



**Oadby & Wigston**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# **Housing Strategy**

## **2019 - 2024**

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## **Forward by Leader of the Council**

A decent, secure and affordable home is central to all residents of the Borough of Oadby and Wigston being able to live full, prosperous and happy lives; it is vital to wellbeing, employment, children's education and managing household debt.

Whilst recognising the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Government's definition of affordable housing, this strategy alongside the Council's Local Plan sets out the Council's commitment to delivering affordable homes.

The Local Plan sets out the policy requirements for additional affordable housing. Affordable housing will be delivered through new social housing provision and by working collaboratively with partners who share our commitment to providing secure, affordable homes.

This strategy recognises the need for a broad approach for housing and planning services to deliver affordable housing to meet the needs of priority groups and those wanting to live in the Borough.

### **Oadby and Wigston Housing**

The strategy reaffirms the Council's long term commitment to being a high quality landlord with a growing stock of homes, whilst recognising the need to modernise the service to become more customer focused.

The strategy commits the Council to increasing choice through the continued use of Choice Based Lettings. We see choice and control for tenants and leaseholders as central to a modern and responsive Council owned and managed housing provider.

The Council will work with the private rented sector to improve the quality and where possible the quantity of affordable private rented homes.

### **Regeneration**

The Council's Corporate Plan commits the authority to supporting regeneration in a range of settings.

### **Homelessness**

Tackling homelessness is one of our top priorities. Homelessness is faced by a number of families and rough sleepers. The former can only be addressed through the delivery of secure, affordable housing and working with service delivery partners across the Borough.

**Cllr John Boyce**

## Executive Summary

The Housing Strategy identifies a number of key current and future housing issues within the Borough of Oadby and Wigston and sets out the Council's priorities for dealing with them. The strategy supports the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and provides the strategic framework for the delivery of our four housing priorities:

### Priority One: Increase the supply of housing

- The Council are committed to delivering 148 new homes per annum by 2031 as set out in the adopted Local Plan.
- Providing appropriate housing for the whole community, this will require affordable housing on all new residential developments of 11 dwellings or more to meet identified local need.
- All residential development must contribute towards delivering a mix of dwelling types, tenures and sizes that meet the identified needs (and / or demand) of the communities within the Borough. All new residential development proposals must demonstrate how they contribute to achieving the identified needs as set out within the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment.
- Securing the required infrastructure in all new residential developments within the Borough area, including the provision of new homes in our agreed directions for growth.
- Encourage housing that specifically caters for the aging population that do not require supported living.
- Develop a 5 year forward programme for providing high quality new Council homes that the community needs, by utilising new Modular Homes technologies

### Priority Two: Manage the demand for housing

- Focussing on prevention and support
- Refreshing our Temporary Accommodation Strategy
- Being clear about how and when we will use temporary accommodation
- Being clear about who can apply for Council housing
- Managing the list of people who apply for housing in a clear and transparent way
- Enabling applicants to exercise choice over where they live through choice based lettings

### Priority Three: Provide high quality local authority landlord services

- Being clear about how we use our income to invest in homes and provide services
- Having a clear Rent Policy
- Being community focused and responsive to local needs
- Putting our tenants at the heart of everything we do
- Ensuring we maintain our stock to the highest standards
- Complying with the Homes England Regulatory Standards
- Being transparent about levels of customer satisfaction
- Ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all people who live on and visit Council estates
- Ensuring that tenants have the opportunity to live independently in their own home

### Priority Four: Create great places to live

- Commissioning a private sector stock profiling exercise
- Implementing a Selective Licensing Scheme
- Ensuring full compliance of mandatory licensing of Homes in Multiple Occupation
- Working with landlords to improve conditions in the private sector
- Refreshing our Empty Homes Strategy
- Encouraging institutional investment in market rented housing

## Introduction

This strategy identifies the key housing challenges facing Oadby and Wigston and sets out the Council's priorities for tackling them. Our vision for housing is as follows:

***To provide high quality housing in sustainable locations that meets local community. All housing will be 'fit for purpose', promote health living conditions, be affordable and support the creation of safe, clean and attractive places in which to live, work and visit.***

### The Corporate Plan

This sets out the overall priorities and programme of work for the period 2019-24. Housing, homelessness and regeneration are key priorities, with an ambition that "every person can live in a good home, to buy or rent at a price people can afford in a great environment."

## 1 The Wider Context for the Housing Strategy

### 1.1 National Context

The UK has historically struggled to deliver the number of new homes required. This has resulted in house prices and private sector rents increasing beyond the reach of most households.

In February 2017 the Government published a housing White Paper, "Fixing our Broken Housing Market" which included a commitment to Council house new build. This was followed in the Budget (November 2017) with the announcement of an additional £880m for local authority house building between 2019 and 2022<sup>1</sup>.

### 1.2 Local Context

#### **Homelessness and Housing waiting list**

The Council faces two distinct challenges in relation to homelessness and the housing waiting list in the Borough. The first is the increasing number of households on the waiting list due to a lack of secure, affordable housing in the Borough. The total number of general needs social and affordable vacancies in the Borough has reduced over the past three years from 147 in 2016/17 to 53 in 2017/18 and just 40 in 2018/19. This means that those households on the waiting list are either waiting in temporary accommodation for longer or remaining in settled but unsuitable accommodation for long periods.

The second challenge is the increase demand for temporary accommodation. Since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (which came in to effect 1 April 2018) there has been an increase in the time the Council is required to accommodate certain households who present as homeless. There are currently 22 households living in temporary accommodation (since the Act came into effect, the number of households living in temporary accommodation has been consistently around 20). The Council is committed to providing temporary accommodation to a high standard, and preferably within the Borough.

## **Private Sector**

A private sector stock condition survey carried out in 2010 of 809 dwelling using a stratified sampling technique identified the following;

- Total dwelling stock of 27600,
- 7,109 dwellings were estimated to not meet the Decent Homes Standard, some 25.75%.
- 20.9% of all dwellings (5,768) are assessed as exhibiting Category 1 HHSRS hazards. The most commonly occurring hazard is that of Excess Cold.
- There is a total estimated cost implication of £21,077,481 to rectify non-decency; an average of £2,964.90 per failing property.
- 18.0% of dwellings are assessed as having a SAP rating lower than 35 which by default precipitates a Category 1 HHSRS hazard; 58.8% of these properties were constructed before 1944. The average SAP rating for the whole of the private sector within Oadby & Wigston is 41.
- 919 (4.8%) households have a monthly income lower than £500;
- 3,350 (16.2%) have a monthly income lower than £750.
- Households spending more than 10% of income on fuel bills are considered to be in fuel poverty: the level of fuel poverty across Oadby & Wigston based on those properties that provided the required information has been assessed at 3.0%. As this percentage is only based on households that provided income level, this information is less statistically reliable than the other data contained within this report.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are an important part of the Borough's housing stock and many people rely on them to meet their housing needs. However, HMOs can lead to potential problems such as increased risk of fire, car parking and the impact on surrounding areas.

There are currently an estimated 125 empty private sector homes in Oadby and Wigston. Of these, 28 have been empty for two years or more. Properties left empty for this length of time can attract anti-social behaviour, often blight the neighbourhood and represent a waste of potential housing.

## **Decent Homes (Council)<sup>2</sup>**

The English Housing Survey 2016/17 published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government puts the average level of non-decent homes in the social housing sector at 13%. The level of non decent homes in Oadby and Wigston represents a significant investment need in order to secure the long term future of the stock and ensure our tenants have good quality housing. Work is currently ongoing to ensure that the Housing Revenue Account is sustainable and can viably deliver local priorities.

## **Regeneration**

The Council is committed to supporting the delivery of new housing on regeneration sites across the Borough as evidenced in the Corporate Plan 2019-24. The Council and its partners will continue to investigate opportunities to bring forward development on sites identified in the Local Plan or at emerging regeneration sites at the earliest opportunity subject to legal, planning and financial issues. Where major development is proposed Communities will be consulted on the scheme to ensure the proposed development meets their needs.

## **Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-decent-home-definition-and-guidance>

Our adopted Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Oadby and Wigston in partnership with Leicester County Council continues to place our community at the heart of our wish to improve health and wellbeing, and to reduce health inequalities. The importance of income, employment, education, housing quality and crime play a role in the physical and mental health of our residents. We need specialist and supported housing for a variety of client groups (such as older people, people with physical and learning disabilities and people with mental health problems) Our strategy is to keep people within the Borough rather than placing people out of the area. Good quality housing provision is vital to achieve this.

## 2 Our Priorities

### 2.1 Priority One: Increase the supply of housing

We will do this by:

- **Securing additional inward investment in the provision of new homes** by working more closely with registered providers and Homes England to enable the provision and variety of homes to meet different needs.
- **Ensuring the provision of new affordable homes to meet local need** including the delivery of more new Council homes that are affordable for residents.
- **Encouraging small and medium enterprises to build** by working with local communities to identify small and medium sites for development
- **Providing additional Council homes for rent by 2022** by expanding the Council's own new build and acquisition programme, and working with Government, Homes England and registered providers

### 2.2 Priority Two: Manage the demand for housing

We will help and support people to prevent them becoming homeless and enable them to secure and maintain good quality permanent accommodation. In doing so, we will ensure that people have fair and equal access to affordable housing where appropriate, but recognise that the needs of some will be met by the private sector.

We will do this by:

- **Focussing on prevention and support** by producing a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy aligned to the Homelessness Reduction Act. This will set out how we aim to help people address their housing needs to avoid homelessness, which can include enabling them to remain in their current property or obtain alternative accommodation elsewhere, including in the private sector.
- **Being clear about how and when we will use temporary accommodation** by developing a Temporary Accommodation Protocol that establishes a clear commitment to placing in-borough wherever possible and clear criteria showing how we will determine whether and in what circumstances, placement outside the borough is justified.

- **Being clear about who can apply for Council housing** by continuing to implement the Council's allocations policy which sets out the criteria for applying for social housing in the Borough, how people can apply and how applicants will be prioritised.
- **Managing the list of people who apply for housing in a clear and transparent way** by ensuring the reviews and voids procedures are closely monitored and times reduced for reletting.
- **Giving applicants choice over where they live** by continuing to use a 'choice based lettings' system that will provide all relevant information about the properties available, including address, number of bedrooms, layout, weekly rent, service charges, and local amenities, which will allow applicants to bid for the property of their choice (subject to eligibility criteria)
- **Develop closer working with housing partners in the Borough** to promote a consistent approach to providing housing support for local residents, coordinate our approach to estate management and enhance local accountability.
- **Ensuring affordable housing is affordable** by publishing an Affordability Statement that provides clear guidance to developers and registered providers on the levels of rent the Council supports in order to ensure that homes are affordable for local people

## 2.3 Priority Three: Provide high quality local authority landlord services

The Council is committed to being a high performing landlord and recognises that the housing service needs to be modernised. In doing this, we will lead the way in providing the highest quality housing services and ensuring that our tenants are at the heart of everything we do.

We will achieve this by:

- **Being clear about how we use our income to invest in homes and provide services**
- **Having a clear Rent Policy** that sets out the Council's approach to setting rents
- **Being more community focused and responsive to local needs** by developing and implementing a customer focussed, neighbourhood based approach to tenancy and estate management
- **Putting our tenants at the heart of everything we do** by reviewing how and when we engage with our tenants.
- **Ensuring we maintain our stock to standards** by maintaining a programme of planned works and ensuring repairs are carried out on time and to a high standard.
- **Complying with the Homes England Regulatory Standards** by developing the Council's Local Offer, improving ways to engage and shape the service and publishing an annual report to tenants
- **Ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all people who live on and visit Council estates** by undertaking regular and frequent estate and block inspections, ensuring that all properties and common parts are maintained to the appropriate standards (whether required by statute, regulation or local agreement).



- **Ensuring that tenants have the opportunity to live independently in their own home** by working with partner agencies including Adult Social Care.
- **Regenerating our priority estates** by developing and delivering affordable and viable solutions that meet local need,

## 2.4 Priority Four: Create great places to live

The Council support the creation of safe, clean and attractive places in which to live, work and visit. Housing will meet the physical and mental health needs of all residents, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of older and more vulnerable people (e.g. for people with disabilities and mental health problems) that will help them to achieve and/or maintain their independence within Oadby and Wigston.

We will achieve this by:

- **Commissioning a private sector stock condition profiling exercise** to identify and prioritise action for the areas in the worst condition
- **Ensuring full compliance of mandatory licensing of Homes in Multiple Occupation** to ensure that HMOs are of the highest quality
- **Implementing a Selective Licensing Scheme** in South Wigston ward.
- **Working with landlords to improve conditions in the private sector** continuing to provide information and advice to landlords and tenants, facilitate a bi-annual landlords forum,
- **Developing an Empty Homes Strategy** to bring as many empty homes back into use as possible, by all means possible through the use of statutory powers, including Empty Dwelling Management Orders, Enforced Sale and Compulsory Purchase

## 3 Delivery and Monitoring

The Housing Strategy sets out the strategic direction for housing in Oadby and Wigston and what we want to achieve, focusing in particular on the major changes required. It will be underpinned by policies and delivery plans to measure progress. A number of specific initiatives described in the strategy have been completed, are in development or planned.

Leadership on housing in Oadby and Wigston extends beyond the Council. The strategic priorities set out within the strategy cannot be achieved without the collective commitment of the Council and its key partners and stakeholders. This partnership approach should apply to all housing in the Borough, which means that everyone involved in building and managing homes, and supporting the people who live in them have an important role to play.

## 4 We will:

Involve residents and partners in developing detailed proposals to deliver the strategic objectives.

Be inclusive and transparent in developing our policies and delivery plans and place on the Council's website a comprehensive collection that underpin the Strategy, such as our Allocations Policy, refreshed Homelessness Strategy and other policies required by Government and Publish details of our progress against the strategic priorities and the Council's Corporate Plan.