

Growth Strategy



Our Assets

Warrington Housing Association

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

This Growth strategy sets out our growth ambition in the context of the Association's vision and the external operating environment.

Our ambition to build is in recognition that delivering the right type of homes in the right areas is critical if the areas in which we work are going to thrive. Warrington Borough Council has identified that it needs to build an average of 945 homes per annum (377 of which need to be affordable) in order to meet predicted demand, yet thus far the Borough has been unable meet these targets.

Over the life of this plan, WHA aims to deliver over 100 new affordable homes to support the achievement of this target, with the aim of then delivering a further 100 new homes by 2026. We will do this in-line with key local strategies such as the Central 6 Regeneration Strategy.

We have the financial capacity and the funding in place to do this and our Growth strategy sets out in detail how we intend to do this in Warrington and beyond.

The growth strategy is intrinsically linked to our asset strategy, which is a statement of intent as to how WHA will manage and improve our homes to ensure they remain safe, secure, energy efficient and affordable and are homes which tenants are proud to live in, exceeding their expectations both now and in the future.

Zero Carbon

Further to this, we anticipate increasing expectations in respect of the environmental impact of our business. Across the UK, the homes we live in contribute 22% of the UK's emissions, so more needs to be done to stop our buildings from contributing to global warming. The Government Future Homes Standard for New Build consultation aims to set a target for all new homes to be zero carbon from 2026 and recent announcements have included a £50m pilot on the decarbonisation of social housing.

We will explore opportunities to work in partnership with others to develop means to improve quality and speed of producing new homes, such as Modern Methods of Construction and achieve zero carbon for our new homes by 2026, maximising grant opportunities.

CONTEXT

We continue to work closely with the National Housing Federation, Placeshapers and the CHANW networks to lobby and support Government to build the homes the country needs.

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Research, conducted by Heriot-Watt University on behalf of the National Housing Federation (NHF) and homelessness charity Crisis in 2018, concluded the country has a housing need backlog of around four million homes and England needs 340,000 new homes a year until 2031 to tackle the housing shortage, including 90,000 for social rent.

The coronavirus crisis has underlined the need for high quality, well-designed and affordable homes. During the crisis, our relationship with our home has changed dramatically – becoming a sanctuary for many and a prison for some – and home has never been more important to us than it is now.

We are supporting the NHF's #HomesAtTheHeart campaign which is calling for housing to be at the heart of the nation's recovery. A long-term, once-in-a generation investment in social housing that provides everyone with a safe, comfortable and affordable home can be the catalyst for social and economic recovery.

“Smaller associations are part of a wider association sector. If the sector as a whole does not demonstrate its effectiveness in releasing capacity it will face continuing scrutiny from government.” **JRF – Smaller housing associations' capacity to develop new homes (2014)**

Our growth strategy aligns with the ambition of the wider borough. Warrington Means Business is WBC's Growth and Regeneration Programme and WBC issued their draft Local Plan and Transport Plans in 2019 and is continuing to work with key partners, Homes England, Transport for the North and the Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership. Warrington's GVA has increased by 28% in the last 10 years. It continues to attract new commercial, industrial and retail business given its prime location within the northwest transport network and has ambitious plans for the future through the Local Authority and its partners, including Time Square, Central 6 and Omega.

OBJECTIVES

Our vision is to help make Warrington a great place to live, in which the potential of individuals and communities can be realised. This vision is underpinned by five strategic objectives:

- To remain a significant local provider of homes and housing solutions in Warrington and beyond.
- To prioritise the needs of people and place the creation of sustainable communities at the heart of our work.
- To ensure that achieving Social Value is an integral part of the way we think, the way we procure and the way we deliver.

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- To be an exceptional place to work that attracts, develops and nurtures our colleagues.
- To deliver a financially strong and well managed business, fit for today and prepared for tomorrow

In delivering on these objectives, and to ensure that the Association maintains its unique position, our emphasis will be on retaining our Warrington identity and the local flexibility that this brings. We will deliver controlled growth in housing units across Warrington and the immediately vicinity, whilst remaining sustainable and financially viable. We also recognise that growth is not reflected simply in numbers of units. We remain committed to offering a range of community based services beyond the provision of affordable housing and working across tenures, these services will be outcome based and will be able to clearly demonstrate our ethos and purpose.

RESOURCES AND DELIVERY

Housing and housing solutions are our core business. Our properties are our most valuable assets, without them we would not exist. However, it is important that we continue to protect and evolve our asset base to meet the needs of our current and future customers.

We have gained Homes England’s Investment Partner status, enabling us to bid for grant to support our new homes programme and recently brought development in house, appointing an experienced Development Lead.

- In supporting the development of our housing offer we will increase our stock ownership by at least 100 units by 2023, with the aim of then delivering a further 100 new homes by 2026 In order to achieve this we will: Continue to build our network and partnerships with Homes England, Local Authorities, Developers and Contractors
- Consider utilising our existing vacant land/ repurposing assets, land led and package deals, Section 106 affordable homes opportunities
- Consider a range of housing solutions beyond traditional affordable housing, such as; private sector acquisition, shared ownership, key worker accommodation, conversion of offices to residential use, mortgage rescue, rent to buy and managed services.
- Consider alternative methods of development and delivery, working with local partners, such as Warrington Borough Councils to help partners deliver their Housing Strategies
- Continue to reaffirm our commitment to the community focussed work we undertake.

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- In the pursuit of best value, we will review and remodel our community services, as required, and seek to more clearly understand the impact and outcome of our activities in this area.
- Within the context of protecting and maintaining our core purpose and objectives, we will consider other partnership proposals within clear evaluation parameters set out by the Board.

In order to deliver on our commitment to growth, we will review existing and future skills requirements within WHA. We will ensure that we use the most appropriate mechanisms to achieve maximum outcome. This will include exploring partnership relations with others, potential investment partnerships, the use of specialist consultants and internal skills development, as appropriate.

GOVERNANCE

As a key corporate priority, this strategy and the development financial assumptions have been approved by the Association’s Board. The Board has agreed appropriate delegations for the Executive team and any agents. The Board, and its relevant committees/ sub groups, will scrutinise and challenge programme delivery as required. The strategy will be refreshed every three years, or earlier, if there are any material legislative or regulatory changes and in line with changing market and financial conditions.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Warrington Borough Council Housing strategy and Central 6 regeneration masterplan
- WHA Business Plan 2020–23
- JRF, Smaller housing associations’ capacity to develop new homes (2014)
- Research, conducted by Heriot-Watt University on behalf of the National Housing Federation (NHF) and homelessness charity Crisis 2018
- MHCLG Future Homes Standard Consultation 2019
- NHF Development Guide for Smaller Housing Associations
- NHF Campaign #HomesAttheHeart

STRATEGY OWNERSHIP: WHA BOARD
STRATEGY LEAD: Director of Operations
REVIEW DATE: July 2023

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