

A Housing Strategy for Halton 2026-2031

January 2026

Homes that Drive Growth, Opportunity, and Fairness for All



A Housing Strategy for Halton 2026-2031



Foreword

As the Council lead for housing strategy, it is a privilege to introduce the first Housing Strategy for Runcorn and Widnes in over a decade. This strategy is underpinned by evidence from a housing needs assessment that included many organisations with an interest in housing locally and wider afield and a survey sent to around 1 in 4 households across Runcorn and Widnes.

This strategy will now move to delivery as swiftly as possible.

This is an ambitious strategy for a 5-year period, but it is intended to lay the foundations for the longer term. Examples of new policies likely to be a focus in the short term include;

Bringing in Selective Licensing in parts of the Borough to raise standards in the private rented sector for the benefit of private tenants and their neighbours.

Establishing an Affordable & Specialist Housing Fund, through commuted sums from developer contributions to invest in local housing need.

Creation of a new Local Connections Policy that will help local people to access local home ownership - by having more priority.

Providing choice and dignity for people to live independently as they age, including increased older person's housing provision.

Publication of a Specialist Housing Prospectus, to improve the local housing offer for people most at need, such as survivors of domestic violence & abuse, young people leaving care & those experiencing homelessness. This will also help reduce the need for more costly out-of-borough provision or temporary accommodation.

Employment & Skills Opportunities, to ensure any workforce gaps are addressed to help the young into jobs and retraining for others, so we can deliver the housing our towns need.

We now need to turn this strategy into a detailed Delivery Plan so it can be realised and work on this has already commenced. We have urgent housing needs that need addressing and time is of the essence.



Cllr Phil Harris
Portfolio Holder for Housing Strategy.

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Listening to people who live in Halton

Our Housing Strategy has been shaped by what residents told us matters most. Through engagement and consultation, local people shared their views, concerns, and priorities for the future of housing in Halton. We've listened – and this strategy responds directly.

You will find these comments distributed throughout this document with how we are responding

Introduction

Our Housing Strategy is more than a plan to build homes — it is a blueprint for stronger, healthier, and more inclusive communities across Runcorn, Widnes, and the surrounding villages.

Shaped by the borough's industrial legacy, strong local identity, and strategic location within the Liverpool City Region, Halton faces a distinctive mix of housing challenges and opportunities. We are confronting affordability pressures, rising demand for supported housing, persistent inequalities between and within communities, the need to regenerate town centres, and the challenge of ensuring our housing offer can adapt to the needs of a changing population.

At the same time, Halton is well positioned to realise significant opportunities. As an active partner of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, we work through the Strategic Place Partnership to coordinate residential-led development and housing renewal, and the city region support our ambitions in this strategy.

We are already well underway in transforming our town centres, with ambitious regeneration projects backed by inward investment, and have established



robust master planning frameworks — shaped with input from local communities — to guide future growth. Halton also benefits from a good supply of affordable housing, which, alongside improvements to infrastructure and access to

employment, provides a strong foundation for delivering this strategy. Our place-based approach supports the creation of vibrant, inclusive, and climate-resilient

neighbourhoods, particularly in key areas such as West Runcorn and the Mersey Gateway growth corridor.

Our Housing Strategy goes well beyond increasing the number of homes in the borough — though we are clear about the proactive role the council must play in working with developers, housing associations, and communities to support this. For us, it's about ensuring new homes are genuinely affordable for Halton residents and offer meaningful choice and flexibility as people move through different life stages. From young adults struggling to access their first home, to families in need of more space, and older people seeking to right size or access suitable supported housing, our strategy supports people to find the right home at the right time.

Having your own front door is essential for independence, dignity, and stability — especially in Halton, where community ties are strong and supporting independent living is vital to improving health and wellbeing.

We recognise that housing is a critical foundation for ageing well, reducing pressure on health and care services, and enabling people to remain active members of their communities. But we also know housing alone isn't enough — Halton's residents deserve safe, attractive, and well-designed neighbourhoods, supported by good local services, green spaces, and transport connections. Whether it's improving links to employment areas like Daresbury Park and Sci-Tech Daresbury or revitalising town



centres like Halton Lea through mixed-use development, our approach integrates housing with wider priorities for economic growth, climate action, and social inclusion.

We have thought very carefully about how we deliver the priorities in our strategy. Times have changed, and the council cannot deliver everything alone, especially in the face of ongoing budget pressures and rising costs. More must be done with less, which means adopting new ways of working and prioritising approaches that are critical to meeting housing needs efficiently and effectively.

Preparing this Housing Strategy has been a co-productive process, shaped through collaboration with residents, housing associations, council officers, and a wide range of partners from across the public, private, voluntary, and community sectors.

It is built on a robust evidence base and a borough-wide household survey that has provided a clear picture of our current housing market, including data on housing need, affordability, supply, and demographic trends.

This foundation has helped us understand the pressures and gaps across different tenures and communities. Building on

this, we have engaged with stakeholders to explore where the housing market needs to be in the future and what improvements are required. These conversations have allowed us to identify shared priorities, uncover lived

experiences behind the data, and shape a strategy that is both evidence-led and people-focused. As a result, we're confident this strategy lays a strong foundation for

guiding our housing market in the direction it needs to go.

This Housing Strategy is fully aligned with the council's corporate objectives, supporting priorities such as improving health and wellbeing, building a strong and sustainable local economy, and providing targeted support for children, young people, and families. It is committed to tackling inequality, valuing community pride, and promoting environmental sustainability. By addressing these key areas, the strategy will contribute to delivering the council's broader vision for a healthier, fairer, and greener Halton.

A guiding principle of the Housing Strategy is improving the council's financial position by reducing revenue costs — such as those linked to homelessness and specialist placements — and increasing income through accelerated housing delivery.

This may involve 'invest to save' approaches and using council-owned land strategically, balancing capital receipts with long-term savings. Whilst the strategy focuses on the next five years, it is also a statement of ambition that lays the foundations for a longer-term horizon, setting the direction for housing in Halton well into the future.

Our three guiding principles

As a civic leader, the council will set clear direction, drive innovation, and use its assets effectively to deliver housing that meets local priorities.

Delivery is with our partners, building on trusted relationships to co-design and deliver the ambitions of this Housing Strategy.

We will prioritise early intervention and smart investment, preventing problems, improving outcomes, and ensuring value for money.



Successful delivery will require better coordination between 'People' and 'Place' functions, with any capacity or resourcing needs addressed in the Housing Strategy Delivery Plan.

The council is ready and focused on delivery, and we are committed to working with our partners to translate this strategy into meaningful action that makes a real difference in people's lives.

The strategy includes a clear approach to implementation and monitoring, while a separate delivery plan provides further detail on how we will deliver these ambitions and ensure progress is made at pace.

What is Affordable Housing?

Affordable housing is defined in national planning policy as homes for sale or rent for households whose needs are not met by the open market. Affordable housing is generally delivered and managed by a housing association, often referred to as a Registered Provider.

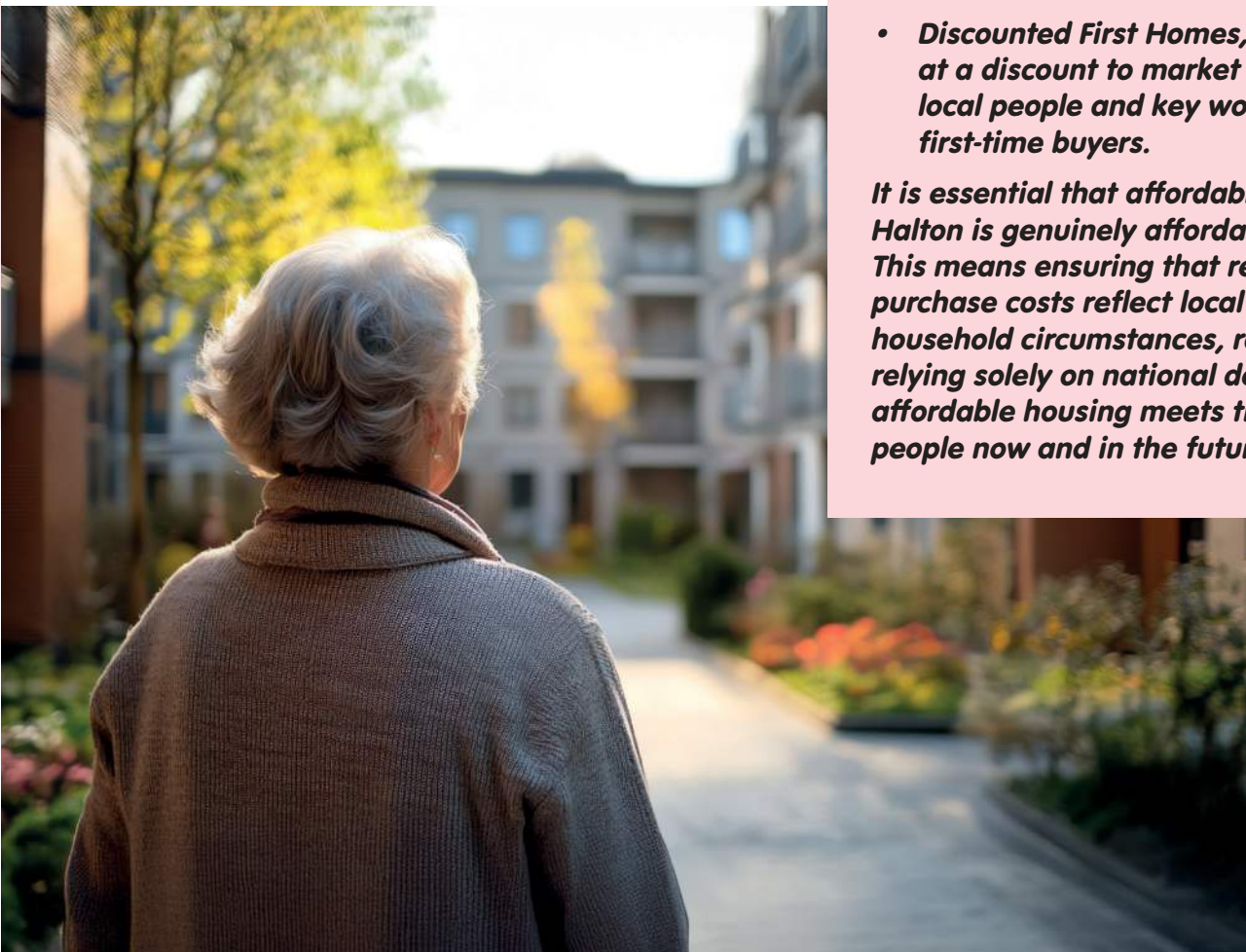
Affordable housing includes homes for rent:

- *Social Rent, typically set at around 50% of local market (private) rent levels.*
- *Affordable Rent, set at up to 80% of local market (private) rent levels.*

It also includes affordable routes into home ownership:

- *Rent to Buy, where households rent a home at a discounted rent for a fixed period, enabling them to save for a deposit to purchase the property.*
- *Shared Ownership, which allows households to buy an initial share of a home (usually between 25% and 75%) and pay a subsidised rent on the remaining share. Over time, purchasers can increase their ownership through a process known as "staircasing".*
- *Discounted First Homes, which are sold at a discount to market value to eligible local people and key workers who are first-time buyers.*

It is essential that affordable housing in Halton is genuinely affordable in practice. This means ensuring that rents and purchase costs reflect local incomes and household circumstances, rather than relying solely on national definitions, so that affordable housing meets the needs of local people now and in the future.



Our Vision for Housing in Halton

Priority Six of Halton Borough Council's Corporate Plan is "Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Communities – Supporting Halton's residents to live in decent and affordable homes, surrounded by safe and thriving communities."

Although Halton Borough Council no longer directly builds or owns housing, it continues to play a vital role in shaping the housing landscape through a wide range of statutory and non-statutory functions.

The Housing Strategy will provide a clear and coordinated framework for aligning these functions and activities to meet local needs, deliver on corporate priorities, and support thriving, inclusive communities. It will articulate the council's leadership role in housing delivery and set out how we will work collaboratively with partners and stakeholders across all sectors.

Informed by the council's Corporate Values Framework, the strategy will guide our approach, priorities, and actions. This is a five-year strategy, covering the period 2026 to 2031

Where housing sits in policy framework



You can find copies of the latest versions of these housing policy documents on the Council's website.
www.halton.gov.uk

A detailed action plan underpins the strategy and sets out what we will do, how we will do it, who will be responsible, and when it will happen. This level of clarity is essential to turning ambition into action. It ensures the strategy is not just a set of high-level intentions, but a practical and measurable programme of work that delivers real results for Halton's residents.

Our Vision

Our Housing Strategy will deliver access to quality, affordable, and sustainable homes. It will underpin a foundation for thriving, inclusive communities, stronger local economies, and greater opportunity and fairness for all.

Our Housing Strategy is centred on four priorities that embody our commitment to delivering far more than just homes—they drive economic growth, promote fairness, enhance quality of life, and foster healthier, more sustainable communities.

Driving Economic Growth Through Housing-led investment

We will use housing investment as a tool to support local economic priorities by aligning new development with key employment areas, attracting private investment, regenerating town centres, and creating vibrant mixed-use communities. We'll support local jobs and skills through housing projects, including apprenticeships and training.

Our Pledge... We will champion housing developments that revitalise our town centres and transform underutilised brownfield sites into vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhoods where people want to live, work, and spend time. We will work with housing and skills partners to close workforce gaps, supporting young people into employment and providing retraining opportunities for others, so we can deliver the homes our towns need.

Creating Inclusive Housing Markets to Promote Fairness

We aim to expand affordable housing options, from rented homes to accessible homeownership pathways. We will reform the Private Rented Sector, reduce homelessness, and make smarter use of developer contributions to deliver housing where it's most needed.

Our Pledge... We will improve the local housing offer for those most in need—including survivors of domestic abuse, young people leaving care, and people experiencing homelessness—while raising standards in the private rented sector to benefit tenants and their communities. We will also prioritise local people in access to affordable housing.

Supporting Independent Living, Empowering People, and Strengthening Communities

We'll introduce new housing models that enable people to live independently for longer and meet the needs of specific groups such as care leavers, survivors of domestic abuse, individuals with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, and those with mental health support needs. A new Specialist Housing Prospectus will guide the market to respond more effectively to these diverse local needs.

Our Pledge... Provide choice and dignity for people to live independently as they age, including increased older person's housing provision.

Promoting Healthy Homes, Thriving Communities and Resilient Neighbourhoods

Good housing is central to good health. We'll improve housing conditions—especially in the Private Rented Sector—drive energy retrofits, and develop healthy neighbourhoods through stronger partnerships between health, housing, and the council to build thriving communities.

Our Pledge... We will ensure homes are safe, healthy, and efficient, while fostering resilient neighbourhoods that provide a foundation for people to flourish.

Our Housing Market — At a Glance

4.3% POPULATION GROWTH		Total population grows modestly by 4.3% (5,653 people) from 131,417 in 2024 to 137,071 in 2042.	
2.4% EMPTY	Halton has 58,863 dwellings, 2.4% are empty, below the England average of 2.8%.	79% ARE HOUSES	Nearly 79% of homes are houses, 12% are flats, and 9% are bungalows.
68.7% ARE BAND A OR B	68.7% of dwellings in Halton are council tax band A or B.	60.5% OWN THEIR HOME	60.5% of households own their home.
14.4% PRIVATE RENT	14.4% rent privately.	25.1% IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING	25.1% live in affordable housing.
£160K	Lower Quartile house price in Halton is £112,500 and Median house price is £160,000, also well below the England Median of £280,000.	£676	Lower Quartile private rent is £676 per month, compared to England's £997
66% SATISFIED	66.6% are satisfied with home conditions, but dissatisfaction is highest among affordable housing tenants (39.5%) and private renters (36.2%).	14.7% HOME NON-DECENT	Approximately 14.7% of homes are non-decent, in line with the national average of 17%.
8.3% FAIL TO REACH STANDARD	About 8.3% of dwellings fail to reach the minimum Decent Homes Standard, slightly better than the 9.9% national figure.	141 AFFORDABLE HOMES NEEDED	Annual need for 141 affordable homes, with a recommended tenure split of 50% social rent, 27% affordable rent, and 23% affordable home ownership.
81.7% INCREASE IN PEOPLE 85+	People aged 85+ will increase by 81.7% by 2042.	62.8% INCREASE IN DEMENTIA CASES	Dementia cases among 65+ expected to rise by 62.8%.
22.1% HAVE A DISABILITY	22.1% of residents have a disability, higher than national average.	INCREASE TO 32,282 BY 2042	Estimated 28,749 people with disabilities in 2024, increasing to 32,282 by 2042.
NEED 2,790 OLDER PERSON UNITS	Need for 2,790 specialist older person units (sheltered/retirement) by 2042.	NEED 543 EXTRA CARE UNITS	In addition to the 2,790 older person units there is a need for 543 Extra care units for rent and purchase and 455 residential care units.

Driving Economic Growth through Housing-led Investment

Sewell Street, Runcorn



Building new homes

We are serious about accelerating housing growth. Halton Borough Council is committed to taking all necessary and timely actions to accelerate the delivery of new homes. Whether this requires short-term interventions to jumpstart development, targeted investment of resources, or using our statutory powers to assemble land and overcome barriers, Halton will act decisively and proactively. We have the strength, determination, and tools to ensure housing growth meets the needs of our community.

Delivering new homes is a key driver of economic growth by creating construction jobs, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce, and increasing local spending. It boosts council revenues through council tax, supports business growth by expanding the consumer base, and enables investment

in essential infrastructure and community services.

Well-planned housing development enhances property values and attracts further investment, fostering a sustainable and diversified

local economy. At the same time, it is vital that housing delivery generates wider social value — ensuring developments bring lasting benefits to local communities, such as skills, training, employment opportunities, and improved wellbeing.

The Accelerating Growth Project in Halton is a strategic initiative aimed at expediting the development and delivery of economic development, enhancing infrastructure, and improving service delivery within the borough.

By unlocking development sites, improving infrastructure, and aligning with the Local Plan, it helps make housing delivery more viable through investment, planning reform, and regional partnerships like the Liverpool City Region's Strategic Place Partnership.

We have a very positive track record of new homes being delivered in Halton. Over the past 10 years, over 4,000 additional homes have been delivered in Halton. This represents 120% of our target of 350 per year.

However, challenges remain — including infrastructure constraints, viability issues on some sites, and the need for continued investment and collaboration to bring forward development at the required pace. This strategy provides the framework for how we will deliver new homes.

The government has now set a target of 474 new homes to be delivered every year from 2027 (in 2026 the target is 350 new homes). With a clear Local Plan, strong partnerships across the Liverpool City Region, and strategic projects like the Accelerating Growth Project, the borough is well-placed to support sustainable housing growth.

The Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP), adopted in March 2022, sets out how development will be managed up to 2037, including clear requirements to ensure that infrastructure such as GP provision, schools, roads and public transport is planned alongside new development. In line with national policy, the Council will undertake a partial review of the DALP in 2027/28 to ensure that policies remain up to date, infrastructure delivery keeps pace with growth, and residents' concerns continue to be addressed. To guide and coordinate housing and infrastructure delivery, and where needed, the Council will develop area-specific Housing Delivery Plans.

This proactive approach will ensure that Halton's planning framework remains current and responsive to evolving local needs and national policy changes.

Open for business

During the life of this Housing Strategy, the council will establish a one-stop-shop to

support developers, landowners, social and private rental sector landlords, and investors. The Housing Delivery Hub will bring together critical information such as the local evidence base for housing need, planning policy, delivery routes, funding opportunities, land availability, and key contacts within the council. Our message to developers is simple: speak to us early, ask what we can do to support delivery, and work with us to shape development proposals that meet local needs.

To drive housing delivery, the council will take a more strategic and creative approach to land use.

This includes assembling land and repurposing underused or surplus assets, particularly in areas like Halton Lea, West Runcorn, and the Widnes Waterfront, where residential-led regeneration can support broader transformation goals. We will work with public sector partners to identify sites—such as former school land or NHS estates—with potential for redevelopment, and may use Compulsory Purchase Orders where ownership constraints block delivery.

These sites will be brought together into a Housing Opportunity Prospectus, showcasing their planning status and infrastructure investment plans to give support confidence to invest. Initial investment will be fronted by the council to prepare sites, with value captured through returns or disposals and potentially recycled through funding mechanisms like the Liverpool City Region Housing Investment Fund.



Sewell Street, Runcorn

The council's role in delivery

The council's new Housing Delivery Function will drive Halton's growth and support the Accelerated Growth Programme. Led by Regeneration and Asset Management services, it focuses on three key areas to unlock new housing development and investment:

1. **Delivering new homes on under-utilised council-owned and public estate land through proactive land release and disposal.**
2. **Managing an active pipeline of housing sites eligible for grant funding, with an emphasis on brownfield land and stalled projects.**
3. **Strengthening partnerships with strategic bodies, including Homes England, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, housing developers, and Housing Associations to secure growth and investment in Halton.**

In addition to these core activities, the Housing Delivery Function will also support wider Housing Strategy priorities, such as collaborating with other departments to address specialist housing needs and promoting innovation in housing design and construction, including Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), energy-efficient developments, and Build to Rent schemes.

Bringing more sites forward on brownfield land

You can find evidence on brownfield site use by viewing the latest Housing Land Supply Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) within the Councils Planning Policy Background Documents:

[Planning Policy Background Documents](#)

Brownfield land will be prioritised wherever viable for new development to protect green

spaces, support sustainable growth and bring underused land back into productive use. This approach makes efficient use of existing infrastructure and helps create vibrant, well-connected communities.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages the re-use of previously developed land for new homes. The DALP (Policy CS(R)3) states that an average of 30% of new residential development is to be built on previously developed land over the plan period.

Meeting brownfield development targets in Halton is challenging, with many sites facing contamination and viability issues. Despite this, the council is fully committed to bringing these sites forward—developments like Foundry Lane and the Kingsway site clearly demonstrate this ambition.

While some greenfield development is unavoidable, the council is determined to minimise its impact and ensure that any new homes are supported by the necessary infrastructure.

The council is exercising strong leadership and using all available legal powers, tools, and investment to prioritise the delivery of brownfield sites. Where

greenfield sites must be brought forward, the council will ensure any value generated is captured and reinvested to support the regeneration, development, and investment in brownfield land.

Since 2014, over 55% of all new homes have been built on brownfield land.

Transforming brownfield sites into desirable living spaces exemplifies Halton's proactive approach to urban regeneration & the desire to minimise the use of greenfield sites when it can.



Foundry Lane, Widnes



Three Sails Point, Widnes

The Liverpool City Region's Brownfield Land Fund offers Halton a vital opportunity to unlock challenging, sites for new housing and regeneration. By supporting site remediation and infrastructure, the fund helps make these areas viable for development.

The Kingsway Quarter development in Widnes has benefited from brownfield funding.

You said: "New homes should be built on brownfield land, not green spaces – and they should be well designed with good character."

We will act: We're committed to prioritising brownfield development and protecting valued green spaces. Our strategy supports high-quality design, creating attractive, well-planned communities that respect the borough's character.

Halton Borough Council secured a £517,500 grant from the government's Brownfield Land Release Fund to support the demolition of the Kingsway Leisure Centre and associated site preparation.

The Kingsway Quarter in Widnes is a major regeneration project aimed at revitalising a 5.9-acre brownfield site at the southern edge of Widnes town centre.

The site encompasses the former Kingsway Leisure Centre, the old police station and magistrates' court, and Broseley House. With the relocation of the leisure centre to Moor Lane, the Kingsway site has become available for redevelopment.

The Vision for the site is for residential-led development, with the opportunity to deliver new homes catering to families and older residents, with a focus on creating an intergenerational community.

Additionally, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has provided joint funding for pre-development work at Kingsway Quarter. As a council, we will continue to work with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to maximise Brownfield Land Fund.

Expanding Build to Rent and Affordable Private Rent in Halton

Build to Rent (BtR) is a type of housing specifically designed for long-term private rent (at open market rates), typically delivered and managed by institutional investors or specialist operators.

Unlike traditional for-sale homes, BtR developments are built with the intention of being rented out as a professionally managed, long-term investment.

These schemes characteristically include high-quality homes with consistent tenancy terms, on-site management, and shared amenities.

Affordable Private Rent in Build to Rent developments refers to homes offered at a rent typically set at least 20% below local market rates. These homes are designed to be more accessible to people who cannot afford full market rents but don't qualify for



social housing, helping to meet local housing needs while still being part of professionally managed, good-quality rental schemes.

We have already seen Build to Rent (BtR) being delivered in Halton and we believe more schemes can be built in the borough

To promote this model, we will develop an evidence base to shape policy — defining Affordable Private Rent in the local context, setting expectations around unit types, residential space standards, rent levels, management standards, tenancy terms, and rent increases.

We have identified several locations with strong potential for Build to Rent (BtR) development, based on key factors such as connectivity, regeneration opportunity, and proximity to major employment centres — all of which align with the Liverpool City Region BtR Study's evidence base, with potential support from the Brownfield Land Fund.

Runcorn Mainline Station offers excellent rail links to Liverpool, Chester, and London, making it ideal for young professionals and commuters seeking well-located, flexible rental housing.

Widnes Town Centre presents a strong opportunity for high-density, professionally managed Build to Rent homes that can boost footfall, support local businesses, and drive regeneration.

Sci-Tech Daresbury, a nationally significant innovation campus, creates ongoing demand for high-quality, tenure-flexible housing close to work.

Promoting housing-led growth through 'Housing Delivery Plans'

Housing is a key driver of the council's regeneration and growth ambitions.

In the Borough's Regeneration Strategy – Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan, new homes plays a central role in unlocking economic growth and shaping the future social and economic vitality of Halton. The plan identifies three priority locations for housing-led regeneration:

Halebank, West Bank, and Southern Widnes. The Local Plan allocates sites which can support aspirational housing including East Runcorn and North Widnes. Each of these areas presents unique

opportunities to support industrial growth, enhance employment hubs, and create thriving, sustainable communities.

As people's incomes and aspirations improve, it is vital that Halton offers a housing market that meets the full range of their needs.

Our local evidence base — including Housing Needs Assessments, population forecasts, and dwelling preferences — helps us understand both how different household types live now and the types of homes they aspire to in the future. This evidence informs tailored housing offers in each priority area.

To guide delivery, the council will develop area-specific Housing Delivery Plans. These will work alongside existing Local Planning mechanisms (such as S106 agreements and the Council's Infrastructure Plan) to set out the types of homes required, the quantity to be built, and the necessary infrastructure such as GP practices, schools and local services to

support vibrant communities. For example, Halebank will focus on family and affordable housing close to employment centres, while West Bank and Southern Widnes will deliver homes that align with industrial growth and wider regeneration objectives.

While affordable housing remains important, Halton's current housing market shows a clear imbalance.

Approximately 43% of dwellings fall into council tax bands A or B, reflecting a high proportion of affordable and lower-value

market-rented homes. Although this provides crucial options for lower-income households, it limits choices for those seeking higher-value homes. The shortage of such properties restricts opportunities for residents to

progress up the housing ladder and often forces people to look beyond Halton for better-quality homes.

A lack of housing diversity impacts the borough's ability to cater to a broad spectrum of incomes and lifestyles, and can deter higher-income professionals and investment — both essential to local economic growth. Additionally, the predominance of lower-band homes affects local revenue streams, which are critical for funding public services and infrastructure.

To address these challenges, the council will encourage mixed-use and mixed-tenure developments that provide a balanced housing offer.

This approach ensures a healthy mix of affordable, mid-market, and higher-value homes within regeneration areas, supporting a diverse community and sustainable economic development.

Increasing residential delivery in our town centres

Residents have expressed strong and widespread concern about the future of Halton's town centres. Like many town centres across the UK, they are under pressure from changing retail habits, economic uncertainty and the continued growth of online shopping, raising concerns about vacancy levels, footfall and long-term vitality.

Runcorn Old Town regeneration is backed by a combined £43.6 million investment—including £23.6 million from the government's Town Deal and an additional £20 million secured through the Plan for Neighbourhoods.

Introducing residential development into centres such as Runcorn Old Town, Halton Lea, and Widnes is key to revitalising these areas.

to live near services and public transport, this approach promotes more sustainable, low-carbon lifestyles and supports the long-term vibrancy and resilience of Halton's communities

Runcorn Old Town

Housing delivery is a central pillar of the regeneration of Runcorn Old Town, playing a vital role in the wider ambition to revitalise the area through the Reconnecting Runcorn initiative.

This regeneration investment is driving transformative change across the town. Alongside new cultural, educational, and economic infrastructure, delivering high-quality homes is key to creating a vibrant, inclusive town centre. The Mercia Place development, for example, will provide 66 affordable homes for over-55s on a prominent brownfield site, breathing new life into the high street and enhancing the

area's visual appeal and the proposals for new waterfront homes and green space to reconnect Runcorn Town Centre with its Mersey Waterfront will create attractive, accessible public spaces, enhance the local environment, and support a vibrant, well-connected community.

The council is actively working to bring forward other town centre sites, such as

Rutland Street, aligning housing growth with wider improvements to public spaces, connectivity, and community facilities. By enabling a mix of tenures and encouraging private sector investment, Halton aims to attract new residents, support local businesses, and build a resilient town centre economy.



Top left:
Local Centre
Masterplan

A growing town centre population supports local shops, cafés, and services by increasing footfall throughout the day and evening, helping businesses stay viable and attracting further investment. Repurposing vacant or underused buildings for housing also reduces dereliction, improves safety, and enhances the look and feel of our centres. By enabling more people

Halton Lea

Regenerating Halton Lea is complex and requires sustained public and private sector commitment. The area faces significant obstacles, including complex land assembly, a high proportion of affordable housing, and an outdated 1960s design that no longer meets modern standards. Current new housing developments have yet to reach the quality Halton aspires to, and the area remains low in value.

We believe that new housing is central to unlocking Halton Lea's potential and driving its transformation into a thriving, inclusive community.

Designated as a Strategic Residential Location in the Local Plan, the regeneration will deliver a diverse mix of homes – to help improve the local housing offer with private and mixed tenure – designed to support wellbeing, independence, and meet a range of community needs.

A flagship element is the planned upgraded Neighbourhood Centre, which integrates retail and community amenities with housing, health and social care services to enhance residents' quality of life. The project will bring forward £109 million of capital investment in Palacefields, including the redevelopment of the Local Centre and The Uplands, to provide 134 high-quality affordable homes, with provision for social rent.



Tricorn Park to Extra Care



Palacefields Local Centre

Widnes Town Centre

Widnes Town Centre is poised for a major transformation driven by the recently adopted Widnes Town Centre Regeneration Framework, which places increasing the number of residents at its core to animate and revitalise the heart of the town.

The Regeneration Framework identifies three housing development opportunities to support Town Centre Living - The Kingsway Quarter, Albert Square and The

You said: "Town centres need investment – too many shops are closing."

We will act: We're aligning new housing with town centre regeneration, supporting economic growth and revitalising our communities. New mixed-use developments will help bring vibrancy back to local centres.

Northern Gateway. These sites exemplifies our ambition that regeneration is housing focused, offering landmark opportunities

The regeneration vision recognises that vibrant, sustainable housing is central to creating a dynamic and resilient urban environment.

to deliver a high-quality, residential-led development on prominent gateway sites. These developments will introduce contemporary homes designed to support sustainable urban living while addressing local demand for both older-persons and younger family housing.

These developments, alongside improved public transport, cycling, and pedestrian links, will collectively drive a 20-year regeneration programme that transforms Widnes into a thriving, accessible, and attractive place to live, work, and invest. Housing delivery is thus a cornerstone of Widnes' regeneration, underpinning efforts to stimulate economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability while breathing new life into the town centre.

Supporting Neighbourhood Regeneration Activity

The Council will continue to support neighbourhood regeneration and housing renewal initiatives which improve the physical, social and economic conditions for local residents. It is recognised that area-based interventions can vary in scale – ranging from investment within existing housing stock and quick win environmental improvements – to more fundamental long term neighbourhood restructuring. Area-based housing regeneration proposals must be underpinned by evidence and a strong case for intervention, have broad support of partners and fundamentally be brought forward in consultation and coalition with local residents and the wider community.

Community-led development to accelerate housing supply

Halton is committed to supporting a more diverse and inclusive housing market by enabling self-build, custom-build, and community-led housing.

These models offer greater choice, empower

residents to shape their own homes and communities, and can help deliver more affordable and innovative housing solutions.

Halton will work to embed these approaches within wider housing delivery plans, where they align with planning policy and meet identified local needs.

With 115 households currently on Halton's self-build register and no plots presently available, the council will use its planning powers and partnerships to increase land supply for this sector.

You said: "Town centres need investment – too many shops are closing."

We will act: We're aligning new housing with town centre regeneration, supporting economic growth and revitalising our communities. New mixed-use developments will help bring vibrancy back to local centres.

This will include engaging with developers and landowners to encourage provision, supporting neighbourhood planning groups to develop relevant policies, and facilitating community-led housing models such as co-operatives and community land trusts. Self and custom build housing offers high design quality, supports SME builders, and delivers homes that are affordable relative to local incomes.

We will explore opportunities on publicly owned land working with Homes England — such as the Wharford Farm sites, identified as Allocations R67 and R38 in Halton's Local Plan. These sites are designated for future residential development and together, they have the potential to deliver approximately 600 new homes. We are exploring opportunities to bring forward serviced plots as part of wider housing deliver on these publicly owned sites to support diverse housing models such as self-build, custom-build, and community-led housing.

Gypsy and Traveller households

The Local Plan confirms the provision will be made for 10 additional pitches in Halton over the GTAA period 2017-2032.

This will meet the required need for 4 additional pitches and provision for up to 6

additional pitches for Gypsy and Traveller households that may not meet the planning definition 52.2. There is no identified need for plots for Travelling Showpeople.

There are currently no planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller sites. The site (H1767) at Warrington Road, Runcorn was completed in 2015/16 for 24 total pitches.

Unlocking local employment and training opportunities through housing investment

We are committed to maximising the social value of housing investment by embedding local employment, skills development, and apprenticeship opportunities into the delivery of new homes.

A great example of integrated development and education is the Kingsway Quarter redevelopment.

The council has identified opportunities for collaboration with Riverside College. The project aims to provide hands-on learning opportunities in construction, site management, and related trades. This integration of education and development will support pathways into sustainable careers for local young people and adults.

We are developing a Social Value Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which will set out clear expectations for developers to contribute to local employment outcomes, including apprenticeships and on-site training placements.

By integrating social value into planning obligations, the council seeks to

ensure that development projects deliver tangible benefits to the community, such as

job creation, skills development, and support for local businesses.

This initiative builds upon Halton's existing Social Value Policy Statement and Procurement Framework, which emphasise the importance of delivering measurable social benefits through targeted employment and training opportunities.

The SPD will provide detailed guidance on how these principles should be applied within the planning context, ensuring that social value considerations are systematically incorporated into development proposals.



Sci-Tech Daresbury

Creating Inclusive Housing Markets to Promote Fairness

An inclusive housing market ensures that people from all walks of life — whether on low incomes, in insecure employment, facing health challenges, or simply starting out — can access a safe, secure and suitable home. Housing is more than just somewhere to live; it underpins access to education, employment, healthcare and community life. When people are well housed, they are more likely to thrive socially and economically, and less likely to experience poor health, unemployment or social isolation.

By offering a mix of tenures — such as social rent, affordable private rent, shared ownership and outright sale — and by ensuring homes are of good quality and in the right locations, barriers that exclude people from opportunity are reduced. Affordable homes in Halton are allocated through clear, transparent and needs-based processes, with priority given to households whose needs are not met by the market and who have a local connection to the borough, in line with the Council's allocations policy and nomination arrangements with housing providers. This helps ensure that new

deepens — making it harder for people to improve their circumstances and for places to prosper.

So when Halton commits to inclusive housing, it is not just about building homes — it's about creating the foundation for healthier lives, stronger communities, and a more equal borough.

Delivering more social rented homes for local people who cannot afford to buy or rent a home

Halton has a strong affordable housing market, with affordable homes making up 25.1% of all housing.

Nearly 40% of homes support lower-income households through social or market rent, rising to almost 60% in Central Runcorn. Additionally, Halton's Median house price is 4.6 times local earnings — more affordable than neighbouring areas — reinforcing its position as a relatively affordable housing market.

Despite this, many households still struggle to find suitable and affordable homes.

When access to affordable housing is limited, people often have no choice but to turn to the Private Rented Sector — where costs may be higher and quality can be inconsistent. As our population grows, there remains a clear need to increase the supply of affordable housing, while also improving standards in the Private Rented Sector, to ensure everyone has access to safe, secure, and appropriate accommodation.

64.6% of residents in our 2024 household survey told us that delivering more social rented homes for local people who cannot afford to buy or rent a home should be an important priority in our Housing Strategy.

homes are meeting identified local housing needs and supporting balanced, sustainable communities.

Inclusive housing markets support wider social and economic outcomes: they help children achieve

better educational outcomes, enable older residents to live independently for longer, support workforce retention, and create more resilient, diverse neighbourhoods. Without inclusive housing markets, inequality

Our evidence base tells us there is a need for 141 affordable dwellings each year.

And so we have a robust affordable housing policy in place to help deliver against this strategic need. Under the Local Plan, sites of

Where affordable housing is provided, our overall recommended affordable housing tenure split for those homes is — 50% social rent, 27% affordable rent, and 23% affordable home ownership — this is rooted in robust local evidence and reflects the needs of Halton's communities now and in the future.

Halton already benefits from a relatively strong supply of social housing compared to many areas, but we know the demand for genuinely affordable homes remains high. That is why we are committed to delivering more social housing for local people, alongside other affordable options, to create balanced, sustainable communities.

Our approach ensures we make best use of our existing stock while meeting the full range of housing needs identified through our evidence base.

10 or more homes — except brownfield sites — must include a mix of property types that address local needs, with affordable housing requirements set at 20% for Strategic Housing Sites and 25% for greenfield developments.

Delivering affordable homes

Housing associations are not just delivery agents — they are key partners in achieving our shared vision of a fair, inclusive, and resilient housing system for Halton.

We greatly value the vital role housing associations play in Halton — not only as providers of affordable homes, but as trusted, long-term partners

committed to improving lives and supporting the council in tackling some of the borough's most pressing challenges. With over 20 active housing associations operating in Halton, many of which have deep local roots, their contribution goes well beyond building homes. These organisations are embedded



Queens Court, Widnes

You said: "We need more affordable housing and help for young people to get onto the property ladder."

We will act: We're expanding affordable housing options and creating more accessible homeownership pathways. Our strategy aims to make the housing market work better for local people, including young households and first-time buyers.



Cottage Hospital, Runcorn

in our communities and work closely with us to deliver high-quality housing, regenerate neighbourhoods, and promote social inclusion.

Housing associations are essential to ensuring that vulnerable residents have access to safe, secure, and appropriate housing. Many provide supported accommodation for older people, people with disabilities, and those facing or recovering from homelessness. They play a key role in helping residents live independently,

delivering tailored support services that improve wellbeing and reduce pressure on health and social care. Their commitment to long-term stewardship also ensures that neighbourhoods remain well-managed and sustainable over time.

Through the Halton Housing Partnership, we maintain a strong, collaborative relationship with our housing association partners. This forum allows us to share intelligence, align investment plans, and respond collectively to emerging housing needs. It also provides a platform for strategic discussion as we navigate future changes in funding and delivery models.

Housing associations in Halton have made strong use of the Social and Affordable Housing Programme, securing investment to deliver much-needed new housing.

The 2025 Spending Review announced a

major expansion of the Social and Affordable Housing Programme, with £39 billion allocated over 10 years (2026-2036), up from £12.3 billion in the current programme. This includes an additional £10 billion to boost affordable housing delivery in this Parliament. This increased investment presents a significant opportunity for Halton.

We will work with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and housing associations to unlock funding, support viable schemes, and ensure delivery aligns with local needs and priorities.

However, during the lifetime of this strategy, the way affordable housing is funded may change, with the devolution of housing funding to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. This may bring a shift toward more regionally planned investment aligned with city region priorities. We are working closely with housing associations to understand and respond to these changes, ensuring that Halton continues to benefit from new affordable homes and that local needs remain a priority.

In 2025, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced a significant increase in funding for the Social and Affordable Housing Programme to accelerate the delivery of affordable homes across the country. Halton welcomes this challenge and is ready to step up—working with our partners to secure funding, unlock sites, and deliver the high-quality, affordable homes our residents need.

We are committed to delivering affordable housing through multiple routes, including planning obligations on new developments and the Social and Affordable Housing Programme led by housing associations:

Planning obligations are secured through Section 106 (S106) agreements, which are legal agreements between developers and the council. These require developers to provide affordable housing directly or contribute funding toward it as part of new housing projects.

The Social and Affordable Housing Programme is a government funding programme that enables housing associations to build new affordable homes. It helps bridge the gap between development costs and what residents can afford, supporting a range of tenures from affordable rent to shared ownership. Without this funding, many schemes simply wouldn't be viable.



Finding new ways to fund affordable housing

Delivering more affordable housing in Halton means using a variety of funding sources, from traditional grants and loans

As part of this Housing Strategy, we will actively explore and engage with alternative funding partners to unlock investment, support innovation, and ensure a pipeline of affordable homes that meet local need.

to newer options like investment from institutions and social impact finance. While loans have been the main way to fund affordable homes, new methods such as green bonds and sustainability-linked

loans are becoming more common. These involve investors funding affordable homes in exchange for steady rental income, often supported by housing benefits. Rents are usually linked to inflation, providing reliable returns. This approach attracts investors who want both financial returns and to make a positive social impact, especially those focused on environmental and social responsibility.

Creating more affordable homeownership pathways for local people

While Halton has a substantial affordable rented housing sector, expanding homeownership opportunities remains an important focus across the borough.

You said: "Support families, young people, older people, and those facing homelessness or domestic abuse."

We will act: We're introducing housing models tailored to vulnerable groups, helping people live independently and with dignity. A new Specialist Housing Prospectus will help providers meet the needs of groups like older people, care leavers, and survivors of domestic abuse.

In Central Runcorn for example, affordable housing accounts for over 40% of the market, and when combined with private

rented homes, nearly six out of every ten properties are rented. Some areas still require more affordable housing options — both for rent and ownership — while others face a lack of diversity in their housing market. Expanding homeownership opportunities will help create a more balanced and inclusive housing landscape across the borough.

Increasing access to affordable home ownership is essential to ensure that local people can remain and put down roots in their communities, supporting first-time buyers and key workers while also contributing to wider economic growth.

Enabling more residents to buy a home of their own can improve financial security, strengthen community stability, and help retain essential workers such as teachers, health professionals, and care staff. In our 2024 household survey, 62.3% of respondents felt that it was important to help local first-time buyers to get onto the housing ladder and 55.9% felt that delivering more low-cost home ownership solutions such as shared ownership or rent to buy for local residents was a way to do that.

We are actively collaborating with our partners to expand the supply of shared ownership and other affordable home ownership options secured through Section 106 agreements.

To ensure that local people benefit most from affordable homeownership opportunities (shared ownership, rent to buy and discounted first/starter homes), we will be consulting on the development of a Local Connection Policy. This policy will apply to homes delivered via S106 and we have already started to implement it with

Our evidence base confirms that a home should cost no more than £117,117 to be affordable to households on Lower Quartile incomes and £156,156 to households on Median incomes.

The average price of a home in Halton in 2024 was £191,373.

discounted first homes. We recognise this policy will help prioritise access for residents with strong ties to Halton, supporting community stability and ensuring that new homes serve those who live and work in the borough.

We will also improve access to information and support for those looking into opportunities for affordable routes to homeownership. Those who may benefit include young people and families looking to remain close to support networks, key workers who provide essential local services, and veterans seeking to settle in the community after service.

Maximising the use of affordable housing contributions

We have a strong track record in securing affordable housing on site, achieving 34% delivery across all sites in 2023/24 — well above the typical policy targets of 20% or 25%.

With an already significant affordable housing sector in place, we now have an opportunity to adopt a more flexible and strategic approach.

While delivering affordable housing on site will remain our preferred and default

approach, the council recognises that in certain circumstances — such as where site constraints, location, or housing mix considerations make on-site provision less effective — it may

be more appropriate to accept commuted sums instead. This commuted sum could be for all or part of affordable housing requirement for a development. This will be

determined on a site-by-site basis and early engagement with the council is encouraged.

In these cases, the council will secure financial contributions, equivalent to the costs of delivering affordable housing on site and direct them into a dedicated Affordable and Specialist Housing Needs Fund. This fund will be used strategically to deliver affordable housing and increase housing choice in locations where it can have the greatest impact.

This approach will allow the council to work closely with housing associations and other partners to direct investment where it is most needed and the fund will be structured to recycle investment, ensuring that the benefits are sustained over the long term.

Inspired by successful models used by other local authorities, we will develop a clear framework to manage the fund, drawing on best practice in governance, transparency, and value for money.

Some of the options on how we may spend our Affordable and Specialist Housing Needs Fund:

Supporting specialist affordable housing.

Bringing empty homes back into use for affordable housing.

Regeneration projects delivering affordable housing.

Purchasing land to enable the development of affordable housing.

Purchasing an equity stake in open market properties to support affordable home ownership.

Creating adaptations or extensions to properties for disabled people to stay in their own homes.

Supporting rightsizing in social housing.

Providing a support service for children coming out of care to sustain a tenancy.

Home extensions or loft conversions to create larger homes for families that foster.



Okell St, Runcorn

Making the best use of existing affordable housing

While Halton continues to build more affordable homes, we are equally committed to making the best use of our existing affordable housing stock—ensuring it effectively meets the needs of local people now and in the future, across all stages of life.

Through the Halton Housing Partnership (HHP), we can work closely with housing association partners to make the most of Halton's existing affordable housing stock.

We will look to strengthen the role of this partnership and encourage more housing associations with homes in Halton to participate. By using funding from commuted sums and other sources, we can unlock more value and better meet local needs through measures such as:

- Exploring the potential for home extensions or loft conversions to create larger family homes where needed;
- Working more closely and positively with our private sector and social housing landlords developing a rightsizing offer to support older residents who wish to move from larger homes into more manageable properties.
- Supporting tenants with pathways to home ownership, including options to move into alternative properties more suited to their circumstances, and freeing up their home for another family.

Raising standards in the Private Rented Sector — A fairer deal for private renters

At an average rent of £676pcm in 2024, Halton's Private Rented Sector is relatively affordable compared to £693pcm across the Liverpool City Region and £776pcm in the North West. Because of these lower rents, many people who cannot access affordable or social housing are likely relying on the Private Rented Sector, making it a vital part of the local housing system.

However, unlike social housing, the Private Rented Sector is not subject to the same level of regulation.

While many landlords offer well-managed homes, others do not, and poor management can have a serious impact on tenants' health, stability, and wellbeing.

Too many tenants face insecure tenancies, unaffordable rents, or poorly maintained homes — with the burden falling most heavily on those already facing disadvantage.

We want to work positively and constructively with private landlords. A better-regulated, more professional Private Rented Sector will reduce health inequalities, support educational attainment, and offer people the dignity and security of a decent home. By raising standards and expectations, we can help ensure the sector plays a positive role in delivering safe, inclusive, and sustainable communities.



Over the lifetime of this strategy, we will develop a deeper understanding of the Private Rented Sector to better target investment and resources.

In 2001 the Private Rented Sector was 6.5%, in 2021, it is home to 14.4% of all households although this figure increases to over 20.6% in Central and Southern Widnes.

Improving the quality, stability, and affordability of private renting is essential to creating a fairer housing system.

This evidence will examine how the sector is evolving, who lives there, the challenges they face, what influences landlords' decisions, and how poor housing management can affect wider council services — for example, how might it be contributing to increased pressure on

housing and support services? This insight will shape future interventions and ensure our approach is focused, effective, and responsive to local needs.

Delivering the Renters' Rights Bill locally

The Renters' Rights Bill is legislation aimed at strengthening protections for tenants, including clearer rights around repairs, eviction processes, and security of tenure. It seeks to create a fairer rental market by improving transparency and ensuring landlords uphold minimum standards for safe and secure homes.

As this strategy was being developed, the Renters' Reform Bill was introduced — representing the most significant transformation of the Private Rented Sector in a generation.

This landmark legislation is designed to enhance tenant rights, raise housing standards, and promote a more secure and balanced rental market.

We welcome these reforms and are committed to supporting both tenants and landlords to ensure the changes deliver meaningful improvements locally.

We will closely monitor the Bill's implementation in Halton, assess its impact, and develop an action plan to maximise the benefits while addressing any emerging challenges or unintended consequences.

To ensure that tenants fully understand their rights as well as their responsibilities and to forge better relationships with their landlords.

We are developing dedicated tenant-facing web pages focused on safer renting within the Private Rented Sector.

This new online resource will provide clear, practical advice and important information to help tenants understand their rights and responsibilities. Additionally, the pages will offer guidance and support to assist individuals in finding a suitable home, making the renting process more transparent, accessible, and secure for everyone involved.

We will take a robust and uncompromising approach to enforcement against landlords and agents who fail to comply with legal standards or who put tenants at risk.



Introducing Landlord Accreditation

A small Landlord Accreditation Scheme exists in Halton, but we are keen to expand this. It

will have a dedicated post which will also establish additional support mechanisms for tenants.

We offer a Bond Guarantee Scheme that helps with tenancy deposits for people entering private renting. This scheme provides financial assistance to cover the deposit, effectively acting as a guarantee to landlords, particularly useful for those who might struggle to afford a full deposit upfront.

Landlord Accreditation is a voluntary programme run by local authorities to encourage and recognise good standards in the Private Rented Sector.

Halton will establish a Landlord Accreditation Scheme that promotes and recognises good standards in the Private Rented Sector. The scheme will set clear expectations around property condition and management and offer training and support to participating landlords.

We will work alongside accredited landlords to create tailored pathways for groups facing barriers, such as people with disabilities, refugees, care leavers, or survivors of domestic abuse to better equip them to offer their homes to these client groups who are often in housing need.

We will explore a range of incentives and rewards — such as public recognition, access to council support, access a range of grant-funded energy efficiency schemes to residents including ECO4, LAD3, and the Warm Homes Local Grant — to encourage landlords to join. This will help raise standards, improve landlord-tenant relationships, and build a more professional and trusted rental market in Halton.

Working more closely with our housing associations

There is significant potential to forge stronger, more purposeful partnerships between local housing associations and the Private Rented Sector in Halton.

Many homes in the Private Rented Sector are located in the same neighbourhoods as social housing, meaning issues such as poor property conditions, tenant turnover, or anti-social behaviour can affect the broader community — including housing association tenants. Despite this proximity, coordination between housing associations and the Private Rented Sector has historically been limited.

To unlock this opportunity, we will actively explore how the Private Rented Sector impacts the operations and communities of housing associations, and the appetite, capacity, and specific roles housing associations could play in supporting Private Rented Sector improvement, particularly on tenant engagement.

This may include shared neighbourhood management, joint interventions, tenancy sustainment initiatives, or even direct involvement in acquiring or managing Private Rented Sector stock to raise standards. We will use the Affordable and Specialist Housing Fund to unlock opportunities and develop a neighbourhood pilot project.

You said: “Tackle inequality, create apprenticeships, and support local skills.”

We will act: We'll use housing investment to support local jobs, training, and economic opportunity — working with developers to provide apprenticeships and build prosperity across Halton.

Tackling homelessness and housing insecurity

Addressing homelessness and improving housing security are fundamental to creating a more inclusive and equitable housing market.

When people have stable, safe, and affordable homes, they are better able to participate fully in their communities, access employment, and improve their overall well-being. Tackling these challenges not only helps to reduce inequality but also fosters social cohesion and economic resilience. By prioritising support for those most vulnerable, we can build a housing system that works for everyone — offering opportunity, dignity, and security to all residents.



Reducing homelessness successfully involves far more than simply providing someone with a home. Homelessness is often the result of complex and interrelated factors — such as poor mental or physical health, experiences of trauma, domestic abuse, substance misuse, financial hardship, or a lack of support networks. Addressing homelessness effectively therefore requires a holistic, person-centred approach that includes early intervention and prevention, timely advice and advocacy, access to health and wellbeing services, employment and skills

support, and coordinated case management. Sustainable solutions are built on partnerships across housing, health, social care, criminal justice, and the voluntary sector to ensure people receive the tailored support they need not just to exit homelessness, but to avoid returning to it.

Our Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy is currently under review and will be published following this Housing Strategy. The review is focused on making Halton a borough where:

- People are provided with early, targeted advice and intervention to prevent the loss of their accommodation.
- Effective action is taken in a timely manner to relieve homelessness where it has not been preventable. People are supported with the issues that can lead to homelessness, to prevent repeat homelessness.
- Stakeholders work together to protect and increase local housing options.

The Housing Strategy is fully aligned to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and will set out in more detail in respect of

accommodation needs, including different age groups. This will prioritise improving access to safe, stable accommodation and will be updated to reflect the emerging national homelessness strategy, expected to be published by the government in autumn 2025, which is anticipated to set out new priorities and guidance for tackling homelessness and improving prevention efforts. Any new accommodation requirements will feed into the Specialist Housing Prospectus.

Increasing access to temporary accommodation

We will explore a mix of traditional and innovative options to expand the supply of temporary accommodation. This includes leasing properties from private landlords, purchasing and developing dedicated temporary accommodation units, and working with housing associations. Modern methods of construction (MMC) and institutional investment in modular housing are also being considered to provide flexible, cost-effective housing on underused land.

You said: "Housing and health are linked — make sure homes support wellbeing."

We will act: Our strategy puts healthy homes at the heart of thriving neighbourhoods. We'll target improvements in housing conditions, support energy retrofits, and strengthen partnerships between housing and health services.

homeowners who have spare rooms. These temporary arrangements create mutually beneficial opportunities: the person in need gains safe, affordable accommodation, while the homeowner may receive financial support, practical help around the home, or companionship. Homeshare schemes

can help reduce social isolation, make better use of existing housing stock, and expand housing options for both younger and older residents.

Using the Private Rented Sector

40.9% of respondents in our 2024 household survey felt that using the Private Rented Sector to support households that are homeless should be an important priority in our Housing Strategy.

The Private Rented Sector is used to support people who are homeless. We want to extend this option to help us

to meet urgent housing needs. We will consider various schemes such as rent deposit guarantees, direct leasing, and incentive payments to encourage landlords to provide homes to those facing homelessness.

Renting out rooms

We will explore innovative room-renting models, such as homeshare schemes, where people seeking affordable housing are paired with



Independent Living, Empowering People, and Strengthening Communities

Having the right accommodation — safe, accessible, and suited to individual needs — enables people to live independently behind their own front door for as long as possible.

58.9% of respondents in our 2024 household survey felt that building more specialist housing for people with specific needs such as a physical disability or learning disability should be an important priority in our Housing Strategy.

This not only reflects what most people want — to remain in familiar surroundings, with dignity and autonomy — but also delivers better health and wellbeing outcomes, and reduces reliance on costly care services for the council by preventing or delaying

the need for more intensive support.

Our evidence base highlights significant and growing challenges in Halton linked to disability, dementia, and mental health. A substantial proportion of residents live with long-term health conditions, many of whom face mobility impairments, mental health issues, or age-related illnesses. The rising numbers of older people, particularly those with dementia and learning disabilities, underline the urgent need for more accessible, adaptable, and inclusive housing options.

These residents often require specialist support and environments that promote independence, safety, and wellbeing. Addressing these challenges through inclusive housing design, tailored services, and embedding accessibility standards into planning and delivery is essential — not just for improving lives, but also for creating a more sustainable and cost-effective care system, and enabling vulnerable residents to remain active members of the community.

We want to be much clearer about our accommodation requirements

We have a clear understanding of the types of accommodation our communities need, but we recognise the importance of communicating this more effectively to the market — not just what is needed, but also where and when it is needed. To address this, we will develop a Specialist Housing Prospectus that sets out detailed, evidence-based requirements for specific types of housing.

This Prospectus will provide clarity for developers, investors, and housing associations, aligning with the Local Plan Review to ensure that Section 106 contributions are better targeted prioritising

clearly identified needs over general provision. As part of this work, we will also implement the Housing Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism – Cheshire and Merseyside, including a refresh of the Market Position Statement in 2026. Together, these actions will ensure a more coordinated, transparent, and evidence-led approach to delivering the right homes in the right places for those who need them most.

One Halton is a local partnership that brings together the council, NHS, GPs, third sector, health providers, and hospitals to deliver more collaborative and joined-up health and care services. The partners are committed to improving the whole system by sharing resources and tackling Halton's biggest health challenges together. The One Halton Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027 outlines their joint approach to reducing health inequalities across the borough.

Our priorities are:

- An increase in 'own front door' housing for adults (18-64) with learning disabilities and autism, focusing on self-contained units within safe, supported environments;
- More core and cluster schemes to meet rising demand from

individuals with complex needs moving from shared to individual tenancies;

Our evidence base recommends that 5% of newbuild homes need to meet the M4(3)(b) wheelchair accessible standard.



- Housing with assistive living and technology-based support for adults (18-64) with physical disabilities, supporting their strong preference for independent living and low demand for residential care;
- Expanded supported living options to enable the relocation of adults (18-64) with mental health needs from out-of-area placements;
- Enhanced 'Home First' services to help older people (65+) live independently with care, increasing capacity for dementia care across residential and nursing settings;
- A need for 12-15 units of own front door accommodation for younger adults with neurodiversity diagnosis;
- Solutions for children with disabilities where housing is not suitable and families are in danger of being split up;
- Transitional accommodation option for young people leaving care; and
- Futureproofing the accommodation offer to enable use of technology.

Hazelhurst, Runcorn



There are significant gaps in our current accommodation offer. Much of the current

Our priorities for people drive how we approach solutions:

- ***Providing the right support, for the right person, at the right time, and reduce the use of residential care and inappropriate admissions to hospital.***
- ***Supporting people to remain living in Halton or return to Halton.***
- ***Enabling people to live in their own home, if possible or for as long as possible.***
- ***Ensuring that people live independently in their home and interdependently within their neighbourhoods.***
- ***Creating choices about where people want to live, how they live and whether they rent or own their property.***

supply of specialist accommodation is shared and outdated. This is not compatible with what clients want, which is their own front door, better accessibility, and their own space.

The current model is dispersed, and 'core and cluster' models are the preferred options where self-contained homes (the cluster) are grouped around a central building (the core) that provides shared facilities and on-site support services. This approach allows residents to live independently while still having access to communal spaces and staff support when needed.

We will undertake a thorough accommodation needs assessment and apply an 'Invest to Save' approach — reviewing existing provision to identify opportunities for remodelling, decommissioning, or developing new services that better meet changing needs, while also considering the cost implications for the council and its partners.

We will consolidate our existing evidence on accommodation needs into a clear, accessible Specialist Housing prospectus outlining the requirements for each client group. This will enable delivery partners to fully understand local demand and priorities to enable early conversations for inclusion/

commissioning specialist accommodation within new developments. All proposals for specialist accommodation must be brought forward in consultation and partnership with the appropriate Council Commissioning Team (such as Children and Young People or Adult Social Care) and meet Halton model of care and support and housing standards.

Delivering what we need

By working collaboratively with partners, we will create diverse housing options that empower individuals to choose where and how they live — whether renting or owning — and ensure services are aligned to deliver improved outcomes for people with specific needs.

We believe that there are three strategic partners that can help us to deliver our housing offer:

Housing associations

Through the Halton Housing Partnership, we will develop a long-term delivery strategy with housing association partners.

Grounded in an Invest to Save ethos, this strategy recognises that getting housing right can reduce care needs and associated costs. We will use the Affordable and Specialist Housing Fund to provide upfront investment in appropriate accommodation, with the intention of repaying it over time through the savings generated in care and support services.

Key elements include:

- Ongoing market engagement between commissioning services and housing associations to align affordable housing delivery with the needs of specialist client groups;
- Pre-allocation of new homes at the planning stage to ensure they meet individual household needs such as adaptations built into new homes

bespoke to individual household needs and specifically focused on children and supporting families;

- Leveraging contributions for affordable housing tailored to people with disabilities or health needs;
- Work in partnership to jointly develop specific delivery arrangements for schemes to reduce risk for associations;
- Offering financial incentives such as grants or low-interest loans to encourage specialist housing development from the Affordable and Specialist Housing Fund; and
- Collaborating to address wider housing demands, including optimising the use of existing stock where appropriate.

• ***The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 aims to improve the quality and oversight of supported housing by giving local authorities greater powers to regulate providers and enforce minimum standards. It introduces a national licensing scheme and requires providers to meet clear criteria to ensure safe, suitable, and well-managed accommodation for vulnerable residents.***

Private supported housing

Halton's supported housing sector includes many private providers — some delivering excellent services, while others fall short of expected standards. Despite this variation, all providers often access higher rates of housing benefit, which underscores the need for ensuring

value and quality of care and support for residents and the community.

Using the powers granted by the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 as a foundation, the council intends to take a proactive approach: retaining and supporting the high-quality providers, encouraging their growth, and attracting more reputable providers to the borough. At the same time, we will rigorously address poor-performing

providers, ensuring they improve or exit the market to protect residents' wellbeing and community stability.

To achieve this, we will:

- Conduct a comprehensive audit of all exempt accommodation in Halton, reviewing service quality, client outcomes, and value for money.
- Implement a robust quality assurance framework with regular inspections and self-assessments.
- Develop a provider charter setting clear expectations and standards for supported housing.
- Create a list of 'approved' or 'trusted' providers, with council endorsement and promote good providers in council literature and websites to build their reputation with potential funders and landlords.

Where high-quality providers operate, we will support their expansion to meet demonstrated demand for additional accommodation. This may include access to capital funding from our Affordable and Specialist Housing Fund, offer planning support service or named contact within the planning team to help trusted providers navigate planning applications for new schemes or conversions.

PossAbilities is a social enterprise that supports vulnerable people so they can live the life they choose. It supports people with learning disabilities, young people leaving care, and people with dementia.

There is a current option to develop a 20-unit apartment in Halton for vulnerable adults with their own front door.

There is potential for additional developments to be delivered if land can be identified.

Private landlords through the Private Rented Sector

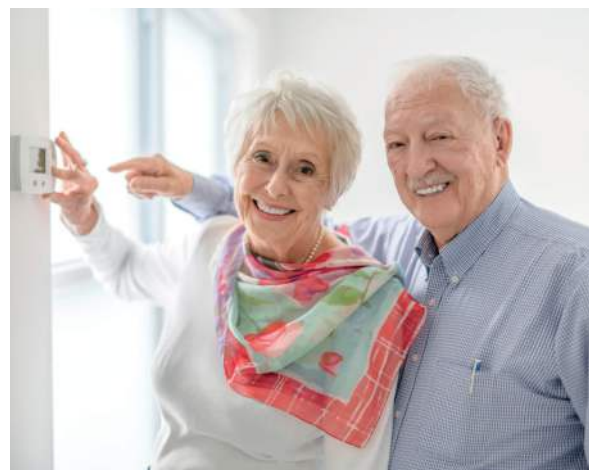
We believe landlords will be supportive to collaborate with the council in providing homes for households with specialist needs. As we develop our landlord accreditation scheme, we will identify and engage with potential landlords for closer partnership. Our approach will focus on:

- Education and awareness to inform landlords about the benefits of renting to households with specialist needs, including stable tenancies, potential rental income guarantees through programmes or subsidies, and the rewarding experience of supporting vulnerable individuals;
- Support and guidance to offer practical advice and assistance on accommodating specific needs, including necessary property adaptations, modifications and support packages;
- Financial incentives such as housing benefit guarantees, rent deposit schemes, and grants to support property modifications for landlords renting to these households;
- Increasing the opportunities for landlords to connect with support organisations and local authorities, fostering a community that shares best practices and offers mutual support;
- Celebrating and showcase landlords who have successfully rented to specialist households, encouraging others to follow their lead; and
- Maintaining regular communication to address landlord concerns, resolving challenges, and providing ongoing support throughout tenancies.

To safeguard quality and suitability, we will implement a rigorous landlord accreditation and vetting process to ensure only experienced and committed landlords, who understand the specialist needs of tenants,

participate in the scheme. This will prevent speculative landlords without relevant expertise from exploiting incentives and ensure that housing genuinely meets the needs of vulnerable households.

Making homes work for every age



Like many places, Halton is experiencing an ageing population — a trend to celebrate, as people are living longer than ever before.

Our priority is to help people remain in their own homes for as long as possible, enjoying the many benefits this brings — independence, familiarity, and connection to their community — and because this is what most people tell us they want. We will look at how to bring together information, advice, and support to help people live well at home for longer, and make sure this is easy to find and widely available across Halton.

However, we also recognise that as people age, some will need specialist housing or care, and our strategy must plan for this too.

The 2024 household survey shows that 67% of older residents in Halton want to stay in their current home with support when needed.

While others are interested in options such as sheltered accommodation, co-housing, and Extra Care housing. Among those planning

to move, nearly half (47%) would prefer a smaller home, though some want the same size or even larger properties.

Around 10% of all households need care and support to remain at home, rising sharply to 40.5% among those aged 85 and over.

Common home improvement needs focus on better heating, insulation, and accessibility adaptations, especially for those aged 65 and over. Practical help with repairs, gardening, cleaning, and companionship also becomes more important with age.

Currently, Halton has around 1,587 specialist older persons' accommodation units, but projections indicate a net need for 2,790 additional units by 2042—as well as 543 Extra Care units, and 455 residential care bedspaces. There is particular demand for mixed-tenure sheltered, enhanced sheltered, and Extra Care housing alongside a strong supply of dementia-friendly accommodation. All proposals for specialist older persons' accommodation must be brought forward in consultation and partnership with Adult Social Care Commissioning and meet Halton model of care and support and housing standards for older people.

The Local Plan supports new specialist housing in accessible locations and encourages adaptable home designs to help older people live independently for longer, while managing the supply of residential care and specialist housing to meet local needs.

Promoting the use of technology

Technology plays an increasingly vital role in enabling people to live independently, particularly for those with disabilities, long-term health conditions, or age-related support needs. For many people, especially younger disabled adults, assistive technologies offer more dignity, choice, and

control in their daily lives.

To fully unlock the potential of these solutions, there is a growing need to develop “tech-ready” homes as standard. These properties should be equipped with the infrastructure—such as robust digital connectivity, smart energy systems, and adaptable internal layouts—to support

a range of digital and assistive technologies. This will ensure that new homes are future-proofed, enabling individuals to access emerging innovations

without the need for costly retrofitting later.

The council has a critical role to play in driving this agenda. By working with developers and housing associations to embed a technology specification into new-build requirements, we can ensure that all new affordable and supported homes intended for end users who need this technology are ready for digital living. This should include minimum digital infrastructure standards, guidance on sensor and device compatibility, and opportunities for personalisation to meet specific needs.

There is also a growing role for artificial intelligence in supporting independent living. AI-enabled tools can learn routines, detect early warning signs of deteriorating health, or help manage chronic conditions through personalised insights. The council will explore how AI could complement human support—for example, by automating routine check-ins or enhancing predictive care planning—to improve outcomes and reduce strain on services. By positioning itself as an innovator in this space, we can ensure we are maximising the opportunities technology offers to improve lives and support a more efficient, person-centred system of care.

From smart home devices that automate daily tasks to remote monitoring systems that provide reassurance to families and carers, technology can promote autonomy, improve safety, and reduce reliance on traditional care services.

Increasing the number of accessible homes



Improve the health of our people and communities

New minor adaptation products could include hospital discharge grant (funding for urgent adaptations, repairs, or modifications that will allow someone to be discharged from hospital sooner) and dementia grants (small grants to fund modifications that would allow someone with a diagnosis of dementia to remain living safely in their home for longer.)

Our evidence base confirms that there is a clear link between age and disability. There is a clear need to increase the supply of accessible and adaptable homes and wheelchair user homes as well as providing specific provision of older persons housing.

We recognise the urgent and growing need for accessible and adapted homes, particularly as the population ages and more people live with long-term health conditions. To respond to this, we offer a comprehensive adaptations service that helps futureproof

existing homes through timely, low-cost interventions such as small ramps, grab rails, steps and relocated power sockets. We will also work to secure 5% of newbuild homes meet the M4(3)(b) wheelchair accessible standard.

We are committed to encouraging owners, landlords, and private tenants to use these adaptations and to introducing products that help people live well at home longer, such as small dementia grants that use colour-coding to assist those with dementia. These relatively low-cost adaptations can make a big difference, helping people stay independent for longer—what they want—while also being more cost-effective than other care options.

To maximise the impact of funding for home

adaptations, this strategy proposes exploring the development of a discretionary fund alongside the existing mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). This fund, potentially jointly financed through health and social care partners, would focus on funding adaptations that aren't covered by the DFG, providing greater flexibility to meet a wider range of needs and enabling more timely, tailored support for residents. This approach would strengthen the integration of housing, health, and social care services, laying a foundation for more effective prevention and improved wellbeing outcomes.

Supporting young people leaving care

Addressing the number of looked after children needing

housing and support services is a priority for the council. We want to co-produce transition support creating housing pathways for children long before they turn 18.

Young people transitioning out of care often struggle to access and sustain appropriate housing. Many are not tenancy-ready, lack support networks, and face stigma from private landlords, leading to high rates of tenancy breakdown. The council intends to identify housing solutions earlier for young people with plans made far earlier.

Young people often need one bedroom, self-contained homes because shared housing like Houses in Multiple Occupation are often unsuitable. We currently have 2 trainer flats — transitional, self-contained homes with on site or floating support that

58.2% of respondents in our 2024 household survey felt that supporting looked after children leaving care with permanent accommodation and support should be an important priority in our Housing Strategy.



help young people learn the skills needed to manage a tenancy successfully. There is a clear need for more trainer flats, and we will explore using several unused properties across the borough for this purpose in partnership with housing associations.

Young people starting out on their own in a tenancy may still need some support to sustain their housing. To address this, the council plans to front-fund dedicated support roles for care leavers living in housing association or private rented homes through the Affordable and Specialist Housing Fund, with the funding recycled from savings achieved by providing more suitable, cost-effective accommodation for young people in care.

Safe homes and support for survivors of domestic abuse

Our approach to Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-24 takes a Whole Housing Approach.

Supporting survivors of domestic abuse with support and accommodation was the second highest priority for the Housing Strategy according to respondents of our 2024 Household Survey, with 68.3% confirming it as a priority. Given this feedback, we want to ensure our response reflects this clear message. These priorities apply to both men and women, and we will put in place a clear plan of action to address their needs.



- Ensure survivors receive appropriate housing priority through the Housing Options Team.
- A thorough review of domestic abuse housing needs to ensure the council has an understanding of the true scale and impact of domestic abuse locally.
- Develop a new 3-4 bed refuge provision for emergency placements, including those with complex needs.
- Provide appropriate accommodation options for older people (60+) fleeing abuse.
- Standardise and strengthen the Sanctuary Scheme offer across housing associations.
- Allow more survivors to remain safely in their homes.
- Expand 'perpetrator behaviour changes' support, backed by appropriate resources.
- Recognise that many survivors need short-term help, not long-term support, and prioritise access to safe, stable temporary housing.
- Work proactively with local landlords to co-develop a supportive housing scheme for survivors, including options in the Private Rented Sector.
- Consider future commissioning options for emergency accommodation, in line with review process.
- Work with our local partner organisations to seek, where appropriate, White Ribbon and/or Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditations.

The Whole Housing Approach, developed in 2018 by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance and partners, aims to identify and intervene earlier in domestic abuse cases, reduce homelessness caused by abuse, support survivors to stay safely in their homes if they choose, and enable joint tenancies to be changed so the perpetrator is removed, and the tenancy remains in the survivor's name.

Supporting veterans

The council will support veterans and members of the Armed Forces community with their housing needs.

We recognise the unique challenges that veterans may face in accessing suitable housing, particularly during the transition from service to civilian life.

Through tailored housing advice, clear information on available options, and prioritised access where appropriate, we will ensure that veterans are able to secure a stable home. This support will be embedded

within our housing services and partnerships, reflecting both the Armed Forces Covenant and Halton's recognition of the contribution of those who have served. The specific needs of veterans and their spouses will be taken into account in the implementation of the Strategy.



Promoting Healthy Homes, Thriving Communities and Resilient Neighbourhoods

Through our Corporate Plan, our One Halton Health and Wellbeing Strategy and this Housing Strategy, we will support everyone in Halton to live a long, healthy, and fulfilling life.

- We are committed to improving health by ensuring all households have access to safe, warm, good-quality homes within healthier and more supportive neighbourhoods.
- A secure and suitable home has a

Better health outcomes is an outcome we are prepared to invest in, and we recognise that good housing is a vital foundation for achieving this.

profound impact on physical and mental wellbeing: it helps individuals remain independent, supports faster recovery from illness, and can prevent hospital admissions or reduce the time people spend in hospital. Conversely, poor-quality housing is a significant contributor to ill health and widening health inequalities —

affecting older people, children, individuals with disabilities, and those who are socially or economically isolated most severely.

- Our approach aligns with the NHS Long Term Plan's emphasis on prevention, recognising that early intervention and addressing the wider determinants of health — like housing — are key to reducing health inequalities and avoiding preventable illness.
- While all the actions set out in this Housing Strategy aim to improve homes and neighbourhoods — and, in doing so, contribute to better health outcomes — there are certain specific areas of focus that are fundamental to achieving good health. This section highlights those key priorities, recognising that targeted efforts in these areas are essential to creating safer, healthier living environments and supporting the wellbeing of our residents across Halton.

Tackling fuel poverty

Improving the quality of both existing and new housing to ensure safe, warm, and healthy homes is a key priority in Halton. A central part of this effort is working with local partners to enhance energy efficiency by promoting and delivering retrofit measures across the borough.

65.4% of respondents in our 2024 household survey felt that focusing on fuel poverty and the costs of living crisis should be an important priority in our Housing Strategy.

The challenge is significant: of the 57,731 homes in Halton, 36,576 (63%) have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of D or below. Improving these

homes to at least an EPC rating of C is a long-term task, likely to take years or even decades. Within this, priority will be given to the 7,748 homes rated E to G — the most inefficient and hardest to heat — and to households most at risk of fuel poverty.

Targeting support to those who need it most is crucial.

Research estimates that about 38% of homes in Halton are occupied by low-income households, with the highest concentrations in south-east Runcorn, particularly in wards such as Central & West Bank, Halton Lea, Halton Castle, Norton North, and Hough Green. EPC data also shows particular concentrations of low-rated homes in wards including Daresbury, Moore, Sandymoor, Ditton, Hale Village, Halebank, Beechwood, Heath, Bankfield, Mersey, and Weston.

To better understand the challenge and guide action, a desktop study analysed EPC data across Halton. This evidence helps prioritise funding and resources to the homes and households that will benefit most from improvements. Further research will focus on specific neighbourhoods, streets, and even individual properties.

Halton has a strong track record of working with partners to deliver energy efficiency improvements. Over the past 5–10 years, the council has played a strategic leadership and partnership-brokering role — rather than directly managing schemes — working closely with housing associations that have the capacity to deliver at neighbourhood scale.

Notable projects include:

- Castlefields: £2.8 million invested in improving 330 mixed-tenure homes, including external wall insulation, delivered with Onward Housing and Plus Dane.
- Halton Brook: £3.8 million invested to upgrade 580 mixed-tenure homes, led by Riverside Housing with council support.

More recently, collaboration with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has enabled Halton to access government funding efficiently and to take a strategic lead alongside local partners. Initiatives such as the Green Homes Grant and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund have supported thousands of home improvements in mixed-tenure areas, particularly through partnerships with housing associations.

The council also supports national energy efficiency schemes such as ECO4 and the Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS), which help eligible low-income and vulnerable residents reduce energy bills and improve health. However, progress with ECO4 in Halton has been limited by fragmented delivery, highlighting the need for more coordinated approaches. Public Health and local organisations already play an important role in advising and assisting residents in accessing these schemes.

We will continue working regionally to secure investment for fabric-first and deep retrofit projects that reduce carbon emissions and promote long-term wellbeing for residents.

To strengthen support for vulnerable and low-income homeowners, we will explore updating the council's Homes Assistance Policy to provide ways to fund energy efficiency and home improvement measures through loans secured as a land charge — repayable when the property is sold. The

66.8% of respondents in our 2024 household survey felt improving housing standards for new homes so that they use less energy and take account of changing weather patterns should be an important priority in our Housing Strategy.

council is also exploring the feasibility of introducing a broader loan-based scheme for homeowners who might otherwise struggle to afford essential energy efficiency improvements. Such an approach would not only help

residents improve the comfort, safety, and sustainability of their homes but also create a sustainable, recyclable source of funding to continue improving Halton's housing stock.

By prioritising the most inefficient homes, supporting low-income households, and building on strong partnerships, Halton aims to make steady progress toward ensuring safe, warm, and healthy homes for all its residents.

Improving the quality of homes in the Private Rented Sector

We are committed to working positively and constructively with private landlords to help them meet their legal responsibilities and provide safe, good-quality homes for their tenants. However, where landlords fail to act, the council will use its enforcement powers to protect residents.

As part of implementing the Renters' Reform Bill, the council will allocate capital funding to support Works in Default — enabling it to step in and carry out essential repairs and improvements when landlords do not fulfil

their duties. This ensures tenants are not left living in unsafe or unfit homes. The costs of these works will

be recovered from landlords, reinforcing the council's commitment to upholding housing standards while ensuring that public funds do not subsidise poor practice.

Selective licensing

Over the past few years, we have undertaken research to better understand the Private Rented Sector and identify opportunities to target resources more effectively. Based on this, we are now considering the potential benefits and impact that selective licensing could have in wards where housing quality, anti-social behaviour, and deprivation continue to affect tenants, the wider neighbourhood and community. If the council believes selective licensing could be an effective tool to raise standards, we will consult on introducing it — ensuring landlords in designated areas meet clear property and management conditions.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

There are currently 129 licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in Halton (five or more occupants), and the Council is aware of a further 73 smaller, unlicensed HMOs (fewer than five occupants). However, the true number of smaller HMOs is not known, as these properties do not require a licence or planning permission and landlords are not required to notify the Council.

Halton Borough Council recognises the significant impact that concentrations of HMOs can have on local communities, including pressure on residential amenity, changes to neighbourhood character and imbalances in housing mix. The Council will therefore take a proactive approach to managing and,

The BRE 2021 stock condition report confirms that there are 1,454 dwellings in the Private Rented Sector with a Category 1 hazards. A Category 1 hazard is a serious problem in a home that poses an immediate risk to a person's health or safety.

where necessary, limiting the concentration of HMOs, using available planning, licensing and enforcement powers to protect community balance and quality of life.

36.2% of respondents living in the Private Rented Sector in our 2024 household survey were dissatisfied with the quality of accommodation. 48% of respondents in our 2024 household survey confirmed that increasing the quality and management of the Private Rented Sector should be an important priority in our Housing Strategy.

In response, the council has taken a proactive approach by introducing a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that sets out clear restrictions on the siting and clustering of HMOs. The SPD aims to prevent overconcentration by applying three specific

controls: a concentration threshold, a ban on 'sandwiching' of properties between HMOs, and a restriction on allowing three adjacent HMOs. Additionally in September 2024, the Council introduced an Article 4 Direction to some areas of the Borough to remove the permitted development right to convert dwellinghouses to HMOs.

These planning tools are designed to retain the character of residential areas, support balanced communities, and reduce issues such as noise, parking pressure, and anti-social behaviour. The SPD also includes detailed amenity and management standards to guide the quality of accommodation provided. Should it be required, and were supported by evidence, the council will continue to use all available tools to further control the concentration and proliferation of HMOs, such as through the introduction of Selective Licensing.

The forthcoming Renters (Reform) Bill presents a further opportunity to strengthen HMO regulation. A key feature of the Bill is the introduction of a new national Property Portal, which will act as a central database of landlords and rented properties.

This will be a legal requirement and will support local authorities in identifying unlicensed HMOs that fall under mandatory licensing

requirements. For Halton, this will provide a valuable enforcement tool, enabling the council to cross-reference local intelligence with national data to ensure that all HMOs requiring a licence are appropriately registered and meet minimum legal and safety standards. Combined with the existing SPD, the Property Portal could help close enforcement gaps and ensure that both tenants and communities are better protected from the risks posed by poorly managed or unregulated HMOs.

Bringing long-term empty homes back into use

Our evidence base confirms that the number of long-term empty homes in Halton is relatively low. However, addressing empty homes remains a top priority for local residents, suggesting that perceptions about the issue may be stronger than the reality. Despite their low numbers, empty homes can have a significant negative impact on neighbourhoods. When left unoccupied, these properties often become unsightly, attracting vandalism and neglect, which can contribute to a decline in community wellbeing and property values. Recognising residents' concerns, we will continue focusing efforts on bringing empty homes back into use to maintain vibrant, safe, and attractive neighbourhoods across Halton.

We introduced a council tax premium on empty homes in April 2025 to encourage property owners to bring vacant properties back into use, and we will monitor its impact while exploring different models to enable long-term empty homes to provide affordable housing options, including considering whether the Affordable and Specialist Housing Fund could provide repayable investment funding through rent. The council will use all available powers, such as Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs), to bring empty homes back into use and maximise the local housing stock, in addition to exploring schemes that offer guaranteed rent and property management to owners of vacant homes.

The Safer Halton Partnership

The Safer Halton Partnership plays a vital role in supporting good health and well-being across the borough by addressing the wider social factors that influence people's physical and mental health.

By tackling issues such as anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, substance misuse, and serious violence, the partnership helps to create safer, more stable environments that are essential for individuals and communities to thrive.

Reducing anti-social behaviour and hate crime, for example, helps alleviate the chronic stress, anxiety, and fear that such incidents can cause. Similarly, efforts to prevent domestic abuse and support survivors have a direct impact on both physical safety and mental health, helping individuals regain control and rebuild their lives. The partnership's work to tackle serious and organised crime and improve road safety also reduces the risk of harm, injury, and trauma, which in turn lowers the demand on health and emergency services.

By supporting offender rehabilitation, tackling substance misuse, and engaging with those at risk of radicalisation or exploitation, the Safer Halton Partnership addresses root causes of harm and exclusion.

These preventative measures contribute to long-term improvements in individual and community resilience, mental well-being, and social cohesion.

Maximising our impact in delivering a healthy Halton

We recognise that housing is a social determinant of health.

Poor housing conditions such as cold homes and damp and mould can cause or make

worse a number of chronic health conditions including respiratory and cardiovascular disease. Living in poor housing also affects residents' mental health and sense of wellbeing which in turn limits their opportunities to live a productive and fulfilling life.

We are committed to working with our delivery partners including NHS, social landlords, private landlords and developers to review

current actions, investments and services to assess whether current activity and ways of working are achieving the best possible health outcomes and to identify any gaps or overlaps in service delivery that may be limiting effectiveness.

To improve health outcomes across Halton, we must first understand where our efforts can make the greatest difference. By identifying the communities, housing conditions, and services most closely linked to poor health, we can target interventions more effectively. This evidence-led approach will allow us to focus resources where they will have the biggest impact—tackling the root causes of ill health and creating healthier, more resilient communities.



We will undertake a review to examine how housing quality, affordability, accessibility, and neighbourhood conditions intersect with physical and mental health. Our goal is to shift from a reactive model to a proactive, preventative approach — improving health outcomes for residents while generating



The Building Research Establishment (BRE) estimate that poor quality housing in England is costing the NHS £1.4bn a year in treatments. BRE also identified the cost of poor quality housing to wider society – to mental health, educational achievement, and long term care for example – calculating it at £18.5bn.

long-term savings for public services. This will demonstrate the value of integrated, sustained investment in housing-related health interventions.

Overseen by the Council's Housing Partnership, which currently includes the council and

local social landlords, membership will be expanded to include Public Health and NHS delivery partners, including One Halton, to strengthen collaboration across sectors.

The Housing Partnership will ensure all stakeholders work together to deliver safe, affordable, and supportive homes. The focus will be on identifying shared challenges, exchanging data, and developing coordinated responses that address the social determinants of health within the borough's housing stock.

Through open communication and shared responsibility, the partnership aims to deliver timely interventions, reduce hospital admissions related to poor housing conditions, and support residents to live independently for longer.

A preventative approach will be championed — emphasising early intervention and recognising that coordinated action between

housing and health sectors can significantly enhance quality of life and alleviate pressure on health and care services.

To support effective delivery, the partnership's current governance arrangements will be reviewed, and new shared goals and outcomes will be established.

Making the most of every chance to help

Collaboration is a guiding principle of this strategy and its implementation.

This strategy seeks to improve multi-agency working to support better health outcomes – between local health providers, the council and housing associations to enable them pool

By making every contact count, day-to-day visits become valuable opportunities for early intervention, helping residents get the support they need before problems escalate.



resources and making the most of day-to-day contact with residents of Halton.

25% of households within Halton live within Affordable Housing. Through the Halton Housing Partnership there is an opportunity for greater operational collaboration between partners to improve health outcomes for these households, and support a shift from reactive interventions to a proactive and

preventative approach to housing and health.

We will also explore opportunities for better working with blue light partners. A good example of existing working is Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service who undertook nearly 5,000 'Safe and Well' visits to homes in Halton in 2024/25. These surveys include onwards referrals to other services.

Our ambition is to create clear referral pathways that ensure every contact counts, whether that contact is in a clinical setting or a resident's home.

Housing conditions that are impacting on a residents mental or physical health are assessed and followed up by referral to an organisation that can help.

We aim to work closely with front line health services to ensure adequate housing is a central consideration in a patient's care. This could include GP services or hospital consultants making a referral for patients with respiratory conditions to the council or social landlord for property health checks to investigate any conditions in the home that may affect indoor air quality.

Or if a Health Visitor during a routine health check identifies damp and mould, and hears a parent express concern about the costs of heating a home and falling behind on rent, then they could raise a housing repair concern or refer the household for debt or energy advice.

For patients with conditions most at risk from poor housing we will work alongside health services on proactive identification and early intervention. For example, we are running a winter cold home pilot to improve the home conditions of 120 patients with COPD with high risk of hospital admission due to fuel poverty. This preventative project has been made possible by successfully establishing a process to screen patient data to formulate at risk cohorts to support.

Permitted Development

We will not support poor quality and poorly considered homes delivered through permitted development. Halton Council is supportive of lobbying by the Local Government Association for amendments to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

Specifically, this is for amendments that ensure that conversions of existing buildings (such as office blocks) into residential units result in homes that are sustainable and are of good quality (well designed and energy efficient) and contribute towards meeting affordable housing and infrastructure needs in an area.

Implementation and Monitoring

This section signals the transition from strategy to action, setting out how the ambitions and priorities of the strategy will be delivered, resourced, monitored and adapted over time. A five-year delivery plan underpins the strategy, identifying clear actions, lead officers, delivery partners and required resources. Progress will be regularly monitored and reviewed, enabling the Council to track outcomes, respond to changing circumstances and ensure the strategy remains effective and deliverable.

Although this may be Halton's first Housing Strategy in some time, excellent and impactful work has been ongoing across the borough, with housing functions spread across several council departments. Through developing this strategy, it has become clear that there is an opportunity to strengthen how we organise and coordinate these functions — potentially bringing teams closer together or adjusting roles to improve alignment and collaboration.

The council has a strong track record of working collaboratively with partners to address housing priorities. Examples include cross-boundary work on the One Halton All-age Autism Strategy, ensuring housing forms an integral part of the Runcorn Town Deal Board, and ongoing engagement through the Halton Housing Partnership. The council has also worked closely with both strategic and local partners on major regeneration projects, such as the Castlefields Regeneration Partnership.

The council is committed to reviewing its staffing structure not to reduce staff, but to enhance efficiency, foster stronger teamwork, and ensure we have the right focus and skills in place to deliver the best possible outcomes for our communities.

Our strategy will be implemented through three guiding

principles that maximise the skills, knowledge, and resources of all involved, aligning them to achieve the best outcomes for Halton.

These principles ensure that our efforts are coordinated, evidence-based, and focused on long-term benefits — enabling us to deliver a Housing Strategy that meets local needs, supports independence, and contributes to a thriving, sustainable borough.

The Council will be a Civic Leader

The council will take a clear leadership role on housing policy in Halton, setting the vision and strategy for how housing supports the borough's economic, social, and environmental goals.

As a civic leader, the council will set clear policy direction that reflects local evidence and priorities, and it will champion innovation by exploring new approaches, technologies, and partnerships to deliver better housing outcomes.

The council will maximise the use of council-owned land and assets, unlocking sites for development that meet identified needs, and act as a steward of the place, ensuring that all housing activity aligns with wider regeneration, health, and sustainability objectives. Progress will be regularly monitored and reviewed, with the approach adapted as needed to stay on track and respond to emerging challenges.

Delivery will be achieved in partnership

While the council sets the direction and provides stewardship, delivery will depend on strong partnerships. We will work collaboratively with housing associations, developers, health

services, community organisations, and residents to co-design solutions and pilot projects to test concepts that work locally. Our approach will leverage the expertise, capacity, and investment of partners, recognising that many housing outcomes require shared effort. Partnerships will be formalised and strengthened through agreements and joint delivery plans where appropriate.

Collaboration is not just a buzzword in Halton — it is our way of working, rooted in trust and a proven track record of joint success. We will build on existing relationships to co-fund, co-design, and co-deliver projects, ensuring that solutions are sustainable and reflect diverse perspectives. Partners will be engaged early and meaningfully in the planning and delivery process, and we will continue to foster a culture of openness and mutual support that enables us to overcome challenges together and make the most of opportunities.

Early Intervention and Cost-Effective Investment

A key driver for the strategy is enabling the council to work more effectively across its housing services to improve its financial position by:

- a) Reducing revenue expenditure, such as costs of homelessness and specialist accommodation; and
- b) Increasing revenue income by accelerating housing delivery and diversifying the housing offer.

Given these drivers, some aspects of the Housing Strategy are likely to require an ‘invest to save’ approach.

The strategy will also influence how the council uses its land and buildings, which may affect Capital Land Receipts. For example, disposing of land to meet supported housing needs might lower capital values but reduce revenue expenditure

by cutting reliance on out-of-borough or unsuitable placements. The council is already exploring this at sites like Kingsway Quarter, Widnes (independent living for older people) and Crow Wood Lane, Widnes (supported housing for adults with complex needs). Each disposal is approved through the council’s governance processes and aligned with strategies such as the Children and Young People Sufficiency Strategy.

Successful implementation will depend on strong coordination across the council and with our partners.

Current capacity gaps include strengthening the connection between ‘People’ aspects, such as specialist housing needs, and ‘Place’ aspects, including engagement with developers and social housing providers. Recommendations on resourcing and organisational changes to address these gaps will be set out in the Housing Strategy Delivery Plan, with additional work on capacity development continuing as needed. Building on our existing evidence base and monitoring progress over time to evaluate the impact of our actions, we will deliver a Housing Strategy that meets local needs, supports independence, and contributes to a thriving, sustainable borough.

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