural elements and panels (PRC) fixed over a concrete frame. For the first floor, a mansard roof upper story incorporating a dormer window.



Typical unimproved BISF house (right) Council improved BISF house (left)

The BISF house designed and produced by the British Iron and Steel Federation from 1946 onwards. The main structure is of steel columns spaced to take standard metal windows between them.



Typical Wates improved dwelling

Appendix C: Sample images of improved properties



Typical kitchen refurbishment



Typical roof refurbishment



Window replacement programme

Appendix D: Social Housing demand contextual information and data – April 2024

- High demand for affordable rented accommodation, with 6,698 applicants on the Housing Register as of 16 April 2024. This is an increase on the previous year of 248
- 1,823 have a statutory preference
- 3,558 applicants require 1 bedroom and 1,865 need 2 bedrooms
- 13% are under 25 and 11% are over 65 years old
- Increasing levels of homelessness and rough sleeping, more people with complex needs
- Accelerated asylum resulting in more families in temporary accommodation (hotels)
- Major shortfalls in supply of supported, affordable and private rented housing that local housing allowance can meet
- 885 properties allocated to applicants from the housing register in 23-24. Only 44 applicants were in the Housing Options band (non-statutory preference band). Of the successful applicants 88% were on benefits
- 264 bedsits/1 bed homes, 432 x 2 bedroom, 148 x 3 bedroom, 11 x 4 bedroom and 1x 5 bedroom became available in 23-24
- The existing stock is able to meet priority need demand for 2 bedroom homes, but there is significant unmet need for 1 bedroom and 4+ bedroom homes
- 318 properties owned by CWAC were let through the Housing Register in 23-24 (please note this includes new builds, but not refugee acquisitions), 122 x 1bed, 128 x2 beds ,64 x3 beds, 3 x 4 beds, 1 x 5 bed of which 42 were adapted.

Table 14 - Housing Register applicants by bedroom need

Number of bedrooms needed	Number of applicants		
	Over 55	Under 55	Grand total
Band A - urgent housing need to move	44	224	268
1	31	83	114
2	9	62	71
3	4	50	54
4		24	24
5		5	5
Band A* - care leavers		20	20
1		20	20

Number of bedrooms needed	Number of applicants		
	Over 55	Under 55	Grand total
Band B - statutory housing need to move	278	1180	1458
1	207	400	607
2	61	317	378
3	8	331	339
4	1	114	115
5	1	14	15
6		3	3
7		1	1
Band C - housing options	956	3745	4701
1	800	1883	2683
2	119	1233	1352
3	35	510	545
4	2	102	104
5		14	14
6		3	3
Grand Total	1278	5169	6447

Appendix E: Sample net present value (NPV) evaluation of stock

