



City
for
All

Westminster
Housing Strategy
Draft for public consultation
Westminster City Council
June 2015



City of Westminster

westminster.gov.uk #CityforAll



Introduction

Introduction

Foreword



Cllr Daniel Astaire
Cabinet Member for
Housing, Regeneration,
Business and Economic
Development

I am extremely pleased to be bringing forward our proposals for an ambitious new housing strategy.

Our aim is set out in the council's new "City for All" vision. To create an unrivalled city of choice where everyone plays their part in and benefits from our city's continued success.

We'll do this by creating a city of aspiration. Housing has a key part to play in making this a reality.

Our strategy aims to create great places to live, work and enjoy. To contribute fully to London's need for more homes for all its people. Looking after our most vulnerable, whilst also encouraging prosperity for all.

We view housing as not just bricks and mortar, but as a catalyst for personal development, inspiration and positive change. Having a good home gives people the stability to take decisions that are right

for them and their families, improving health and shaping neighbourhoods where people look out for one another and are proud to live.

By securing more affordable homes we will be able to support those who need help to get on the housing ladder while not diminishing our ability to help those most in need. We want to promote opportunity, especially for people on comparatively lower incomes who work in crucial jobs contributing to Westminster's economic success.

Housing is a journey. There is much the council can do to help people move onwards and upwards, giving them housing options that give them the ability and confidence to make their own decisions while also allowing the council to help more people in need. We will help empower people; in return there is an obligation on individuals to engage with us and the support we will provide.

We are a council of action, not words. This year we'll lay foundations for 350 new homes in Church Street and Ebury Bridge, as part of an investment of over £60 million to provide more high quality homes. Over the next five years we will build 1,250 affordable homes. We will invest £12 million to tackle cold and damp conditions; we will identify tenants most at risk of poor health and work with

them to improve their homes.

The council cannot deliver this ambitious agenda by itself. This document shows how we will work with other housing providers and the range of agencies providing public services in Westminster, addressing the often complex needs of the people we house and the places we shape.

We have to recognise that we do not have the resources to help everyone. Demand for housing in Westminster is high while the space and money to meet it are both constrained. We have hard choices to make and cannot please everyone. This document sets out the direction and priorities the council considers will make the best use of the resources it has to deliver its vision for the city.

Pressure on housing in central London is unprecedented and enormous. No one local authority acting alone can solve this very complex problem. As we explain, we will work with the Mayor and other boroughs to encourage a London-wide strategic response.

This document sets out clear ambitions for the people of Westminster. We want to hear from as many of you as possible about how we can deliver our vision of a "City for All".

Introduction

Overview: Context and Strategy

In 2015 the council published “City for All”, a bold new vision for Westminster into the 2020s based around the three themes below.

Housing underpins everything we want for our lives and neighbourhoods. Good homes enable healthier and more economically active and successful lives. They make for high quality, sustainable neighbourhoods in which people are proud to live. They are also vital to supporting the most vulnerable and in tackling problems of disadvantage and ill-health. Quite simply, good housing is integral to a successful, sustainable city and an essential foundation for its growth and prosperity.

A new vision means that now is the right time for a new Housing Strategy that is equally as ambitious and ground-breaking.

As this document shows, the council has key roles to play in making sure that housing in Westminster helps deliver the three “City for All” themes at a time of huge change in London and against a background of constrained resources. We want to maximise the benefits for local people and places through innovation and

creativity. The fact we are also revising our planning, economic development, health and other strategies at the same time means we can make sure what we do in these areas is aligned and interlinks so we make the best use of our finite resources, working with our partners and other public services to deliver the best outcomes for local residents and businesses.

This document is the first stage in developing the council’s Housing Strategy. It sets out what we intend to do and explains why we propose to do it, showing how each proposal contributes to the

“City for All” themes and to Westminster’s continued success as the engine of London’s economic growth. It shows how housing will contribute to and support that growth – and help ensure all residents share in its benefits to ensure a thriving population.

The housing issues faced in a world city such as Westminster are complex and challenging. Westminster is currently home to 235,000 residents and 115,000 households – by 2030 there are projected to be nearly 25,000 more residents and over 26,000 more households.



ASPIRATION

We will enable all our communities to share in the economic prosperity of the city.



CHOICE

We will create opportunities for residents, businesses and visitors to make responsible choices for themselves, their families and their neighbourhood.



HERITAGE

We will protect and enhance Westminster’s unique heritage so that every neighbourhood remains a great place to live, work and visit both now and in the future.

To accommodate this growth, Westminster will need to intervene to facilitate this in ways which also protect and enhance the amenity of the area.

We will need to deliver more homes of all kinds in an already densely developed city where space is both limited and expensive. There will be a particular need for more affordable housing - to help the most vulnerable, to ensure Westminster can house the people its growing businesses need and to provide genuinely mixed and balanced communities. At the moment, because of the unique housing market in Westminster, the number of people we accept as being in housing need hugely outstrips the number of homes we have, with the result that many homeless households have to wait long periods in temporary accommodation.

This is the fundamental challenge we face. Increasing the number of affordable homes we deliver is key to meeting it. That is why the commitment to deliver 1,250 more affordable homes is at the core of this document. Growing the supply of affordable housing will enable us to help those most in need, while also giving more scope to offer help to a wider range of people

who aspire to live in the city but do not yet have the opportunity to do so. Recycling existing homes is also essential, so we can make sure we assist the largest number of people; helping to empower them to take up the job opportunities being created in the city which, in turn, enables them to move along the housing journey from social to intermediate housing – and then on into the market; freeing up homes that can then be used to help those most in need.



Tackling these issues requires us to look at everything we do to support our people and places. We need to join up everything we do to support people at different stages in their lives – childcare, supporting vulnerable children, adults and older people, helping people into work, health and social care. We also need to look at the total needs of places and the value we can add through housing in delivering well-designed, environmentally sustainable and economically successful neighbourhoods that support people in achieving their aspirations. These joined-up, multi-faceted approaches mean the council cannot deliver on its own, and a key theme of this document is how we can work with other housing providers and agencies in the health, employment and other sectors to deliver the objectives we set out here.

The document is divided into four chapters dealing with Homes, People, Places and Prosperity. These explain in more detail how we intend to address these issues. It is intended to provoke debate and comment, within Westminster and across London – as many of the issues we face need to be addressed across the capital.

Introduction

More homes

At its heart are proposals to deliver more good quality housing to help us meet these demands and to sustain high quality neighbourhoods in ways that empower and support people in making their own choices.

We have set ourselves an ambitious target for 1,250 new affordable homes to be developed in the city over the next five years and are developing City Plan policies to help ensure delivery. While this goes well beyond previous rates of delivery, we will always be constrained by the shortage and high cost of land here. This is why, like other central London boroughs, we consider it would be a cost-effective use of our resources to develop some homes outside Westminster - over and above the 1,250 - in order to provide more choice to our residents and help meet London's overall housing needs.

Helping a wider range of people

By delivering more affordable homes, we will have greater flexibility to address a wider range of housing needs without reducing our ability to help those with immediately urgent needs. In particular, we propose to provide more housing for low to middle income workers whose

contribution is vital to the city's continued growth and success – and to the prosperity of London and the UK as a whole.

Without this, there is a danger that only the very rich and poor will live in Westminster. If people in the kinds of jobs Westminster needs to sustain its growth and continue its contribution to national prosperity are priced out of the city, not only will ours be an increasingly unbalanced community but, as businesses are increasingly pointing out, growth and competitiveness here will suffer. We will address these issues in two ways.

First, we will use our expansion of affordable housing to grow the “intermediate” housing sector. This is currently very small (1.5% of Westminster's housing stock) compared to our social housing stock (25% of the stock). New intermediate housing will be developed at a faster rate than has been the case in the past. This will lead to a more balanced housing market - where there are not only more opportunities for low and middle income working people but also support for them to move through different tenures, making for greater flexibility to support a larger number of people overall.

Second, we will start opening up some social housing to lower income working people who, until now wouldn't ordinarily have had priority for it. Homelessness has become the major route into social housing and we want a broader group of people to benefit from its stability and low rents. Again, boosting the overall supply of social housing will mean this does not reduce our ability to help those needing urgent help.

We will continue to do everything we can to support homeless households through the range of help, advice and support we and our partner agencies provide. Part of this will be making more use of the private rented sector so they can be accommodated more quickly. We will also provide a range of services to improve the employment prospects of social housing applicants and residents. Compared with other tenures, they are more likely to be long term unemployed so we intend to work with partners to help them into work. A good job is the best way out of disadvantage and getting people into work will enable them to make their own housing choices in the future, with a wider range of intermediate housing giving them greater scope to do so. This focus on jobs will also run through the other strategies we are developing as the

benefits of getting it right will be felt across the board, including supporting growth and improving health.

Helping people to be mobile and to move forward and through different housing tenures is therefore a key part of our strategy. Similarly, it places an onus on people to engage with this help.

Building for the future

This document explains how the council will make its own contribution to delivering its ambitions through our housing renewal programme. We are committed to ensuring this delivers places of which the whole city can be proud now and into the future; delivering new housing embodying the highest standards of design, environmental performance and public realm required by our City Plan, but also supporting enterprise through local shops and other enterprise spaces and - working with our partners - providing the community facilities successful neighbourhoods need. It also announces £12m of investment in our own stock to tackle damp and cold in 5,800 homes.

A joined-up approach

There is a particular need to address the increasing challenge of providing the right homes and support for vulnerable people in ways that meet their needs and preferences, coordinating housing, social and health care provided by a range of agencies to ensure the services people need are provided efficiently and effectively. The work we plan to do in this area includes a review of the sheltered housing currently provided for older people.

Working with others

This document sets out an ambitious agenda. The council will have to work closely with other housing providers (including the forty housing associations active in Westminster) and other agencies that provide health, social care, employment and other support for the people we house. Many of these partners are already breaking new ground and we will want to learn from their experience and make sure these lessons are passed on more widely. We will also see if we can work with them to make sure that the resources we have – such as space on our estates – can be used more creatively to provide

facilities and services to support our residents. Changes in the way public services are provided are gathering pace and we will find ways of ensuring peoples' needs are met as seamlessly and effectively across agencies as possible.

High quality places need good management, particularly to ensure they are safe (and are felt to be safe) by those living in and using them. In conjunction with our partner agencies we will look at ways of using the enforcement and other powers we have to deal with anti-social behaviour proactively to ensure a consistent approach to enabling a good quality of life for all residents.

We have a particular role to play in this through our own housing provider, CityWest Homes. This gives a high quality service appreciated by those who use it. But its costs put it among the most expensive 25% of providers and we will be looking at ways of delivering the same high level of services while making savings in overheads. This in turn will free up resources that we can use to provide more homes.

Introduction

Many of the issues in this document are Londonwide in scale. In particular, there is a pressing need for a Londonwide debate about the best ways that everyone concerned with housing can use their powers and resources to respond to London's homelessness and affordability problems.

We simply do not have enough social housing to accommodate all of the homeless households that we have duties towards. Like many other boroughs facing the same issues, we do not raise this to avoid responsibility for the homeless households that approach us, but to consider if there are better, fairer and more cost-effective ways of doing things.

A good home is an essential building block in providing opportunities for aspirational individuals, families and communities from every background to contribute to - and share in - the city's prosperity. It is a key element in empowering the vulnerable and disadvantaged to make the best of these opportunities and take their own housing decisions - at all stages of their lives. It is integral to achieving the three goals of "City for All". This document outlines a strategy aimed at bringing the benefits of living at the core of a world city in reach for a wider range of people. The strategy aims to make the

best use of the resources we have to deliver the best services that deliver true value for money – and a "City for All".

Purpose of the document

This document outlines our plans to address housing related issues over the next five to ten years. It focuses on new directions and proposals and therefore does not review every area of housing policy (especially where things are already working well). A range of other housing policies explain our existing approach.

Responding to the consultation

Before finalising our strategy, we want to know what you think of our proposals. We will take the views expressed and use them to help us draw up our new strategy.

Throughout the document we have included questions to prompt thinking about a particular topic.

Please answer these and also provide us with additional comments you may have on any of the proposals we are making by **Friday 31st July 2015**. We would also like to know if you think there is something we have overlooked.

How to respond:

- Complete the online feedback form which you can find on the council website www.westminster.gov.uk/housingstrategy
- Complete the paper feedback form, which can be found at the end of this document, and send it to our Freepost address below.
- Email us at:
housingstrategy@westminster.gov.uk
- Write to us at
**Westminster Housing Strategy,
FREPOST LON 17563,
19th Floor City Hall,
64 Victoria Street,
London SW1E 6QP**





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Homes

What are our objectives?

- We want to maximise the delivery of affordable housing in Westminster and provide for a range of housing needs. In particular, we want to deliver more affordable homes for low and middle income working households to address significant unmet need; to promote work; and to support the local and London economies.
- We want to create more mobility in the intermediate sector so people can move from one product to another and on to market housing, to help us make the best use of the homes we have available. With products that better meet peoples' needs we also want to encourage more social housing applicants into intermediate housing.
- We want to optimise the value of our own assets; improving those we want to keep and disposing of those that are not financially or socially viable, so that our housing portfolio aligns with our long term needs.
- We want the management of our own housing stock to be top quality and to provide value for money for Westminster residents.

Why is this important?

- Our research suggests that 420 new affordable homes will be needed in Westminster each year over the next 20 years. This is about 200 more than historic rates of delivery.
- The research suggests that, of the 420 new affordable homes needed per year, 180 will be required to meet social housing demand and 240 for intermediate housing.
- In a recent survey, residents were most likely to select affordable housing as an issue the council should prioritise in the coming years. A small survey of businesses operating in Westminster also identified a need for more affordable housing to rent and buy for their staff.
- The housing market in Westminster is characterised by social housing accessible by those in most need, and very expensive private housing for those who can afford it. There is very little intermediate housing for low and middle income workers and little transition from social into intermediate housing.
- If people are forced to leave Westminster to find suitable affordable housing our communities will become more socially and economically polarised. Local employers will also find it increasingly difficult to recruit suitable workers.
- Much of the council's housing stock is relatively old and costly to maintain. A large portion of our stock are small units (studio and one-bedroom units), with relatively few family-sized homes.
- Our housing manager – CityWest Homes – is popular with residents, with some of the highest satisfaction ratings in the country. CityWest Homes' costs are some of the highest in the country.

Homes

What we plan to do

- We will set a target to deliver 1,250 new affordable homes over the next five years. This will be reflected in the new planning policies we are developing as part of the review of the City Plan.
- We will make the most of opportunities to develop new homes on our estates, improving design and making the most efficient use of land to meet demand pressures and to deliver new homes that better meet needs.
- We will make best use of our assets, disposing to reinvest in new and more appropriate housing.
- We will work with government to further lift restrictions so we can borrow against our own assets to develop more affordable homes

Our ambition is to deliver a minimum of 1,250 new social and intermediate homes over the next five years, to help meet some of the housing needs in the city. We recognise that this is less than the need suggested by our research; but it represents

a realistic and stretching target, and will exceed what has been delivered in recent years.

There are several ways we can do this:

- through section 106 agreements on private development schemes;
- through redeveloping our own housing estates;
- by working with our housing association registered provider partners to create new development opportunities; and
- by purchasing existing homes.

Very few developments are started by affordable housing providers in Westminster, as they cannot compete with the private sector for development sites. The bulk of new affordable housing is delivered as a result of private developments, through agreements linked to their planning consent. We have a target in our planning policy that aims to exceed 30% of all new housing developed in the city to be affordable housing.

We are actively reviewing our property portfolio, including our housing estates, to identify opportunities for new development on under-utilised spaces or redevelopment of poorly performing properties. The Housing Renewal Programme (discussed under the Places theme) is part of this and will deliver hundreds of new homes built to modern standards.

We have also identified some small scale development opportunities to deliver over 80 new homes on our estates. These include building on the ends of existing blocks, converting or redeveloping redundant storage rooms and garages and, in some instances, redeveloping small blocks.

From disposing of poorly performing properties, we have built up a fund that can be used to pay for these developments which will increase our housing stock. Through 2015/16 we will begin to discuss these schemes with residents and submit planning applications.

In the past five years the council and housing associations (known formally as registered providers) have acquired around 60 existing homes each year and converted them into affordable housing. These units tend to be ex-council properties on our estates, which therefore reduces the tenure diversity that has built up over time and does not help deliver the kind of mixed and balanced communities we want to see. It does not add to the overall supply of housing either. For these reasons, it is not an ideal way forward, but it is a quick way of increasing affordable housing supply. Where the opportunity arises to purchase a suitable property and it makes good business sense, this option will still be considered.

Much has been done by government to lift restrictions to enable local authorities to borrow against their housing stock assets to build more affordable homes. However, further lifting these restrictions - known as the "debt cap" - could help councils develop even more homes.

Homes

More intermediate housing

What we plan to do

- We will change planning policies so that in new developments we will ask for 60% of new affordable housing to be intermediate and 40% social, as this better matches demand.
- When developing on our own land, we will emphasise delivery of affordable housing.

Intermediate housing means homes for working people on low to moderate incomes who are not eligible for social housing and who cannot afford to buy or rent a home without accessing welfare benefits.

Currently, they often have no choice but to rent privately. This is particularly expensive in Westminster. Even the cheapest one bedroom property can cost £330 per week and needs an income, without benefit, of £61k. A two bedroom property, which could cost £600 per week, needs an income of £111k.

Two of the most well-known products are shared ownership and intermediate rent, most commonly operated by registered providers.

In Westminster there are approximately 1,600 intermediate homes, compared with over 27,000 social rented homes. But the demand for intermediate housing is nearly as high as for social housing and opportunities for the 3,800 households on the waiting list are very limited.

We consider this means there is a need to boost the supply of new intermediate homes in Westminster and to provide more opportunities within the existing affordable housing stock for households that are working, but whose incomes are low. Our aim is therefore to increase new supply of intermediate housing to better match demand.

We propose to change planning policy so that in new affordable housing developments, 60% of homes will be intermediate housing compared with 40% now ¹. This will not reduce our supply of existing social housing but will help to grow the intermediate sector more quickly, from a low base.

We aim to deliver at least 750 new intermediate homes over the next five years, through section 106 planning obligations linked to planning

permissions for developments of homes to be sold on the open market, or through our own redevelopment schemes.

For developments on the council's own land, intermediate homes will be prioritised unless there is a particular local social housing need, such as overcrowding, which could be addressed through the new development. We will look at schemes on a case by case basis and in their local context.

Most of the sites we have identified are very small and will deliver fewer than 10 units. Under planning policy these sites fall below the size threshold above which affordable housing is sought, so they could be developed. Our proposal therefore will boost affordable housing supply over and above what would otherwise occur.

¹ For further details, see the "Affordable Housing" consultation booklet published as part of the review of the City Plan.

Homes

New kinds of intermediate housing

What we plan to do

- We will run a competition on one of our sites for an intermediate housing development that delivers a new, innovative type of intermediate housing (or “product”). If this is successful we will roll it out more widely.
- We will develop and offer our own intermediate housing products where it makes sense to do so, to help plug the gaps in the current product range.
- We will carry out a further review of intermediate housing to ensure it promotes mobility and allows future generations to benefit

Households registered for intermediate housing have a range of different incomes (eligibility, which is set by the Mayor of London, is currently for households with an income of up to £80k), but most commonly their incomes are between £20k to £40k. As the existing low cost home ownership products are linked to market values, much intermediate housing is only affordable to those with incomes of £40k or more and with significant savings.

The upper end of the intermediate sector is well provided for by existing products and housing providers. So we see the council’s role as addressing the needs of those in the lower and middle income groups: households with incomes of up to about £40k. Where possible we will develop our own intermediate housing products tailored for these households.

We have identified a need to develop a greater range of intermediate housing products that work in our high value property market. We want to provide the right product for people at different stages of their lives and, in particular, more products for people with lower incomes and without significant savings.

Due to the high property values in Westminster, and the structure of the mortgage market, it is hard to develop more affordable intermediate housing products to buy which are ‘mortgageable’. We have been speaking to the Council of Mortgage Lenders about this and propose to initiate a competition on one of our development sites, to see if a provider/developer/financier can come up with a viable home ownership product suitable for those on our waiting list.

We are also in discussions with one of our partners about supporting a product that mimics home ownership by giving a resident a return on ‘equity’, but doesn’t rely on the resident obtaining a mortgage. This product would enable those with only small deposits to live in an intermediate housing property in Westminster for three years, after which their deposit would have grown to an amount that would enable them to access ownership. Still in its early stages as an idea, we will be working on this in the coming year and aim to build up to a portfolio of around 100 properties of this kind. With each property turning over every three years, there is potential to assist 500 households into home ownership over a 15 year period.

We want intermediate housing to provide a ‘step up’, but not always to be for life in Westminster. This would enable us to help more people, as properties can be relet as people move on to their next step on the housing ladder. We will therefore continue our research and engagement with experts across the housing sector to review how intermediate housing can facilitate mobility, so people don’t get ‘stuck’ with no way of progressing on their housing journey.

Homes

Disposal of affordable properties

One further step we intend to take for lower income households is to work towards allocating up to 100 social housing lettings per year in ways that do not affect our ability to address homelessness. This proposal is dealt with in more detail under the Prosperity theme.

Westminster is an expensive and attractive place to live which is home to over 600,000 jobs. We can never meet potential demand for intermediate housing from everyone that would like to live here. However, we will review our current priorities to ensure we are prioritising the right households for intermediate housing.

What we plan to do

- We will work with local registered providers to ensure disposal receipts are reinvested in Westminster, and promote stock rationalisation among registered providers where this is financially viable.
- We will seek to negotiate nomination rights to homes delivered outside Westminster where registered providers are unable to reinvest disposal receipts back in the city.

Due to financial, regulatory and business pressures, registered providers are increasingly engaged in actively managing their assets, much like the council is now doing. This sometimes means that they seek to dispose of their high value assets and reinvest the proceeds in delivering more housing in cheaper areas. Homes in Westminster are obviously high value assets and are likely targets for these disposal programmes.

When the council disposes of a property, the receipt is ring-fenced for reinvestment in the city. By contrast, there is no requirement for a registered provider that disposes of a property to reinvest the proceeds in that local area. Since 2006, over 240 registered provider properties have been sold on the open market in Westminster.

The council has few levers to stop this happening; but we are working with registered providers to minimise the impact. We can, for example, introduce a system of 'Preferred Partner' status, whereby only those that meet certain standards will be recommended by the council as development partners on schemes delivered through council planning policy, or be granted subsidy from the council's Affordable Housing Fund for their schemes; or we could use our Affordable Housing Fund monies to procure the properties where this makes economic sense.

We can also seek to negotiate nomination rights to properties outside Westminster that have been funded from proceeds arising from disposals in the city. All of these options are being considered by the council.

Homes

Homes outside Westminster

What we plan to do

- We will investigate the potential delivery of affordable homes beyond our borders.

No matter what we do, we will never provide enough homes in Westminster for everyone who wants to live here. Even if we meet our target of delivering 250 homes per year, that is still 170 less than our housing needs assessment suggests. So we need to start thinking about whether some people's needs can be better met by us helping them to access housing outside Westminster, or even by direct provision by the council of housing outside the city.

When considering development of homes in areas outside Westminster we will have to be mindful of the pressures also faced in these areas and to meet our legal duties. Wherever possible we aim to use our resources to their best effect to support regeneration activities and to ensure the sustainability of local communities.

Westminster is part of a Londonwide housing market and supporting the London economy and addressing London-wide housing needs should be our aim.

Homes

Reviewing CityWest Homes

What we plan to do

- We will implement the actions arising from our review of CityWest Homes, focusing on costs and value for money.

Our housing management provider – CityWest Homes – has been in operation since 2001 and is very popular with residents. The council has a ten-year management agreement with CityWest Homes which runs until 2022, with a break clause in 2016.

The council recently undertook a review of housing management options which concluded that there is no financial or performance imperative to bring our housing management provider back in-house, as many other councils are currently doing. There are, however, a number of areas to focus on in the future.

There is a high standard of service and the quality of our estates is also high, but this comes at a cost. When compared with other similar housing managers, CityWest Homes' costs are some of the highest in the country. This is partly because Westminster housing stock is expensive to maintain and repair, but the management cost base is also high.

For example, the network of 12 estate offices is twice the number of the closest comparator borough. The repairs service is highly responsive, and residents are very satisfied with the service, but this results in a high cost per home and the age of the stock means the average number of repairs per property is relatively high.

The review also highlighted that CityWest Homes has a major stake in many neighbourhoods in need of improvement and can play a strong regeneration role. It has an enduring relationship with many Westminster residents with multiple needs and can do more to deliver the council's objectives around tackling social disadvantage; supporting residents to be healthy, independent and economically active.

We propose to continue with the current management model through CityWest Homes, at least until the end of the current management agreement. We will also refocus our attention on driving value for money and transforming the business to more closely align it with the council's wider service agendas.

Homes

Making homes more energy efficient

What we plan to do

- Lobby with our partners for a fairer share of funding for energy programmes for central London.

While we have programmes to improve council homes and make them more energy efficient, the nature of the stock in Westminster and in much of central London means private properties can be particularly difficult to make more energy efficient. This is because they are often in conservation areas and in blocks in multi-ownership, so there are legal barriers to making alterations and improvements. As a result, central London properties have received less from national energy programmes compared with other areas. Together with our partners, such as the Mayor and London Councils, we will lobby for a fairer share of this funding and for joint work to be done to resolve these legal barriers.



Homes

What do you think?

1. Do you think our target of 1,250 new affordable homes over five years is reasonable? Do you have any ideas about ways we could boost delivery even further?
2. Do you agree we should focus on growing the intermediate sector in Westminster and focus on developing more products for people with lower incomes?
3. What are the characteristics of an 'intermediate' home or housing product that households in this sector most need?
4. Are there any groups of workers that particularly need to work in Westminster and should have higher priority? If so, why?
5. What is the best approach to ensuring that receipts from disposal of affordable properties in Westminster are re-invested in Westminster? Is it more important to ensure the London-wide supply of affordable homes is increased?
6. Do you think Westminster should be using its resources to deliver homes outside the borough boundaries?
7. Do you agree that we should continue with our current housing management model, and retain CityWest Homes as our housing management provider?



People | 2

People

What are our objectives?

- We want to improve health outcomes for people whose housing conditions are affecting their health.
- We want to provide a wider range of housing options for older people and reduce the pressures on adult and health care services.
- We want to relieve the pressures of overcrowding faced by many households.
- We want to have a coordinated response to homelessness and its prevention and to use all the tools available to manage high demand.
- We want to involve a broader range of people in the development of our housing policies.

Why is this important?

- Excess cold, damp and condensation are the main health hazards in poor housing. They can lead to increased winter deaths and greater risk of heart attack and stroke, particularly in older people.
- Poor quality housing can lead to poor health outcomes. It is estimated to cost the NHS £600m per year nationally. Locally, the cost is estimated at between £750k and £2 million.
- Westminster's population of older people is growing, and people are living longer into older age. The population aged 65+ is projected to increase to 37,052 by 2034 (43% increase over 20 years). The population aged 85+ is projected to nearly double over 20 years, from 3,370 to 6,541.
- Of the population aged 65-84, 45% own their own homes, while 35% live in social housing and 18% rent privately.
- Despite concerted effort in recent years to find solutions, overcrowding remains an issue for council tenants. There are currently just over 1,000 households on our waiting lists awaiting a transfer due to overcrowding.
- Each year we have responsibilities to house between 600-700 homeless households but our ability to accommodate them is very limited by available supply.
- We want everyone to give their views on our housing services and have a say on what we should concentrate on in future.

People

Improving residents' health

What we plan to do

- We will invest £12m to tackle structural cold and damp in over 5,800 homes.
- We will identify 450 tenants most at risk of poor health and work with them to improve their living conditions.
- Where unhealthy properties cannot be improved cost-effectively, we will dispose of them and reinvest the proceeds in better homes.

Poor housing can have a detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of residents living in affected homes. Hazards such as damp, mould, condensation and excess cold are particularly likely to impact the health of residents and lead to increased risk of winter deaths, heart attack and stroke, particularly among older people. This might suggest that capital investment programmes targeted at rectifying these hazards across the portfolio would improve health outcomes overall.

However, evidence from local Public Health research shows that in Westminster, even properties with the worst thermal performance

are not necessarily giving rise to worse health outcomes in Westminster. This is why a two pronged approach is needed; investing in our stock to ensure properties are not damp and cold which will prevent associated health problems from arising, alongside a more intelligence-led and person-centred approach, that targets interventions to the homes of residents who are particularly vulnerable.

With the support of funding from the council's Public Health Service, we have begun a programme of identifying vulnerable residents whose homes are in poor condition; and taking a proactive approach to agreeing and prioritising a programme of capital works to these homes.

In line with this, we will be educating residents on healthy practices in the home to reduce instances of mould and condensation. Most of our housing stock is located within conservation areas, or is in a listed building, which often limits the physical alterations that we can make.

Over the next five years we aim to identify 450 council properties where a resident's health is at

risk, and address property conditions where required. We also plan to invest £12m in addressing damp, condensation and cold in over 5,800 properties.

In some cases, it may not be cost effective to make improvements to a property and, where appropriate, we will consider disposal. In these cases we will earmark the receipt for reinvestment in new, better quality housing to replace the homes lost.

People

Housing and support for vulnerable people

What we plan to do

- We will work with our partners to jointly identify the future housing needs of vulnerable people
- We will work with housing partners on meeting the requirements of the Care Act 2014 to help provide integrated care, support and prevention services.
- We will look at the way public services are provided to vulnerable people and consider ways in which they can be made more efficient and joined up. We will integrate any new ways of working into our Housing Options Service when it is re-commissioned in 2017.

We provide housing and support services for a wide range of people through residential care, supported housing and through support at home; however, we face significant challenges in meeting their needs and in understanding these as they change and become more complex.

We need to work more closely with our partners to jointly identify the housing needs of vulnerable people as they change so we can commission the right services. A particular need has been identified to review our provision of older people's housing (see the next section).

The Care Act 2014 aims to ensure the wellbeing of the person needing care and their carer, and to prevent and delay the need for care and support. The provision of suitable accommodation plays a key role in this, as does the right advice and information about housing options and services which prevent the need for care, such as handy person services.

Housing workers coming into contact with people who may need care and support have a role in providing broader advice on preventative services. We are training front line staff on this. We need to work with our partners and the services that we commission to ensure their staff are also giving the same advice.

The council is also looking at the way public services (including housing) are provided to vulnerable people, as often they approach multiple services provided by a number of the organisations (including the council and health services). Coordination is needed to ensure the best use is made of resources and people's needs are met in a holistic way. We will consider ways of doing this when we re-commission our Housing Options Service which carries out homelessness assessments.

People

Older people's housing fit for the future

What we plan to do

- We will work with Adult Social Care and health services to establish the role of housing services in meeting the future needs of older people.
- We will review our portfolio of older people's housing to ensure it is right for the future.

Westminster wants to ensure that older residents live longer, healthier, independent lives and are empowered to play as full a role in society as possible. Our Adult Care Service's key priority for older people is to reduce entry to hospital and residential homes and to assist swift discharge from hospital when people are ready to leave.

Housing plays an important role in supporting these objectives: by keeping people in their own homes for as long as possible; by preventing the need for hospitalisation or care; by delivering an appropriate range of housing that meets older people's needs; and through community support and involvement.

By addressing housing conditions that affect people's health, we can help to reduce the demands on the Health Service.

Westminster's older population is growing, with a particularly high increase projected for those aged over 85. As this older population grows, illnesses such as dementia will also increase. A high proportion of older people in Westminster live alone and compared with national figures there is a low level of unpaid care provision. These factors significantly increase demands on adult social care services which could be improved by the type of housing and related services we provide.

Adaptations are also important, as they enable older people to remain living in their own home and can prevent a move into specialist accommodation. Each year around 200 clients are referred to CityWest Homes for adaptations, the majority of whom are aged between 51-80 years old. Since 2012 there has been an increase in more complex and urgent cases with over 30% of referrals being due to the risk of falling.

We currently have a stock of around 1,000 units of Community Supportive Housing (sheltered housing), with similar numbers provided by registered providers. Some of this stock is considered to be of poor quality and is unlikely to be adequate to meet the needs of our older population in the future. Some 42% of units are

studios; only 6% are fully wheelchair accessible. People do not always want to move to these types of homes and there is also no tenure choice available. The options for older Westminster residents who own their own homes (including council leaseholders) are very limited.

There are a number of options we might consider if we reshape Community Supportive Housing. However, given the predicted growth in the older population - which will place increased demands on health and adult care services - and likely changes in the kind of homes older residents will need and want, we need to ensure that our housing assets are being used most efficiently. We also need to ensure that housing services are aligned to and complementing the wider objectives of Adult Social Care and health services and delivering cost effective services.

To do this we will need to work with Adult Social Care and health services to establish the role for housing services in meeting the future needs of older people. So in the coming year, we plan to fully review our provision of older people's housing to meet identified needs and deliver the type of housing people aspire to live in.

People

Tackling overcrowding

What we plan to do

- We will address overcrowding for 1,000 households over five years through a range of measures.

There are currently over 1,000 households on our housing waiting lists that are living in overcrowded conditions. This is one of the more serious housing issues we are aiming to tackle, as it can have a significant detrimental impact on the health of residents, children's education and family relationships. It can also affect neighbours and communities.

Each year we rehouse around 60 overcrowded households, but are hindered by the make-up of our social housing stock. With over half of our stock consisting of studio or one-bedroom units, few opportunities are available for larger families in overcrowded properties to move to a bigger home. As part of our asset management plans, we are reconfiguring the council's housing stock: increasing the number of family-sized units through new acquisitions and developments, and disposing of some smaller properties.



There are a number of regional and national schemes to which the council subscribes, through which overcrowded households can move to homes better suited to their needs. For instance, Homeswapper and House Exchange enable tenants across the country to swap their homes. Others, such as the Seaside and Country Homes Scheme, Housing Moves and Homefinder are schemes through which vacant social homes are advertised and overcrowded tenants are prioritised. These schemes are regularly publicised and promoted to Westminster residents.

We also continue to promote downsizing among existing tenants, encouraging residents with spare rooms to move to smaller, more appropriate properties so these homes can be made available for overcrowded families.

People

Addressing homelessness

What we plan to do

- Where possible, we will discharge our housing duty to homeless households who are able to manage a tenancy into the private rented sector.
- Stimulate a debate across London on a different approach to managing homelessness which results in better outcomes for those affected.

Homelessness places significant pressure on our housing services. Each year we accept 600 – 700 homeless households requiring housing from the council. Households accepted as homeless are placed in temporary accommodation to wait for a social home to become available. An increasing trend in Westminster is for households to have been made homeless through the ending of a private sector tenancy. Our waiting list is 75% higher this year than it was in 2010.

With early notification, we will aim to work with the household and their landlord so that they can remain in their home, or so that we can assist them to find alternative accommodation before becoming homeless. This is not always possible and the household then moves into a temporary home.

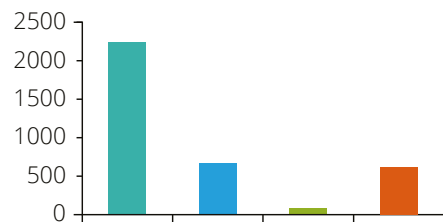
Where possible, our approach will be to make homeless households a direct offer of a private tenancy, when they can manage one, into suitable and good quality housing, so they can move into settled accommodation more quickly rather than facing long waits in temporary accommodation. Most of these offers will be outside Westminster where properties are affordable to non-working people on benefits.

With Westminster's high private rents (a two-bedroom property can cost over £600 per week) it has not been possible to procure enough temporary accommodation inside the city which is affordable to non-working people on benefits. As a result around 50% of temporary accommodation is outside city boundaries. All London boroughs face similar pressures so it can also be difficult to procure enough affordable temporary accommodation within London, due to the competition for properties and rent levels.

People

A new approach to homelessness in London?

Westminster's homelessness acceptances are in the top 10 of all London boroughs² but our ability to offer homeless households social rented housing is more limited compared with other areas because of the lack of land to develop new social homes in the city and the high cost of what land is available. Also, simply not enough existing social homes become available to accommodate them – less than 600 each year. Already around 70% of all social homes are let to homeless households and we also have to consider other groups in need of housing.



- Existing households in temporary accommodation
- New homeless acceptances each year
- New housing supply each year
- Existing properties becoming vacant each year

This results in homeless households having very long waits in temporary accommodation which they may not face in other areas. This is not a satisfactory solution for these households. It is also very expensive.

The council would support a fairer financial settlement for the funding of homelessness and temporary accommodation which enables local authorities to meet their statutory duties, whilst covering costs, particularly in high value areas. We would also support a debate on the best way to address homelessness in London as these are problems faced by many of the capital's boroughs. One option could be for the Mayor to take a more strategic approach to meeting the needs of homeless households across London.

People

Involving people

The council is reviewing how it engages with people and gets their views on its services and priorities for the future. Using new methods will help us know what a broader range of people in the community think about housing issues, which has traditionally been the case.

² In 2013/14 Westminster accepted the 9th highest number of homeless households out of the 32 London boroughs.

People

What do you think?

1. What do older people want and need in terms of housing in Westminster?
2. How can housing services best help to reduce the burdens on adult social care and health services?
3. Are there better ways to address London's homelessness problem?
4. What is the best way of getting people's views about housing policies?





Places | 3

Places

What are our objectives?

- We are committed to delivering great neighbourhoods which support a good and improving quality of life for all residents, working with local people to build positive and sustainable places.
- We are committed to the successful delivery of Phase 1 of our housing renewal programme.
- Once Phase 1 is delivered, we intend to make housing renewal business as usual so that we continually ensure our homes and estates are up to modern standards, meeting the needs of residents now and in the future and supporting London's overall growth.
- We want all landlords involved in our communities to be managing their properties properly, to be responsive to residents' needs, and to invest in our local communities and neighbourhoods.
- We want to improve the use of our community buildings and estate offices.

Why is this important?

- Elements of our housing stock are reaching the end of their economic life and need updating to maintain the health, safety and comfort of our residents.
- Our estate renewal programme has been in the planning stages up until now. Now we need to get on and deliver.
- Demand for affordable housing in Westminster is high. We need to make the most of all opportunities within our land holdings to boost supply.
- There are over 40 registered provider landlords that own or manage approximately half the affordable housing in Westminster, leading to a wide range of management standards and practices.
- The council has a wide range of local facilities from which services can be better coordinated and more effectively delivered.

Places

Delivering estate renewal

What we plan to do

- We will focus on high quality delivery of the existing estate renewal schemes.
- We will continue to review our estates so that, once Phase 1 of the renewal programme is delivered, renewal becomes 'business as usual'.

Our Housing Renewal Strategy was published in 2010, setting out plans to deliver five major regeneration schemes: Church Street, Paddington Green; Tollgate Gardens Estate; Ebury Bridge Estate; Brunel Estate; and Westbourne Green. Three of these are now progressing. As Brunel and Westbourne residents voted against the proposals to renew their areas, renewal plans in those places are not being pursued.

Over the past few years we have been working with residents and design professionals to develop firm plans for these three areas. Planning permission has now been granted for Tollgate Gardens, Ebury Bridge and the first few sites to be developed in Church Street. Projects in this first renewal phase will deliver in the region of 160 additional affordable homes and significantly improved homes to replace the 320 social and

private homes that will be demolished as part of the plans. There will also be more than 400 new private homes plus new commercial and community facilities. Our aim is to make the best possible use of our assets and to maximise the benefits and opportunities they provide.

We are focused on ensuring these projects get delivered, and that wider regeneration benefits are also well integrated into the schemes.

In our renewal areas we aim to improve the business infrastructure and retail offer available, including increasing the number of affordable workspaces designed for start-up businesses and small enterprises. We also aim to deliver new and improved community facilities and to significantly improve areas of public realm, open space and wildlife habitats.

New buildings in our renewal areas will meet high standards in terms of design, sustainability and energy efficiency - bringing benefits to residents in terms of reduced energy bills, better health outcomes, and wider environmental benefits. Environmental sustainability is fully integrated into our plans in these areas.

We intend to incorporate high standards of sustainable and inclusive design and architecture in all new developments and to protect, enhance and sensitively upgrade buildings located within conservation areas. Our aim is for our renewed estates to pass the test of time so they will be places that people want to live in now and in the future.

Renewal schemes have a long lead-in time, and are costly to implement. Early and continuing engagement with residents and identifying funding are crucial to progressing schemes and maintaining momentum.

We will continually review our estates to identify where renewal is needed. Estate renewal will become 'business as usual' for us, to be considered as an option for all estates when investment is planned.

Places

Better management and use of community facilities

What we plan to do

- With CityWest Homes, we will explore establishing partnerships with other housing providers, as well as healthcare, social and employment organisations in order to meet customers' needs in one place.
- We will seek to incorporate renewable and decentralised energy provision in our housing renewal schemes.

Housing services are often located in neighbourhoods where there are residents with a range of needs, many of them relying on other council and public services for support. As housing managers, CityWest Homes and registered providers need to show leadership in the places and for the communities where they work.

This means not just providing housing services or managing major works, but taking a broader view of local economic, social and environmental needs such as: helping people into work; considering the care, support and health needs of vulnerable residents; and working to ensure Westminster's housing estates are fully integrated

with the neighbourhoods in which they are located and support their success.

We are fortunate to have a network of community buildings, estate offices and housing teams based across the city. We need to ensure we work with residents and residents' associations to make the best use of these assets in helping to meet the needs of the whole community. We will investigate offering a broader range of services from our estate offices and we will work with residents and the voluntary sector to further improve the use of these and our other community buildings on estates.

Places

Church Street Phase 2

What we plan to do

- We will work with the Mayor to secure Housing Zone status for Church Street Phase 2 so we have resources available when the time is right.

We are working with the Mayor of London on the possibility of designating a Housing Zone around Church Street and Edgware Road. Housing Zones are areas where local authorities, providers and other stakeholders work with the Mayor of London to accelerate delivery of housing to meet the capital's needs, backed where necessary by additional funding. Such a designation would bring additional financial capacity to help us deliver new homes here earlier than planned. It may also lead to private sites coming forward for development too.

Plans for Church Street Phase 2 are currently being developed and will be discussed with residents.

Places

Working with registered providers

What we plan to do

- We will work with registered providers to have a joined up ambition for a local area and investigate with them how we can jointly respond to anti-social behaviour.
- We will offer registered providers the opportunity to run services and community programmes from council buildings.
- We will investigate options for offering CityWest Homes management services to registered providers who don't have a local management presence.
- We will investigate operating a preferred partner system for registered providers that meet our standards relating to management, condition and provision of performance information.

There are over 40 registered providers operating in Westminster, with responsibility for just over 15,000 affordable housing units. These registered provider landlords are independent of the city council and are regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency. The council does not have direct control over registered providers but

works in partnership with them to meet the needs of Westminster residents.

Many registered providers are doing innovative work locally to support their tenants and to make contributions to communities. We want to learn from their experiences and also to work with them to have a joined up ambition for the local area.

Of the 40 registered providers, we work most closely with 11 who own over 70% of the housing stock. The remainder have relatively small stock holdings. It is rare for a registered provider to own a large housing estate in Westminster; they traditionally have small blocks in various locations dotted across the city.

Westminster is concerned that all social tenants and leaseholders should be provided with a good housing management service regardless of their landlord. This should include minimum standards relating to response times, complaints and repairs requests, carrying out repairs and cleaning to an acceptable standard and dealing with anti-social behaviour.

It is recognised that delivering this can be difficult for a landlord with no local presence, so the

council is investigating ways in which landlords can work better together to deliver a consistent service for residents.

Of our 11 major registered provider partners, only four have an estate office located in the city for their general needs residents and only one is open Monday to Friday. Two registered providers hold regular housing surgeries in the city and two have offices specifically for sheltered or supported schemes.

The majority of registered providers have a centralised call centre, to handle all aspects of housing management enquiries.

CityWest Homes currently operates a network of 16 area or estate offices across the city, some of which are not regularly used by the council's own tenants. We are looking at the way these offices run and if they meet customers' changing needs.

The council may be able to share capacity at a number of these offices with registered providers who could use these facilities to engage with their own local tenants and provide services from these buildings. Our emerging Employment and Enterprise strategies will also help to identify gaps in services and opportunities for provision.

A lot of the stock owned by different registered providers and that are owned by the council overlap by postcode location and even on a street level. There may be opportunities for stock transfers or management arrangement between various landlords with the potential to improve efficiency and effectiveness which will lead in turn to improved performance and tenant satisfaction levels.

The council will initiate discussions with registered provider landlords and then develop business plans for implementation where it is considered such transfers or management arrangements may be suitable.

Many councils operate a preferred partner system, whereby they direct new development opportunities only to those registered provider partners that have qualified to join their list by satisfying certain performance criteria. At present Westminster does not operate such a list and developers providing for affordable housing required through the planning system are free to approach any affordable housing provider they wish.

Development opportunities in Westminster are attractive to those organisations aspiring to grow. Operating such a preferred partner list may be one lever that the council can use to encourage better performance standards across the sector. Registered providers meeting Westminster's performance criteria would then be entitled to bid for funding from the Affordable Housing Fund, and would be supported as potential affordable housing partners on future section 106 sites.

We will investigate whether establishing such a preferred partner system would be appropriate in Westminster.

To ensure that complaints from tenants about properties owned by registered providers are dealt with in a timely manner, we will request that all our major registered provider landlords enter into a Joint Working Protocol with the council's Residential Environmental Health Service linked to investigations into housing conditions. Signing up to such a protocol could also be a requirement to becoming a preferred partner.

We also want to have a consistent approach across the city to tackling anti-social behaviour. New legal powers enable members of the community to trigger a full case review where there is anti-social behaviour and we would like all registered providers to participate in these reviews, although of course many already do. Additionally we also want to work with registered providers on how we can better prevent gang related anti-social behaviour.

Places

What do you think?

1. Are there any estates that you would suggest for inclusion in the future estate renewal programme?
2. How are residents best involved in plans for renewing an estate?





Prosperity | 4

Prosperity

What are our objectives?

- We want to open up social housing to a broader range of households so more low income working people who are vital to Westminster's economic success can benefit.
- We want to support social housing residents experiencing long-term unemployment to overcome barriers and move towards employment.
- We want to ensure that social housing residents from all areas of Westminster, including those with specialist needs, can benefit from the economic opportunities in and around the West End.

Why is this important?

- High homeless demand from vulnerable households means that our ability to provide social housing solutions for a wider range of households, such as low income workers, is limited.
- Social housing residents have lower rates of employment compared with other tenures and this has significant knock-on impacts on health and wellbeing, as well as on the financial security of individuals and families and their ability to secure housing that meets their needs.
- Access to local job opportunities reduces travel costs and commuting time for the individual and also helps Westminster's employers to secure locally-based staff they can count on having good access to the workplace.

Prosperity

Flexibility in allocating social housing

What we plan to do

- We want to allocate some social housing to low income working households that wouldn't ordinarily have priority for it. Our long term ambition is to let 100 social homes each year to this group, but only where supply allows, and in ways that also take account of our duty to the homeless.

Over time, the range of households that have been able to live in social housing has diminished. High demand from households to whom we have a statutory housing duty means that there are few lettings available each year for those without a priority need. Social housing in Westminster has, in effect, become off limits for anyone who isn't vulnerable in some way.

Working people that aren't in priority need for social housing, and with low incomes of around £20k or less, have few housing options in Westminster. Even intermediate housing is too expensive for them and their incomes are better matched to council rents which are on average around £122 per week.

Not being able to afford rents in London's private rented sector, these households are forced out of London and faced with expensive and long commutes to their workplaces. This affects not only their home lives, but the businesses in which they are employed, particularly if the employee is required to be at work at unsocial hours when public transport is less available.

We therefore propose to work towards allocating up to 100 social housing lettings per year, over time and where supply allows it, to low income working households that are eligible for social housing but wouldn't ordinarily have priority for it. Although the fact that we will increase new social housing supply (see the Homes theme) means that the number of social homes available for vulnerable people will not reduce, we intend to make sure this step does not affect our ability to address homelessness. These lettings will be into studio and one-bedroom units, for which turnover is relatively high. We also intend to establish benchmarks – such as the number of households in temporary accommodation - to guide us about when this approach should be introduced and the

number of homes it should cover each year. Supporting social housing residents and applicants into work will also help as many people as possible to benefit from this opportunity.

Prosperity

Helping long-term unemployed residents

What we plan to do

- Work with partners to provide intensive, tailored support to social housing residents experiencing long-term unemployment to help them move towards work.
- Continue to broaden our 'Recruit London' programme to help social housing residents into West End jobs, including adding a specific focus on residents with disabilities or other specific needs.

Recent research³ shows that around half of all Westminster social housing residents in receipt of Housing Benefit also claim Employment Support Allowance or Incapacity Benefit, meaning that they have a health condition – mental or physical – which has presented a barrier to employment. Over half of those economically inactive in social housing are long-term sick or disabled. Caring responsibilities, and the cost of childcare, are also a significant factor.

In recent years we have run a number of successful projects focused on housing estates for Westminster residents in housing need. Key examples include the HELP and HELP Enterprise

projects focused on helping local people in temporary accommodation into sustained employment or self-employment through tailored advice, guidance, mentoring and support.

We announced in "City for All" our aspiration to work with and challenge partners to reduce significantly long term unemployment in Westminster. In recent months we have trialled new services such as the Welfare Reform Team within the Housing Options Service and the Families and Communities Employment Service (FACES) which have provided tailored support to unemployed residents, helping them to navigate through the system and access specialist services to address their barriers to work.

We are expanding this approach through our participation in the Central London Forward Working Capital pilot, which will support individuals with health conditions who have left the national Work Programme without securing work. We will look at how we can build on this experience to put employment at the heart of the council's work with people through health, adult and children's services.

The West End – as well as being home to around 59,000 Londoners – has one of the largest and most diverse concentrations of jobs anywhere in the UK, hosting 610,000 employees. Yet the fringes of the West End include areas of significant unemployment, particularly among social housing residents.

Linking to our aspirations to address long-term unemployment, we plan to continue our successful Recruit London programme, managed by Cross River Partnership and run in conjunction with a range of private sector partners. Recruit London provides a free recruitment service for West End employers, with specialist 'job brokers' working with employers to identify vacancies, pre-screening candidates referred by Westminster's range of employment support providers and helping them prepare for interview. It then provides on-going support while a candidate is settling into their new job to ensure all goes well.

We will also expand the programme to add a job broker who focuses specifically on securing jobs and work experience opportunities for residents with more specialist support needs.

³ *Social tenants and economic wellbeing in Westminster June 2014 (Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion).*

Prosperity

What do you think?

1. What other approaches could we consider to help address long-term unemployment and help local people access the economic opportunities in the West End?
2. Should we allocate some social housing to low income working households that wouldn't ordinarily have priority? If so, what should be taken into account when deciding when to do this?





Glossary and
more information

Glossary

Adult Social Care

The team at the council that offers advice and support to adults who need help or are at risk.

Affordable housing

This is housing for eligible people who are unable to afford market housing. There are two different types:

- Social housing – rented housing which is let by local authorities or registered providers (housing associations). There are two different products: social rented housing, where rents are set through a national formula; and affordable rented properties, where rents can be up to 80% of local market levels.
- Intermediate housing – homes for sale or for rent which are below market prices but higher than social rents (see Intermediate Housing for more information).

Affordable Housing Fund

Planning policy requires there to be affordable housing on some new development sites. If this is not possible or viable, “payments in lieu” are made into the council’s Affordable Housing Fund. This is then used to fund new affordable housing elsewhere in the city.

Community Supportive Housing (also known as sheltered housing)

In Westminster this is housing for people aged 60 or over which includes a personal alarm, a link line (so residents can alert help if they need it) and a scheme manager.

Children’s Services

The team at Westminster that provides a range of support services to children, young adults and their families.

City Plan

A spatial plan for Westminster to guide new development e.g. housing, conservation, transport and the economy.

Council of Mortgage Lenders

A trade association for mortgage lenders.

Disposal receipts

Money generated when council or registered properties are sold.

Homes and Communities Agency

The regulator for social landlords (councils and registered providers). They also administer and run funding programmes for new affordable housing.

Housing Options Service

The service at Westminster which gives advice, help and support to anyone that is or about to become homeless.

Intermediate housing

Homes for sale or for rent which are below market prices but higher than social rents. The most common forms are ‘shared ownership’ and ‘intermediate rent’. The overall eligibility and priority for intermediate housing is set by the London Mayor, but some local priorities can also be set. This kind of housing is often sought by people working in professional, public or service occupations.

Glossary (continued)

Public Health Service

The service, which is now part of the council, aims to prevent disease and help people live longer and healthier lives.

Registered providers (also known as housing associations)

Not for profit organisations which provide, develop and manage affordable housing.

Section 106 Agreements and Sites

The planning system can require developers to provide additional benefits on some sites to meet new demands created by the development. These benefits can include affordable housing. The details of what is being provided are set out in legal agreements between the council and the developer. These are commonly known as Section 106 Agreements after the legislation that establishes them.

Further information

The following documents were used to help develop this draft strategy and are available online at:

www.westminster.gov.uk/housingstrategy

Westminster Housing Market Analysis Final Report: December 2014 (Wessex Economics)

Westminster Housing Market Analysis Summary Report: December 2014 (Wessex Economics)

Westminster Housing Market Study Final Report to Westminster City Council (Ecorys)

Some facts and figures

Our population

- The GLA's population projection (central scenario) suggests our population will grow by 10,300 people between 2013 - 2018
- Annual churn rates are 29-31%

Local incomes

- The average annual gross household income in 2013 was £43,000 (CACI Paycheck)

Property prices

	Westminster	London
Lower quartile flat/maisonette	£506,666	£250,000
Average flat/maisonette	£992,790	£422,512

(Hometrack)

Private rents

Per week	Westminster	London
Lower quartile 2 bed	£515	£276
Median 2 bed	£625	£322

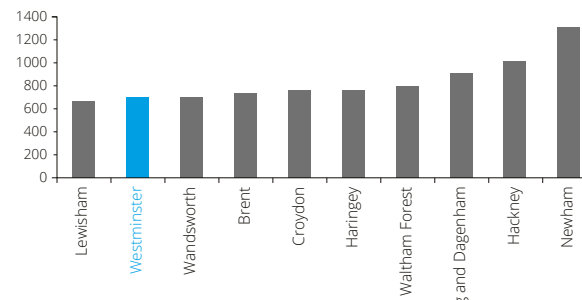
(GLA London rents map)

Households waiting for social housing in Westminster in 2015

	Studio	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed	Total
Homeless	138	24	1,233	737	203	2,335
Transfer	49	475	529	512	156	1,721
Other	313	106	37	29	11	496
Total	500	605	1,799	1,278	370	4,552

(Westminster Records)

Homeless acceptances compared with other boroughs (2013/14)



(Department for Communities and Local Government)

Social properties that become available to let each year in Westminster

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
From existing stock	732	681	568	582
From new supply	51	109	97	122
Total	783	790	665	704

(Westminster Records)

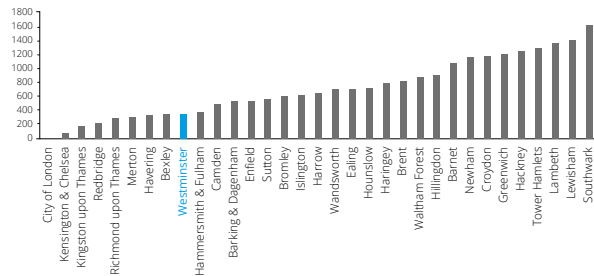
New affordable housing delivery in Westminster

	Social rent	Intermediate	Total
2004 - 2013	1,396	426	1,822
%	77%	23%	
Average no. per year	140	43	183
%	77%	23%	

(Westminster Records)

Some facts and figures (continued)

Affordable housing delivery compared with other boroughs (2010-13)

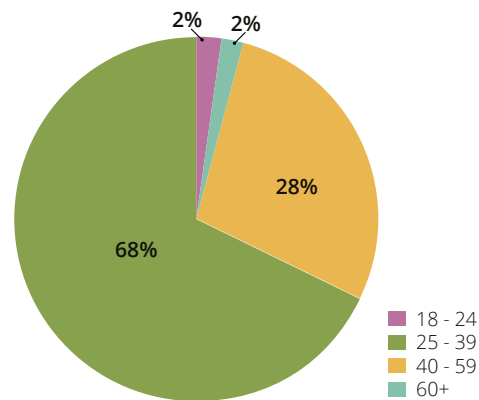


(GLA data)

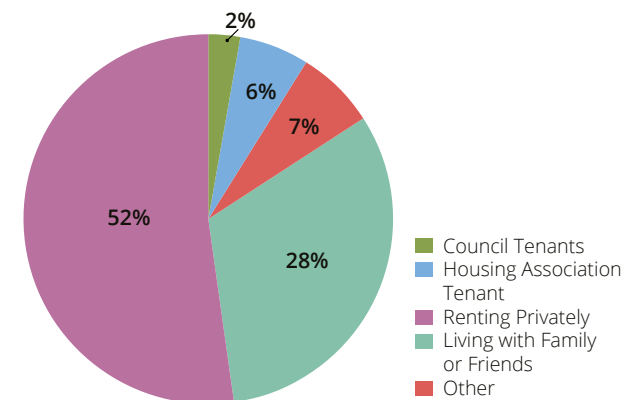
Our intermediate housing customers

The 3,800 households registered for intermediate housing work in a range of professions and include; teachers, nurses, chefs, architects, administrative workers, postal workers, IT managers, business analysts, theatre staff, hotel staff, artists and solicitors.

Age breakdown of intermediate households



Housing status of intermediate households



Income of households registered for intermediate housing

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	Total
No	2,474	1,251	144	9	3,878
Lower quartile income	£26k	£28.4k	£25.7k	£22.8k	
Average income	£32.5k	£37.3k	£36.2k	£30k	
Upper quartile income	£42.5k	£48.9k	£50k	£37.7k	

(Westminster records)

Feedback form

Responding to the consultation

Before finalising our strategy, we want to know what you think of our proposals. We will take the views expressed and use them to help us draw up our new strategy.

Throughout the document we have included questions to prompt thinking about a particular topic.

Please answer these and also provide us with additional comments you may have on any of the proposals we are making by **Friday 31st July 2015**. We would also like to know if you think there is something we have overlooked.

- Complete the online feedback form which you can find on the council website www.westminster.gov.uk/housingstrategy
- Complete this form and send to our freepost address below.
- Email us at: housingstrategy@westminster.gov.uk

Westminster Housing Strategy, FREEPOST LON 17563, 19th Floor City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QP

3. What are the characteristics of an 'intermediate' home or housing product that households in this sector most need?

4. Are there any groups of workers that particularly need to work in Westminster and should have higher priority? If so, why?

5. What is the best approach to ensuring that receipts from disposal of affordable properties in Westminster are re-invested in Westminster? Is it more important to ensure the London-wide supply of affordable homes is increased?

6. Do you think Westminster should be using its resources to deliver homes outside the borough boundaries?

7. Do you agree that we should continue with our current housing management model, and retain CityWest Homes as our housing management provider?

Homes What do you think?

1. Do you think our target of 1,250 new affordable homes over 5 years is reasonable? Do you have any ideas about ways we could boost delivery even further?

2. Do you agree we should focus on growing the intermediate sector in Westminster and focus on developing more products for people with lower incomes?

People What do you think?

1. What do older people want and need in terms of housing in Westminster?

2. How can housing services best help to reduce the burdens on Adult Social Care and health services?

3. Are there better ways to address London's homelessness problem?

4. What is the best way of getting peoples' views about housing policies?

2. How are residents best involved in plans for renewing an estate?

Prosperity What do you think?

1. What other approaches could we consider to help address long-term unemployment and help local people access the economic opportunities in the West End?

2. Should we allocate some social housing to low income working households that wouldn't ordinarily have priority? If so, what should be taken into account when deciding when to do this?

Places What do you think?

1. Are there any estates that you would suggest for inclusion in the future estate renewal programme?





City of Westminster

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