

Draft Leeds Housing Strategy 2009 – 2012

‘Create opportunities for people to live independently, in quality, affordable housing’

Introduction

The city of Leeds has been transformed over the last 20 years from a mainly industrial city into a broad-based commercial centre. Leeds is the largest city in the Yorkshire and Humber region with a population of over 750,000. Leeds has experienced the largest absolute increase in population, 4.8% since 2001, of any authority in the country. This perhaps reflects the status of Leeds as a quality place to live, work and bring up a family.

Access to affordable, quality housing, which can be treated as a home, is an important yardstick of a thriving place. Quality housing can be a foundation for every aspect of a person’s life: it can help children to excel and flourish in everything they do; be a source of self-expression; foster community pride; provide security as people get older; and be an asset that can be passed on to future generations. Affordable, quality housing is also a prerequisite for economic development and job creation.

The Leeds Housing Strategy is closely aligned to the improvement priorities, strategic outcomes and themes included within the Leeds Strategic Plan. The links between the ‘Thriving Places’ theme and the Housing Strategy are clear with shared ambitions relating to increasing the supply of affordable housing, improving housing decency and reducing homelessness. Housing and housing services also play a critical in promoting the ‘Health and Wellbeing’ of the people of Leeds. Quality housing and housing services promote the capacity of vulnerable people to live independently and to exercise choice and control over their lives. The Council and partners are becoming increasingly aware of the negative impact that poor quality housing, overcrowding and fuel poverty have on people’s health, wellbeing and life expectancy.

The Leeds Housing Strategy is being developed in an unprecedented economic climate. Some of the long-standing plans developed by the Council and partners to meet the housing challenges of the city were formulated during a period of sustained economic growth. The rising unemployment, deflationary pressure in property values, more restrictive mortgage lending practice, mothballed or discontinued housing development schemes, rising mortgage default and repossessions are some of the housing trends that have become increasingly evident in recent months. The Leeds Housing Strategy will set out how the Council and partners are responding to long-standing housing challenges and those that have emerged in recent months.

Despite the economic downturn, the Leeds Housing Strategy is clear that the key housing priorities remain constant. The city needs to increase the supply of housing, with a particular emphasis on increasing the range of affordable housing options, to improve housing quality and sustainability across all tenures and to promote the capacity for people to live independently. The Council and partners will need to be flexible and innovative to respond to changing challenges and opportunities. An increasing emphasis on helping home-owners struggling to make mortgage payments, to remain in their homes, and opportunities to bring vacant housing stock in the city into use are

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two examples of this flexible approach that will be set out in the strategy. The strategy will also reflect the steer from the Homes and Communities Agency that there will be an increased focus on the delivery of affordable rented housing.

The Leeds Housing Strategy recognises that at some point the economic position will stabilise and recover. Leeds as a city, including housing providers, needs to be ready for recovery. Long-term forecasts are for significant job growth within the Leeds district and city region. The Yorkshire and Humber Regional Spatial Strategy sets out a target to increase net additions to the housing stock from around 2,260 to 4,300 per annum. This increase is needed to support job creation given that Leeds already has more jobs than homes. The city will need to develop more housing if it is going to benefit from job creation opportunities and to reduce long distance commuting into the city.

In relation to new housing, the Housing Strategy is primarily focused on increasing the supply of affordable housing. The Council, through the Planning Authority, is accountable to government for net housing additions. The Housing Authority is primarily concerned with increasing the supply of housing for people who cannot or do not wish to secure a property on the open market. Affordable housing is that which provides for the needs of people who cannot afford to buy or rent in the open market. The term ‘housing ladder’ has been coined to describe the range of housing options that need to be available to people in the city, from low-cost rent to properties for sale or rent at market prices. A fully functioning ‘housing ladder’ would consist of sufficient options to cover the needs and preferences of all people in the city.

Significant evidence has been collected in recent years that demonstrates that the ‘Leeds housing ladder’ is not functioning to a level where most people’s housing needs and preferences are met. House price values, even with reductions of 20% in 2008, are such that property purchase is unaffordable for people without a significantly above average income or considerable capital. Council owned housing stock has continued to contract in recent years; therefore limiting access to this housing option and pushing people into unsustainable house purchase. Recent research has also highlighted that housing association rents are increasingly unaffordable for people in low or average income employment. The Leeds Housing Strategy will set out plans to increase the supply of a range of affordable housing options and to improve the functioning of the ‘Leeds housing ladder’. Affordable housing delivery is closely linked to wider housing development and the Housing Strategy will set out actions and targets relating to increasing the overall supply of housing in the city. Maximising use of existing stock will be a key element of action relating to increasing the supply of affordable housing.

Improving the quality and sustainability of housing in the city is the second key housing challenge for the city. It has been estimated that two-thirds of existing stock in the city will still be in use in 2050. The Housing Strategy will

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set out the actions that the Council, Leeds ALMOs and local housing associations are making to bringing all social housing stock up to the decency standard by 2010/11. The strategy will also consider options and opportunities for continuing to improve social housing stock post 2011. Perhaps the bigger challenge relates to improving stock condition within the private sector as rates of non-decency significantly exceed those within the social housing sector and the Council has more limited powers and resources to tackle private sector housing quality. Particular emphasis is placed on specific housing types such as back-to-backs that are more likely to contain Category 1 hazards, such as excess cold, limited fire escape routes and increased risk of falls, which are difficult to address due to building design. Improving housing quality and landlord practice within the private rented sector will be another key priority given the increasing importance of the tenure as a housing option of choice. Rising energy costs over the last two years has plunged more people into fuel poverty and opportunities to address this, primarily through improving the energy efficiency of housing, will be set out in the strategy.

Promoting the capacity of vulnerable people to achieve and/or maintain an independent living outcome is the third key housing challenge for the city. The strategy will set out how the Council and partners intend to maximise opportunities to prevent homelessness. The strategy is being developed at the same time that traditional homeless and housing advice services, provided by the Council, are being reconfigured around a housing options model. This new approach aims to deliver personalised housing options services, through a range of providers, to vulnerably housed people so that they are better able to remain in their current homes or are able to make planned, timely moves to alternative housing. The Housing Strategy is clear that the delivery of enhanced housing options services should complement rather than conflict with the Council’s duties to homeless households. The Housing Strategy will set out plans/actions to eradicate rough sleeping by 2012, in line with the governmental target. Housing-related support, adaptations and assistive technology will play an important role in helping people to live independently and prevent admissions to hospital or residential care. The Housing Strategy will set out plans to quantify the wider health and wellbeing benefits that are generated from such services. The Council and partners are committed to modernising housing provision, for older people and people with learning disabilities, to promote independent living and to enable people to exercise greater choice and control over their lives. The strategy will consider how the housing needs of groups such as refugees and Gypsy Travellers. For the latter group, the Housing Strategy will have regard for the findings of the Gypsy Traveller Housing Needs Assessment for West Yorkshire and the need to identify sufficient accommodation sites for the period up to 2015.

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Strategic Vision and Themes

The vision of the Leeds Housing Strategy 2009-2012 is to ‘create opportunities for people to live independently in quality, affordable housing’.

The strategic vision encompasses three strategic themes:

- 1. Increase affordable housing supply**
- 2. Improve housing quality**
- 3. Promote independent living**

The three strategic themes contain more specific strategic priorities:

Increasing the supply of affordable housing:

- a. Helping people to become and remain home-owners**
- b. Increasing the supply of social housing**
- c. Maximise use of existing housing stock**
- d. Deliver the right housing mix of new housing**
- e. Increase the supply of new accessible housing**

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Improve Housing Quality:

- f. Bring all social housing up to the decency standard**
- g. Identify future investment options for council housing**
- h. Increase the supply of private housing that meets the decency standard**
- i. Improve the long-term sustainability of private housing stock**
- j. Continue to improve standards in the private rented sector**
- k. Improve the standard of temporary accommodation leased through the private sector**

Promote Independent Living:

- l. Deliver high quality and enhanced housing options services so that people are able to find a solution to their housing need**
- m. Maximise opportunities to prevent homelessness**
- n. Reduce the incidence of temporary accommodation**
- o. Enable people to live independently through housing-related support, adaptations, lettings and assistive technology**
- p. Modernise housing provision for vulnerable people**
- q. Contribute to promoting community cohesion, reducing worklessness and tackling crime and anti-social behaviour**

Strategy in Context

National Context

The **Housing Green Paper Homes for the Future: More Affordable, More Sustainable** sets out the government’s commitment to deliver 2 million new homes by 2016, and 3 million by

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2020. This will entail building 240,000 new homes per year by 2016, 70,000 of which should be affordable. The **2007 Comprehensive Spending Review** has increased the funding allocated for housing from £8.8 billion in 2007/08 to £10 billion in 2010/11. However, specific programmes, such as Supporting People, have had a cut in funding.

The **Housing and Regeneration Act 2008** builds upon the Housing Green Paper and the **Cave Report** into social housing regulation. The key provisions are:

- Obliging housing authorities to involve tenants in any options appraisal carried out to consider the future management of council housing
- Making it mandatory for housing authorities to carry out a tenant ballot prior to a stock transfer
- Establishing the Homes and Communities Agency as a delivery partner for affordable housing and regeneration
- Setting up a social housing regulator – the Tenant Services Authority

The local government white paper **‘Strong and Prosperous Communities’** includes a requirement for local authorities to develop a Local Area Agreement and partly redefines the strategic housing role of local authorities as centring around ‘place shaping’ as a catalyst for delivering economic growth and prosperity.

Regional Context

The **Yorkshire and Humber Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2026** identifies that the Leeds district already accommodates more jobs than dwellings. It estimates potential job growth at 6,000 per annum and household growth at around 4,000 per year. The Plan therefore recommends that 4,300 new homes be developed in the Leeds district per year for the next 15-20 years.

The **Yorkshire and Humber Regional Strategy 2005-2021** is framed around three key themes: ‘Creating better places’, ‘Delivering better homes, choice and opportunity’ and ‘Ensuring fair access to quality housing’. The priorities set out within the strategy inform the use of available regional housing funding. An emphasis is placed upon investment that integrates housing, economic and social activity. The strategy will be reviewed in 2009.

The West Yorkshire Housing Partnership (comprising the local authorities and other housing providers within the West Yorkshire sub-region) has signed off the **West Yorkshire Housing Strategy 2008-2015**. The priorities of the strategy are:

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- Housing growth, affordability and supply
- Creating sustainable housing markets and promoting economic growth
- Promoting community cohesion
- Vulnerable People
- Environmental sustainability, energy efficiency and health

Climate Change Plan for Yorkshire and the Humber sets out specific actions and targets for reducing carbon emissions generated from building stock. Approximately 46% of carbon emissions relate to property. The government has set targets that all new housing will be carbon neutral from 2016, public buildings from 2016 and commercial buildings from 2019. The plan considers how building design, maintenance and refurbishment can lead to better homes that use far less energy – providing more affordable warmth for inhabitants and helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Local Context

The **Leeds Strategic Plan 2008-2011** is one of the key strategic documents for the city. The plan has been ratified by the Council and the wider local strategic partnership, **Leeds Initiative**, and sets out a shared set of outcomes and improvement priorities. The plan is framed around seven vision themes, which have been adopted from the longer-term **Vision for Leeds 2020**. The vision themes are Culture, Enterprise and Economy, Learning, Transport, Environment, Health and Wellbeing, Thriving Places and Harmonious Communities.

The Thriving Places theme includes the strategic outcome: ‘Improved quality of life through mixed neighbourhoods offering good housing options and better access to services and activities’. The Thriving Places and Health and Wellbeing themes contain improvement priorities relating to improving housing decency, increasing the supply of affordable housing, reducing homelessness and fuel poverty, and increasing the number of vulnerable people helped to live at home.

Housing will also contribute to the achievement of improvement priorities included within the other vision themes:

- an adequate supply of affordable housing will be needed to complement job growth
- stable housing gives children the foundation to learn and develop
- new housing development must contribute to wider environmental objectives such as cutting CO₂ emissions

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- housing policy, such as temporary accommodation placements for the homeless and asylum seekers, impacts upon community cohesion.

The **Leeds Local Area Agreement** is closely aligned to the Leeds Strategic Plan. The Local Area Agreement sets out the 35 improvement priorities for the city and has been ratified by the Council, Central Government and the Leeds Initiative. The improvement priorities are linked to performance indicators included within the **National Indicator Set**. The agreement’s housing-related indicators are:

- NI141: Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living
- NI154: Net number of additional homes provided
- NI56: Number of affordable homes delivered
- NI158: Percentage non-decent council homes
- NI187: Tackling fuel poverty
- Reduce number of homeless people (Local Performance Indicator)
- NI139: Older people helped to live at home
- NI30: Re-offending rate of priority and prolific offenders

The National Indicator Set of 198 performance indicators also includes a number of performance indicators that are housing related:

- NI142: Number of vulnerable people maintaining independent living
- NI156: Number of households living in temporary accommodation
- NI160: Local Authority tenant’s satisfaction with landlord services
- NI1: Percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area
- NI2: Percentage of people who feel they belong to their neighbourhood
- NI5: Overall satisfaction with local area
- NI7: Environment for a thriving third sector
- NI32: Repeat incidents of domestic violence
- NI119: Self reported measure of people’s overall health and wellbeing
- NI131: Delayed transfers of care from hospitals
- NI143: Proportion of offenders under probation supervision in settled and suitable accommodation at the end of their order or licence

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- NI145: Proportion of adults with learning disabilities in settled accommodation
- NI147: Proportion of former care leavers aged 19 who are in settled accommodation
- NI149: Proportion of adults in contact with secondary mental health services in settled accommodation

Leeds Strategic Housing Market Assessment (HMA) (2007) was carried out by consultants, Outside UK. It involved the assessment of cross-tenure housing need and demand within the Leeds district. The HMA identified that there was a need to develop 1889 affordable housing per units per annum up to 2020 in order to meet housing need.

Leeds Local Development Framework (LDF) provides the planning policies for Leeds and is a key delivery tool of the Housing Strategy. The Core Strategy currently being developed will set out strategic housing, including policies for affordable housing and housing mix. The existing Supplementary Planning Guidance and Informal Policy on Affordable Housing provide guidance to developers submitting planning applications for residential development, as to what affordable housing will be sought. This will be replaced by an Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in 2009 (currently at draft stages).

The **Leeds Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)** is produced jointly by NHS Leeds and Leeds City Council. It reflects on data and analysis in relation to the local population in order to identify current and predicted health and well-being needs and gives an account of what people in the local community want from their services. It is able to inform future service planning by identifying health outcomes that are not being met, health inequalities that need to be addressed, client groups with unmet needs, and services that require change.

Although Leeds is recognised as one of Britain’s most successful cities outside London, the JSNA highlights the diversity of the city’s health and wellbeing needs and highlights the gaps between those areas that are wealthy and thriving and those that suffer high levels of multiple deprivation, as well as the key issues of the impact of the changing population, vulnerable groups and broader community well being.

The JSNA addresses the link between health and housing issues; in particular, the importance of enabling people to access quality housing by illustrating the impact this has on people’s health and wellbeing. It highlights the importance of improving housing quality as a means of addressing contributors to multiple deprivation such as fuel poverty and infant mortality and identifies the key Super Output

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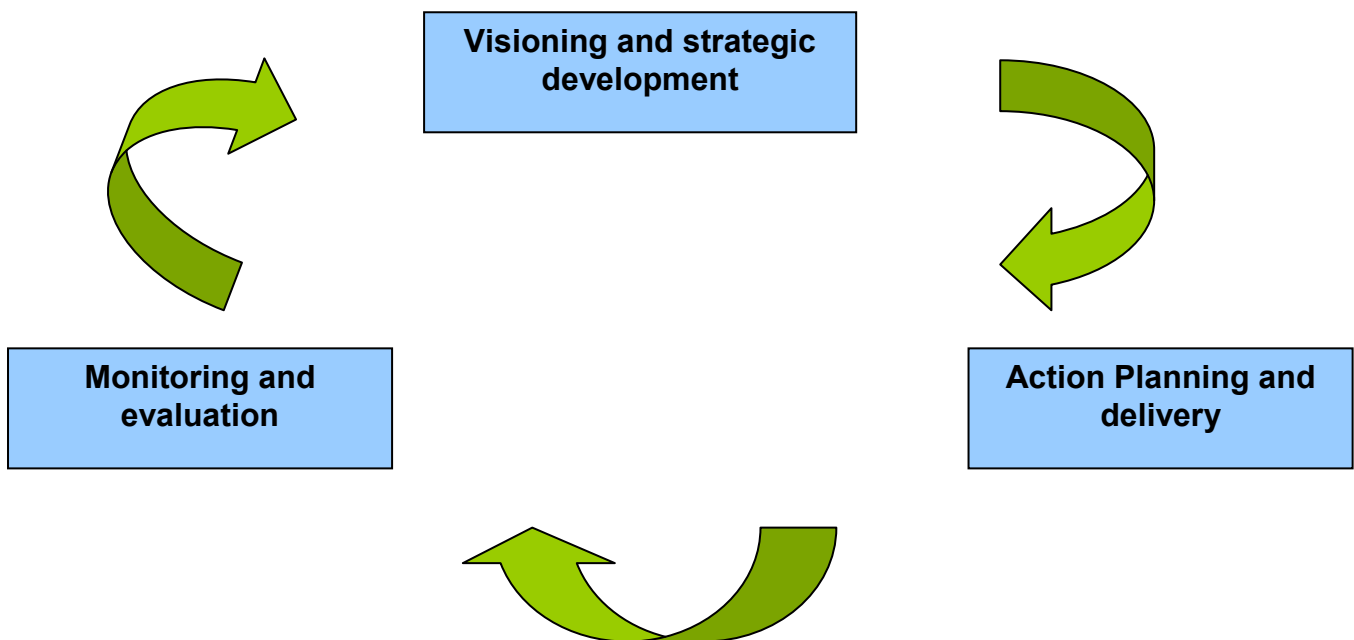
Areas (SOA) from the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007 relating to Leeds that impact on people’s health and wellbeing.

There are also a range of housing related strategies and plans that will inform the development and delivery of the Leeds Housing Strategy: These include:

- **Leeds BME Housing Strategy**
- **Leeds Disabled People’s Housing Strategy**
- **Leeds Older People’s Housing Strategy: ‘Home not Alone’**
- **Leeds Supporting People Strategy**
- **Leeds Homelessness Strategy**
- **Leeds Private Sector Housing Strategy (in development)**
- **Leeds Empty Property Strategy**
- **Safer Leeds Partnership Plan**
- **Leeds Alcohol Strategy**
- **Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy**
- **Affordable Housing Plan: ‘Making the housing ladder work’**
- **Back-to-Back Housing Strategy**
- **Supplementary Planning Guidance (to be implemented December 2007)**

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Strategic Housing Process and Governance



The strategic housing process has three concurrent strands, with the Leeds Housing Strategy document representing the initial delivery of the first stage. The Housing Strategy document will also detail agreed actions, with accompanying success measures, against each of the strategic goals included within one of the three strategic priorities: **‘Increase affordable housing supply’**, **‘Improve housing quality’** and **‘Promote independent living’**.

The most critical element of the strategic housing process will perhaps be monitoring delivery against the agreed actions. Council officers will be responsible for collecting this information so that it can be evaluated through the Leeds Housing Partnership governance framework. It is envisaged that the reporting cycle to the Leeds Housing Partnership will be modified to reflect the three strategic priorities of the Leeds Housing Strategy.

The Leeds Housing Partnership will oversee the updating of the strategic vision, priorities, goals and actions as required to ensure that they continue to reflect the housing challenge.

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Resources

To be completed.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Beyond
HCA funding				
PFI				
RHB Private Sector				
Supporting People				
Commuted Sums				
Other?				
Local Capital				
HRA/Decency				
Other?				