

Growth Strategy

The Right Homes in the Right Places in the Right Way



1. Background and 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. In its most recent Housing Strategy (2024) Warrington Borough Council made a commitment to invest and intervene in the housing market to ensure that the Boroughs housing offer and the supporting infrastructure ensures that people have access to affordable, safe, low energy homes.

The Council have made a commitment to working with the Housing Association Sector to deliver on its targets. This strategy sets out how WHA will support the Council in its statutory duty. It also covers how we will deliver on our own regulatory expectations, the needs and expectations of our future customers, and at a scale that complements other demands on the business.

In order to meet future housing needs in the Borough, there is a commitment to the delivery of an average of 816 homes per annum, 433 of which will need to be affordable. We will actively contribute to this target through growth and effective reinvestment.

We will ensure that we build the Right Homes in the Right Places in the Right Way. Our focus will not be on numbers alone, but will incorporate an increased attention to quality, sustainability, fit and impact. We will:

- Provide homes that are safe, secure, energy efficient and affordable.
- Ensure that WHA offers homes which people are proud to live in, exceeding their expectations now and in the future.
- We will proactively manage our assets to meet customer, regulatory, and legal requirements.

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- Through our work, we will have a positive impact on climate change and sustainability.
- We will continue to grow by doing more of what we already do well.

In delivering on these objectives, 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 immediate vicinity, whilst remaining sustainable and financially viable.

Recognising that growth is not reflected simply in the number 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.

An Inclusive Approach

Equality and Diversity is essential for building inclusive, resilient communities. We will ensure that this approach is central to this strategy so that we can better meet the diverse needs of our future tenants, reflecting and serving the rich variety of backgrounds, identities, and circumstances that make up the communities we support.

A growth strategy rooted in equality ensures fair access to housing services and resources, actively addressing disparities and removing barriers that vulnerable or underrepresented groups may face. We know from experience that this approach will enhance decision-making by including voices that represent a wide range of experiences and is fully aligned to our legal and moral duties.

- Over the life of this plan, WHA aims to deliver 15 to 20 new affordable homes per annum.
- We will continue to build our network and partnerships with Homes England, Local Authorities, Developers and Contractors.

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- We will utilise our existing vacant land/ repurposing assets, land-led and package deals, Section 106 affordable homes opportunities.
- We will continue to grow our PRS management arm working alongside the Council's arms-length development company to provide Warrington residents with a best value, ethical private market offer.
- We will explore growth through stock rationalisation options with other RPs, where this is in line with our vision, beneficial to our wider business plan and to would add value to Warrington Customers.
- We will consider a range of other 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.
- 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.
- We will continue to affirm our commitment to the wider community social value we deliver but with a clear focus on the Right Homes in the Right Places in the Right Way.

Subject to Bi-annual Financial Capacity reviews, we will ensure that we have the financial capacity and the funding in place to do this and our Growth strategy sets out 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.

2. Zero Carbon

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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.

As a small Community based provider, we recognise that we are not in a position to be at the forefront of the decarbonisation agenda. However, in order to achieve zero carbon in line with regulatory and statutory expectations, we will explore opportunities to work in partnership with others to develop ways to improve quality and speed of producing new homes, such as Modern Methods of Construction.. We will learn from our own experiences, and from others to develop our approach.

Partnerships

We continue to work closely with the National Housing Federation, PlaceShapers and the CHANW networks to lobby and support the Government to build the homes the country needs. Research, conducted by Heriot-Watt University on behalf of the National Housing Federation (NHF) and homelessness charity Crisis concluded the country has a housing need backlog of around four million homes and England needs 340,000 new homes a year to tackle the housing shortage, including 90,000 for social rent.

We are supporting the NHF’s #longterm plan 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.

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. For absolute clarity, our growth ambitions will not be at the expense of our core business requirements in terms of maintaining our existing assets and supporting our customers.

We are a Homes England’s Investment Partner enabling us to bid for grant to support our new homes programme and in recent years have created our own in-house development expertise.

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,

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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/subgroups, 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 2024–27

MHCLG Future Homes Standard

NHF Development Guide for Smaller Housing Associations

NHF Campaign #planforhousing

STRATEGY OWNERSHIP: WHA BOARD

STRATEGY LEAD: Chief Executive

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