City of Westminster

Westminster Housing Strategy 2026-2031

Draft for Consultation



FAIRER WESTMINSTER



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Foreword

Everyone deserves a decent, safe, and affordable place to live. Making that a reality for all residents has been central to our Fairer Westminster Strategy since 2022.

This has not been easy. Westminster's position at the heart of London means we face the highest levels of rough sleeping in the UK, limited land for new homes and soaring private rents.

Tackling these challenges has shown us they cannot be solved in isolation. A shortage of social homes increases pressure on temporary accommodation; poor conditions in the private sector push more people into homelessness; and the strain on council services grows. The human cost of eviction or unsafe housing is immense, and we all share responsibility for change.

That is why this overarching Housing Strategy is so important. It brings together every aspect of housing in Westminster - linking council services, partners and residents in a joined-up approach to improve and increase local housing. It also positions the council to seize opportunities created by the government's new investment in affordable housing and reforms to renters' rights, short-term lets and leasehold arrangements.

We have already shown what is possible. Between 2022 and 2030, over 2,000 high-quality, sustainable homes are set to be delivered, including more than 1,100 for social rent - an additional 352 thanks to our Truly Affordable Housing Strategy and partnership with the Mayor of London, from whom we've secured £120m in additional funding since 2022. We've also set in motion the work to deliver the next generation of social and truly affordable homes, looking at sites across Westminster with development potential in terms of feasibility, deliverability and desirability for our communities.

Our strengthened planning policies now prioritise affordable housing in new developments. Through our Housing Compact, we are working with partners to both deliver new affordable homes and raise standards for all social tenants. As a place maker and planning authority, we are ensuring all parties in Westminster play their part in addressing the housing crisis.

For our own housing stock, we are transforming how we handle repairs, resident engagement and complaints. We have opened four new estate offices, introduced fairer tenancy and allocation policies, launched a Rent Support Fund, and created some of the most generous leaseholder payment plans in the country. While there is more to do, achieving the top C1 grade from the Social Housing Regulator reflects significant progress.

We are doing everything we can to prevent and reduce homelessness, which has sadly increased amid the cost-of-living crisis. Bringing the Housing Solutions Service in-house has strengthened our response, and last year we secured 1,000 new properties for temporary accommodation. This year, we have committed £8.2m to rough sleeping initiatives - more than any other council.

To support private renters, we launched a Private Rented Sector Tenants' Charter, and our new Selective Licensing Scheme means most private homes in Westminster will now be licensed - ensuring renters live in safe, well-managed properties with stronger protections.

We know there is still more to do to ensure every Westminster resident has a home they can be proud of. This Strategy sets out our vision to build on the progress made so far and continue making housing fairer, safer and more affordable for everyone.



Councillor Liza Begum
Cabinet Member for Housing Services



Councillor Ellie Ormsby
Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Renters

Introduction

Over the last three years, much has been done to help make a *Fairer Westminster* and creating *Fairer Housing* is an essential part of this[1].

Housing is key to this vision as it impacts across almost every aspect of people's lives. Good quality, safe, affordable and stable housing, in places where people want to live, can improve residents' physical and mental health, positively impact their access to employment, and help alleviate poverty. Housing can also deliver environmental benefits and help us meet our net zero targets. In fact, it feeds into almost every strategic priority the council has.

We have solid foundations of success to build on but there is still much to do, so this Strategy brings together work done already and sets out our future aims and priorities for the next five years. It centres around five priorities and highlights some of the actions we'll take to help meet them. An action plan will be developed and regularly updated, giving us a clear roadmap for how those priorities will be delivered.



Our priorities

The priorities identified in the Strategy have come from residents and stakeholders and we have also considered the national, regional and local context. Through our previous extensive engagement and consultation, we have listened to views on a variety of housing issues. Examples of previous engagement include on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and on the Allocations Scheme.

The housing challenges we face are interlinked and together, these priorities provide a plan to help tackle them. They acknowledge the way that good housing can profoundly impact on people's lives, and on the wider strategic aims of the council. They therefore sit side by side with, and complement, other work being undertaken across the council to improve health, tackle poverty and deliver a fairer Westminster for everyone. The five priorities we have identified are:

THE FIVE PRIORITIES WE HAVE IDENTIFIED ARE:



PRIORITY 1

Supplying the homes that Westminster needs and increasing the supply of social rent homes



PRIORITY 2

Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping



PRIORITY 3

Providing good quality and well managed homes for our tenants and leaseholders



PRIORITY 4

Ensuring a well run, well managed and good quality private rented sector



PRIORITY 5

Working together to make homes and housing services fit for the future

This Housing Strategy will centre on these priorities, exploring the challenges and opportunities we are facing in relation to each, and setting out how we will respond to deliver the greatest impact possible for local communities.

The housing context in Westminster

Westminster is a unique place to live, work and visit – it is a city of inequalities and opportunities. The data below highlights Westminster's unique housing and demographic landscape and has been used to develop this Strategy.

Population and demographics

Westminster is home to nearly 210,000 people within 130,000 households[2]. Seventy-three per cent of the population is of working age[3] and like many London boroughs the number of primary school age children has been falling since 2011[4]. Although the older population (85+) is estimated to have grown slightly over the last two years, it is at a lower rate than in other parts of London.

Westminster has one of the highest levels of population "churn" in London, with 25%–30% of residents moving in or out of the city in any one year. The population is diverse with numerous languages spoken.

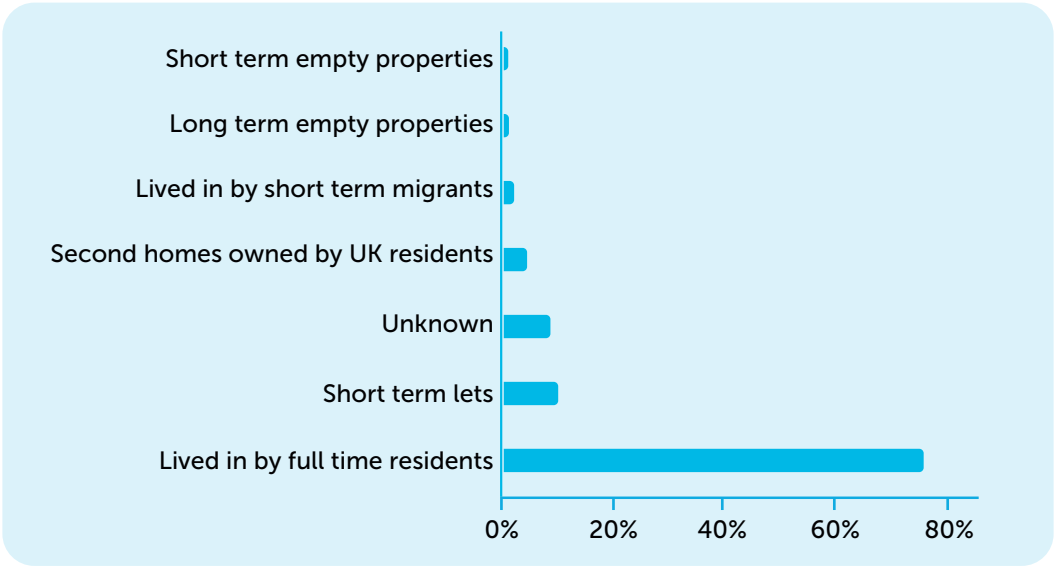
After White British and White Other groups, there is a significant Arab community making up 8% of the population. Asian and Black residents make up 17% and 8% of the population respectively.[5]

Inequality

Westminster has some of the biggest inequalities in the country with high levels of vulnerability alongside extreme affluence. For instance, life expectancy in Westminster is among the highest in the country (85 years for women and 80 years for men). However, residents living in some wards have a much lower life expectancy than residents in others.

The difference between the wards with the highest and lowest life expectancy is 18 years for men and nine years for women.[6]

These inequalities are directly connected to people's health. The 2021 Census notes that deprivation impacts on the proportion of people that say their health is bad or very bad, with 11% of residents in the most deprived areas of the city reporting bad or very bad health compared to 1% in the least deprived areas.[7]



To note: at the time of writing, work was underway to update these figures and reduce the number of properties where occupation information is unknown.

Occupation of housing

The 2021 Census[8] combined with other estimates indicates that nearly 33,500 homes across Westminster (26% of housing) were not occupied by full time residents, with high numbers of second homes and short term lets.

Tenure

Westminster's tenure structure is unusual. Far more of our housing is privately rented (44%) than other areas in the country, and many homeowners do not live in their properties full time. Social housing makes up 28% of homes - around half of these are owned by 40 registered providers (housing associations), and the remainder by the council.

The size of the intermediate sector[9] is not captured by the 2021 Census, but is estimated to make up 3.5% of all housing.

Property type, age and size

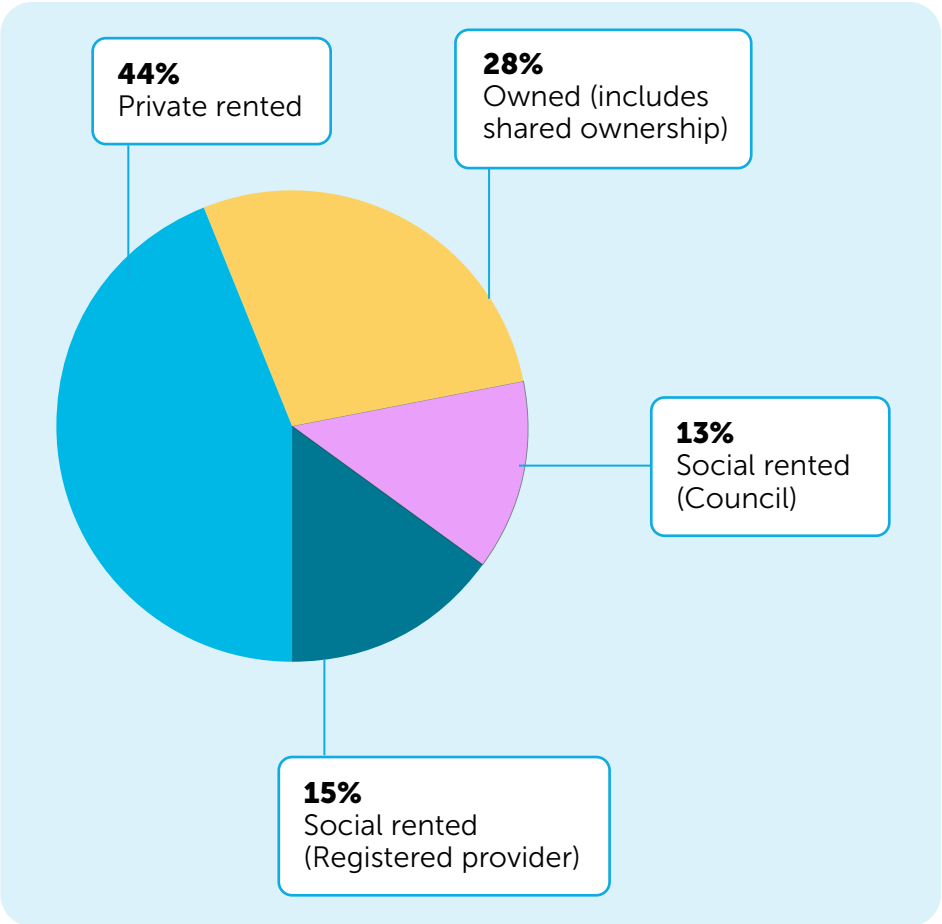
Westminster homes are more likely to be smaller, older and be flats in blocks than the London average. Nearly one third of homes were built before 1900, 72% have one or two bedrooms and 86% are flats.[10]

Price of homes

Westminster has some of the most expensive properties in London to buy and rent. A lower quartile flat (the lowest 25% of property prices) costs £604k to buy, and a median flat (middle value) costs £794k.

To buy one of these, an annual household income of £146k - £183k would be needed.[11] A middle earner would need a deposit of over £200k to buy the cheapest flat in Westminster.

For renters, a two-bedroom flat in the lowest 25% of the rental market can cost £2.8k per month and a median flat can cost £3.4k per month. To afford these without benefits, an annual household income of £120k - £145k would be needed. These prices are beyond the means of many residents with lower quartile household incomes, £36k per year and middle household incomes, £61.8k per year.[12]



PRIORITY 1:

Supplying the homes that Westminster needs and increasing the supply of social rent homes

Our aim: We want Westminster to be a place where there are good quality homes to meet all needs and where the supply of truly affordable homes is increased. Central to this is increasing the number of social rent homes, where need is highest. We also want housing to be prioritised for residents – we don't want homes being left empty for long periods or used extensively as short lets.

Challenges and Opportunities

Homes needed

Providing the homes that Westminster needs is a huge challenge. Between 2019–2024, on average 830 additional new homes of all tenures were developed each year, slightly less than our current annual target of 985. The target, which is set by the Mayor of London, is based on land available for development, rather than actual need. This target is likely to change with a new London Plan, as the government aims to increase housing supply across London and beyond.

Westminster undoubtably needs more affordable housing and social housing in particular - not only to meet the backlog (i.e. to house people on our lists) - but to meet future needs. Based on "need" alone, the evidence shows that 85% (837 homes each year until 2040) of all new housing in Westminster would need to be affordable and of this, 723 homes each year would need to be for social rent and 178 intermediate homes.[13] This doesn't mean that there is no need for new private housing in Westminster but that the greatest need is for more affordable homes particularly social ones.

Types of affordable housing



Social: homes with relatively low rents (much lower than market rents) which are owned by a council or a registered provider (housing association) and let to people on housing lists. **There are 6,800 households on Westminster City Council's social housing list** (72% are homeless households).



Intermediate: this can include homes to rent or for sale through schemes like shared ownership. In Westminster these are generally homes to rent as shared ownership is too expensive. Rents are higher than for social housing but less than market ones. People eligible generally cannot afford market housing but are not eligible for social housing.**There are 3,240 households on Westminster City Council's intermediate housing register.**

Developing affordable housing

If the need for affordable homes were to be met, nearly all the new homes developed in Westminster each year would need to be affordable, and this would require funding and a scaling up of development to unprecedented levels. Housing markets are interlinked, and affordable housing delivery is connected to private delivery as developers are required by planning policy[14] to provide affordable housing, ideally on site.[15] Council-led affordable housing development also requires "cross subsidy" from private homes for sale or rent in order to fund it.

Densely populated and in the heart of London, Westminster will always be a difficult place to develop new homes of all types. Key reasons for this are that land is scarce, new development needs to respect heritage and other considerations (over 75% of the city is in a conservation area), and there are competing priorities in terms of its nationally important economic function and demand for commercial-led growth. Building Safety Act 2022 requirements, although much needed, are also affecting the pace of development.

Delivering affordable housing in central London is particularly challenging due to the limited availability of sites, high land values, and complex viability issues (where developers expect a certain revenue from a scheme). The London-wide slowdown in development in recent years therefore impacts on the number of affordable homes developed. Wider issues, such as the increasing cost of building homes and a lack of growth in residential sales values, are making residential development across central London a less attractive proposition to landowners and developers than other forms of development, such as commercial, which there is also a need for.

Because there is so little undeveloped land available, building new affordable homes often means needing to move people out of existing homes so that the space can be redeveloped. This is called "vacant possession", and it tends to be costly for the developer and disruptive for those living there. There can be difficult site conditions to navigate too, such as constraints on development to protect heritage.



All this impacts on the financial viability of the scheme and often significant subsidy or innovative delivery models are needed to handle this. Careful engagement with residents is vital throughout, because we need to balance the benefits of increasing housing supply with the disruption it can cause to existing residents. All of these issues can limit the ability of registered providers (housing associations) to lead these types of developments, because they simply do not have sufficient funding to take them on.[17]

Despite these challenges, the council has a successful track record in development and regeneration. Since 2018, we have built over 1,400 homes of which almost 1,000 are affordable (see **What we'll do next** for more information on our future pipeline). In the financial year 2024/2025 alone, 274 council-led homes were completed, of which 162 were for social rent or intermediate tenure.

To add to this, the launch of our Housing Compact[18] in 2024 further underlines our commitment to delivering affordable housing in the city and an opportunity to do so. The Compact signals a new partnership between the council and key registered providers (housing associations), setting a joint ambition to create new affordable housing. It comes at a time when central government too, has clearly signalled its intention to boost housing supply and social homes on council land, and when new funding opportunities may emerge. Leasehold reform presents another opportunity for the supply of homes overall to increase as it aims to improve the rights of leaseholders.

Homeownership in Westminster is mainly leasehold rather than freehold, which can be unpopular due to a lack of control over properties including over service charges.

We need to be ready therefore when the market changes and any new opportunities to deliver more affordable housing present themselves. We are well positioned through this Strategy to do exactly that.

Making the best use of housing

Given the scale of the housing challenge, we need to make the best use of all housing, including existing homes, to meet the needs of residents and communities. However, there are estimated to be 14,000 short term lets and empty properties in Westminster – this is 11% of all housing. Around 1,200 properties are registered long-term empty.

Tackling the problem of properties being long-term empty is complex, and the legal powers available do not always work well in places where property values are high, like Westminster. Areas like this can be more vulnerable to the "buy to leave" market (i.e. where a property is left empty for it to be sold later for a higher price, or as a safe place to keep capital). Meanwhile, many properties are used for short terms lets (such as Airbnb), but these reduce housing supply overall. They can also negatively impact neighbouring residents if there is anti-social behaviour associated with them, but powers to restrict them are limited and difficult to enforce. The government's work on a short-term let registration scheme also presents an opportunity to make progress in this area. Westminster has been at the forefront in advising the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on the design of the registration scheme to ensure it is practical and properly supports our efforts to enforce the 90-day rule for short-term lets in London.

Given the high demand for social and intermediate housing, we are determined that available homes should be allocated fairly and should be prioritised for the people and households that need them most. The Westminster Housing Compact with registered providers (housing associations) also signals our ongoing commitment to jointly addressing the issues.

What we are doing

Developing new homes

- Leading the development of new housing. Since 2018, council-led development has resulted in 1,400 homes being provided with over 900 affordable and 60% for social rent.
- Changing the tenure of new housing in council-led development to increase the supply of social homes through a Truly Affordable Housing Strategy[19], resulting in an extra 352 new social homes being added to the pipeline.
- Partially reviewing our planning policy (the City Plan), with changes expected to be adopted in winter 2025/2026, to prioritise the delivery of social housing, where the need is highest, over intermediate housing which is the case in the current Policy. The new Policy will require 70% of all new affordable housing developed to be social housing and 30% to be intermediate housing. The revised Policy also introduces a new requirement for affordable housing contributions from small-scale development sites – the scale of housing development that Westminster mostly experiences.
- The partial review to the City Plan also includes new site allocations which give strong policy support for the redevelopment of four underutilised or stalled sites in the city with potential to significantly contribute to housing delivery, alongside a sustainable mix of other uses, and great public space to create liveable, attractive and environmentally friendly places.[20]

1,400 homes delivered

Council-led development since 2018, with 900+ affordable homes and 60% for social rent

Case Study: Meaningful Community Engagement in Affordable Housing Delivery

We put the views of residents, businesses and local stakeholders at the centre of decision making when forming proposals for new affordable housing schemes. Through capacity building training in areas such as scheme viability, planning frameworks and construction deliverability we empower residents to play a role in assessing options. This has included:

Strategic Resident Steering groups at Church Street and Ebury Bridge, where regeneration is taking place. They have played important roles in developing the projects, from inception through to delivery. The groups have established "Community Charters" that enshrine how the council and our contractors will work with residents.

At Church Street we have embarked on a programme of co-design for future phases of the regeneration project so that proposals are shaped by local people and have their support. Outcomes from this process have included changes to the configuration of kitchens (with separate kitchens and dining rooms now incorporated) and new public spaces. Residents have also played a key role in the naming of new buildings with the rich culture and history of the area reflected through this process.



The use of "community language" speakers across our projects to ensure that residents whose first language isn't English understand proposals and provide feedback in an accessible way.

At the 291 Harrow Road scheme which will deliver 144 new homes, we worked with children from the local primary school to co-design options for a new multi-use games area, as part of the redevelopment. This work developed the first "all-weather" covered sports space that will provide a new amenity for local young people.

Housing renewal | Westminster City Council

- Helping to make intermediate housing more affordable by explaining which types work best in Westminster and setting new rent requirements, so the rents charged better reflect the incomes of households on the intermediate housing register (set out in the new Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document[21]).
- Delivering large scale regeneration programmes at Ebury Bridge and Church Street in partnership with the local community. Ebury Bridge will deliver 750 new homes, with over half affordable and Church Street 1,750 new homes.
- Setting up a new Supply Board of members and senior officers to ensure our development programme is on track and is a top council priority.
- Continuing our track record of working with partners to increase the supply of social homes. The council has secured over £120m from the Greater London Authority (GLA) since 2022 to support its affordable housing delivery programme. This includes £100m which has been unlocked by successful estate regeneration ballots. We also secured a GLA grant of £1.7m under the Right to Buy Back programme, helping us boost the number of our council homes.

Making the best use of housing

- Working to better understand how properties across Westminster are occupied.
- Actively working to bring empty properties back into use, with our plans set out in an Interim Empty Property Strategy Statement 2022.[22] Our work includes recruiting a new officer in 2024, who has sent out over 1,550 letters to owners and inspected 186 properties. A toolkit for owners to help them bring their empty properties back into use is also being developed alongside work to better understand empty property data. We're also charging the maximum council tax on long term empty properties to act as a disincentive against them being left empty.
- Investigating short term lets (the short-term let team are currently investigating 2,870 properties allegedly being used unlawfully for short-let purposes) that breach the requirement for them to have planning permission if let for more than 90 nights in a year or are associated with anti-social behaviour. The team has more than doubled in size in the last year to accelerate work in this area. Also, with other local authorities, we're working with government to help shape the new proposed registration scheme for short term lets so it helps to address some of the issues associated with them.[23]
- Implementing a new Allocation Scheme[24] for social housing which aims to better recognise applicants with multiple needs, be more open and transparent and better communicated to those waiting for housing.

£120m

secured from the Greater London Authority (GLA) to support affordable housing

What we will do next

Developing new homes

- Deliver a council-led development programme of nearly 1,200 new homes from 2025 until 2030, which prioritises social housing: 688 homes will be for social rent and 106 will be intermediate housing.
- Continue work to develop a new council-led development pipeline, with six potential housing opportunity locations across Westminster being explored to deliver much needed affordable housing.
- Explore all opportunities for new affordable housing across the city, prioritising social rent homes in particular on council land, and working with the local community.
- Work to become a leader in council-led development, looking for innovative ways to fund and develop new affordable homes, including if efficiencies can be found without compromising on quality and safety. We will also make use of all funding opportunities and bring sector partners together to learn and generate ideas.
- Through the Housing Compact, work with registered providers (housing associations) to look at ways to jointly increase affordable housing supply.
- Through the newly established Westminster Living, market the private homes for sale in new council-led developments so they sell as quickly and easily as possible and for the highest possible price in order to fund new social and other truly affordable housing.[25]
- Fully review our planning policy (the City Plan) including looking at if it can do more to increase the delivery of homes, particularly affordable homes. We will also update the Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document to bring it into line with the new affordable housing policy from the partial review of the City Plan.
- Explore the reasons for the decline in children in Westminster and consider if through our planning policies we can help to create family friendly environments and provide necessary facilities to help reverse this trend.



- Apply for our development vehicle Westminster Builds to become a registered provider so we are in the best possible position to deliver new affordable housing.
- Better understand the type of specialist housing needed for the future such as for sheltered and extra care housing, so we're in the best position to seek funding opportunities and make investment decisions.

Making the best use of housing

- Develop a full long-term Empty Property Strategy, building on our work so far and the learning on the best way to tackle them in a high value area like Westminster. This will include making the case to government for increased powers to bring long term empty properties back into use such as through a reduction in the time a property must be left empty before we can apply an Empty Dwelling Management Order.
- Make the case for more local authority powers to reduce the short term lets market so the needs of residents and tourists are better balanced.
- With registered providers (housing associations), jointly look for ways to meet housing needs and pilot new approaches.
- Develop a new Intermediate Housing Strategy to review its role in our housing market and ensure those with the highest needs are prioritised for it. It will also look at how we can work with partners to develop intermediate homes.
- Continue the implementation of our new Housing Allocations scheme for social housing to ensure allocations are fair and transparent.[26]

PRIORITY 2:
Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping

Our aim: We will proactively prevent homelessness and make progress towards ending rough sleeping in Westminster. Our aim is to ensure homelessness is prevented early, is rare, brief and non-recurrent.[27]

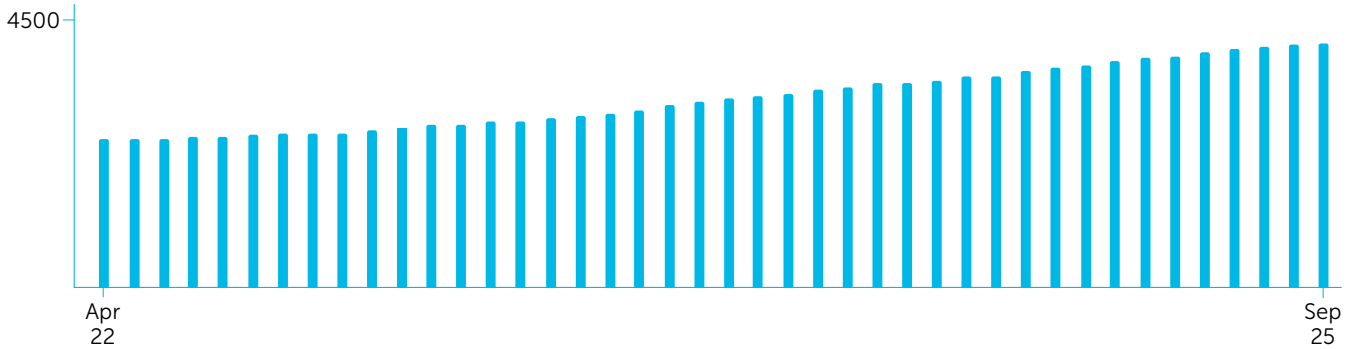
Challenges and Opportunities

Our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 sets out the huge challenges Westminster and London face as homelessness is rising. The council has seen an increase in the number of people in need of housing, and we are working to find suitable accommodation for people and families in need of accommodation.

Overview	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Approaches	5500	5479	4098	3690
Applications	3856	2929	2216	1910
Temporary Accommodation Placements	1518	1364	944	646
Main Duty Acceptances	1141	999	468	365

Homelessness Approaches, Applications, Temporary Accommodation Placements and Main Duty Acceptances in Westminster 21/22-24/25, HOPE System Data

Temporary Accommodation Households



Temporary Accommodation Placements in Westminster April 22-July 25, HOPE System Data

Homelessness applications more than doubled in the three years from 2021/2022 to 2024/2025 and Westminster continues to have the highest number of rough sleepers in the country.[28] Increasing demand for temporary accommodation (TA) is an issue right across the capital, with London Councils reporting that the number of homeless Londoners requiring TA has reached the highest level ever recorded – 183,000, or one in 50 residents of the capital.[29]

In 2024/2025, Westminster homelessness applications to the council increased by nearly a third when compared with 2023/2024. Demand continues to rise, so dealing with homelessness continues to be an extreme cost pressure for the council. Despite these increases in demand and costs, along with changing homelessness funding and uncertainty around the government's Fairer Funding Review, Westminster must still continue to meet its legal duties around homelessness.

The causes of homelessness and rough sleeping are complex and can vary for different people and households.[30] Homelessness can be:

- Caused by structural factors such as the lack of affordable housing, poverty and inequality; and
- Exacerbated by personal situations such as loss of income or relationship breakdown.

The loss of a private tenancy, eviction by family and friends and domestic abuse are leading causes of homelessness.

The factors leading to someone experiencing rough sleeping are particularly complex, are often interconnected and those affected are more likely to have multiple needs.

Losing hostels and supported accommodation with providers leaving the market, also presents further challenges in tackling homelessness. Changes to Integrated Care Boards continue to present difficulties, particularly for those with multiple complex needs, making working together with partners vital.

Meanwhile the Renters' Rights Act which includes the abolition of "no fault evictions" (Section 21) presents an opportunity for homelessness from the private rented sector to reduce (see Priority 4: Ensuring a well run, well managed and good quality private rented sector for more on the possible impact of the Act).

The council's, and government's renewed focus on supplying more social housing presents opportunities to provide more housing for those living with homelessness, however the backdrop remains challenging with demand for social housing likely to continue far outstripping supply (see Priority 1: Supplying the homes that Westminster needs and increasing the supply of social rent homes).



Whilst the challenges in preventing homelessness and rough sleeping are immense, strong partnerships and wider work to create a fairer Westminster puts us in the best possible position to tackle them. These include:

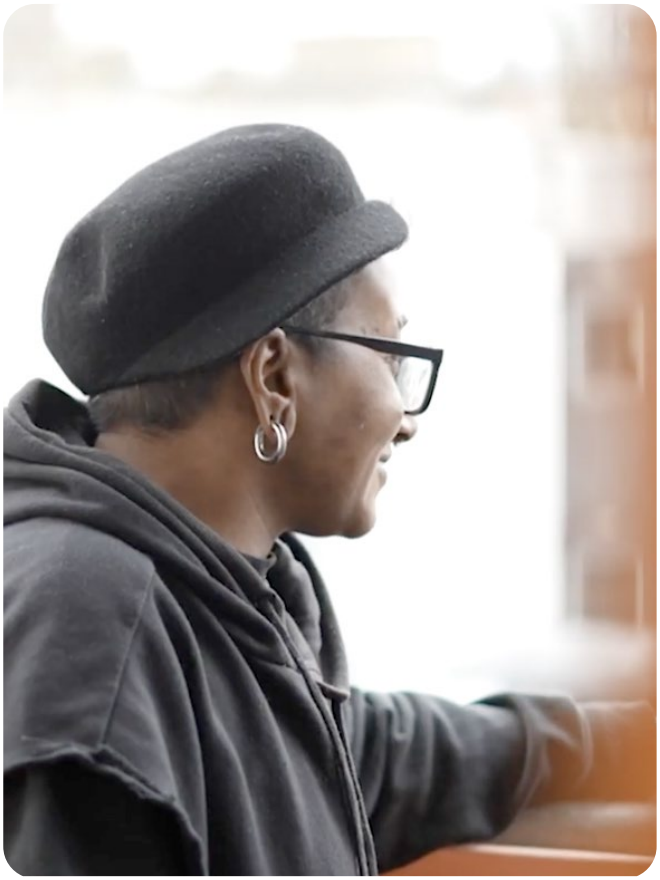
- A Fairer Futures Homelessness Board bringing together public, voluntary and community organisations to help drive the new Strategy.
- A Homelessness Partnership where organisations are committed to working together.
- Work to provide more effective support services.
- A review of poverty in Westminster and, based on that, an action plan to address it.

These Westminster-specific efforts will complement government's commitment to develop a new, more joined-up approach to tackling homelessness.

What we are doing

- Delivering our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030[31] which was published following substantial engagement with communities, partners and service users. The Strategy sets out actions to achieve the four commitments which are: Early Homelessness Prevention, Crisis Response, Re-housing and Recovery and Re-settlement. Some key achievements so far are:
  - > Strengthening our prevention work with 937 cases of homelessness being prevented last year, a 36% increase on the prior year.[32]
  - > Supporting people at risk of homelessness through our Floating Support Service to sustain tenancies, maximise income, and improve health and wellbeing.[33] We have supported around 750 people in the last year.[34]
  - > Securing funding for homelessness and rough sleeping, which has included £21.5m in grant funding for 2025/2026 through the government's Rough Sleeping Initiative, for a three-year programme of support for rough sleepers[35] and an additional £1.2m in council funding to tackling rough sleeping and helping people off the streets and into safety.[36]
  - > Increasing the number of TA properties owned by the council, with plans for 25% of them to be council owned by March 2026. We are also leasing extra high-quality properties for TA, repurposing vacant properties in regeneration areas, and directly purchasing family-sized homes to meet local need. £140m is being invested over 2025/2026 to reduce nightly placements. [37] [38] As part of this, Hopkinson House is being refurbished to increase in-borough TA.[39]
- Successfully insourcing elements of our Housing Solutions Service from April 2025, including Advice and Support, Pathways and Placements, Family Casework, Allocations and Quality and Reviews. The focus is on improving the resident experience and better supporting early prevention.
- Continuing to work on the North Paddington Programme – our "place-based" programme of projects, meaning all our work is developed in partnership with local people, community groups and charities in the Harrow Road, Queen's Park and Westbourne wards – the most deprived areas of the city.
- Developing a plan to tackle poverty across the city with a strong focus on providing financial advice and support at an early stage.
- Continuing to work closely with partners to address and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping, including through the Westminster Housing Compact with registered providers (housing associations).

937
cases of homelessness prevented last year



What we will do next

- Continue to deliver our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 and Action Plan[40] with future work being guided by the four commitments. Key actions include:
  - > Redesigning our Housing Solutions and Floating Support Services so we better prevent homelessness earlier.
  - > Redesigning services for single people and rough sleepers to improve our crisis response.
  - > Expanding the housing first approach and exploring appropriate housing options in the private rental sector, to improve rehousing options.
  - > Expanding the accommodation programme for rough sleepers to improve our resettlement approach.
- In addition to the actions in the Strategy, we will:
  - > Implement a new hybrid model as part of the Reshaping Housing Solutions Phase 2 Programme from April 2026, combining further insourcing, recommissioning, and service transformation so that we have direct management over the most important council services.[41] This follows the successful delivery of phase one of the Programme.
  - > Develop and deliver a new commissioning plan to meet increasing demand and complexity.
  - > Work to develop an "integrated front door" offer which aims to make it simpler for single people at risk of homelessness to get the support they need in a complex environment.
  - > Look for all opportunities to increase the supply of social housing and to support private landlords where possible to maintain supply, to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness (See Priority 1: Supplying the homes that Westminster needs and increasing the supply of social rent homes and Priority 4: Ensuring a well run, well managed and good quality private rented sector).

Case Study: A New Co-Produced Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 | Westminster City Council



Launched in April 2025, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 shows how the council intends to proactively prevent homelessness for the next five years across four commitments. The Strategy was co-produced and developed with extensive involvement from the community, partners, sector experts, officers from across the council and service users.

It was overseen by a Working Group which included representatives from across the sector and a lived experience programme was established to feed into it. As part of the public consultation, there were also four "lived experience" sessions, with people affected by homelessness, in service locations to encourage feedback from those experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping. Around 600 comments were made about the draft Strategy and of those who submitted their demographics information, survey respondents were broadly reflective of the city's population.

PRIORITY 3:
Providing good quality and well managed homes for our tenants and leaseholders

Our aim: We want our tenants and leaseholders to be consistently satisfied with our housing services and the improved condition, safety and energy efficiency their homes.[42] Residents should feel able to influence decisions and trust us, with the needs of vulnerable residents being prioritised and met.

Challenges and Opportunities

Diversity of needs of our residents

The diverse needs of our residents presents both challenges and opportunities, with inequalities often felt most acutely amongst our social housing tenants. For example, the households in our social homes are more than twice as likely to report poor health and face significant challenges with employment. Twenty-eight percent are employed compared with a city average of 49%. Sixty per cent of our tenants identify as Global Majority (compared with 45% of residents overall). Our tenant population is also aging, with a decline in tenants under 34. There are more families and fewer tenants aged 20-49 amongst our tenant population compared to the Westminster population overall.[43]

The council owns and manages 20,655 homes of which 59% are tenanted and 41% are leasehold. This is an uncommon make-up of local authority housing stock - other local authorities more commonly have a lower proportion of leaseholders. Additionally, 38% of leaseholders are non-resident with properties privately rented, which can create further challenges. 11,161 of council homes are for "general needs" tenants (non-vulnerable residents without significant support needs) – but over time people can need support in their homes to live independently and 942 are sheltered homes for older residents.[44] Meeting the needs of this mix of residents is key.[45]

Unique stock

The range and types of council housing we have in Westminster is unique. Seventy-eight per cent of our properties are flats and 148 are high rise buildings. Different types of housing have a range of building safety requirements and management approaches.[46]

Our most common type of housing is high rise and medium rise which makes up 38% (7,788) and 37% (7,666) respectively. We also have 21% (4,428) low rise and 4% (773) houses. Forty-one per cent of our housing stock is in conservation areas and 17% of the stock are listed buildings, creating unique challenges and opportunities, especially when it comes to repairs, retrofit and safety.[47]

We also manage the Pimlico District Heating Undertaking (PDHU) which supplies heating and hot water to Abbots Manor, Churchill Gardens, Lillington and Longmoore Gardens Estates and Russell House as well as commercial properties. This is the oldest communal heat network in the country. The heating system has now reached the end of its design life, presenting challenges and opportunities as we consider future options for the PDHU. In addition to the PDHU, we manage almost 50 heat networks and so meeting and balancing our heating network obligations across these will continue to be a vital area of work.



Delivering works and repairs

Delivering major works and repairs at a time of market pressures and significant costs to leaseholders is a huge challenge. This is especially difficult when considering the makeup of our stock. We are building on our C1 inspection rating by continuing to improve services.

What we are doing

Improving quality and management

- Working hard to improve the quality and management of our council homes and building and improving trust with our residents. This was recognised by being the first Local Authority in London to receive a C1 rating from the Regulator of Social Housing following an inspection of our housing services.[48] This is the highest rating that can be awarded but we know we have a lot further still to go in order to meet the needs and aspirations of our residents.

Case Study: Working with residents to improve the repairs service

Residents told us that improving the repairs service is a top priority for them and to ensure the right changes are made we:

- Developed a resident "task and finish group" on transparency and communications in repairs.
- Worked with a resident group for eight weeks that looked at different aspects of repairs and included observing the contact centre and meeting contractors. The group made over 100 observations and 17 recommendations for improvement, all of which were accepted with many already implemented, which is helping to improve the speed and quality of repairs and how they are communicated. One participant described the group as "certainly a collaboration between staff and residents."
- Consulted on a draft repairs policy which received over 1,400 responses with awareness of it raised through knocking on over 1,000 doors.
- Are involving residents in recruiting repair staff, such as the new Chief of Repairs and Clerk of Works and in the re-tendering of long-term repairs contracts. Work so far includes discussions at community workshops, Resident Associations and at our Residents Panel and Forum. Longer term residents will be involved in procurement and in helping to monitor contractor performance.

- Focussing on improving repairs, complaints and our support for the most vulnerable residents as well as engaging and listening to residents through our Housing Improvement Programme.[49] We are continuing to work on a repairs improvement plan, aiming to improve resident experience informed by feedback. Improvements to how we respond to complaints has resulted in better performance and our aim is for residents to receive a better service.

WHAT WE ARE DOING, CONTINUED

- Making progress to ensure that all of our properties have had a stock condition survey in the last three years through work such as our "Behind Every Door" programme, to increase our knowledge of our stock and inform our investment plans.
- Running a Rent Support Fund, as part of our response to the cost of living crisis, to help tenants that aren't receiving full Housing Benefit and are struggling due to the increase in their rent.[50]
- Embedding our ongoing learning from complaints to improve timelines and quality. The new Customer Advocacy Team has managed and closed over 9,000 cases since its launch and earned a nomination for a UK National Contact Centre award[51] for its work in supporting residents in need.

Supporting leaseholders

- Improving the transparency and accountability of our services for leaseholders through our new Leasehold Charter[52] which was developed in partnership with our Residents Panel, bringing together the standards we are committed to achieving, and which residents can expect from us.
- Offering leaseholders some of the best repayment options in London for works they are charged for. From April 2025 we extended the period for leaseholders to make repayments for works over £30k to up to thirteen years with an eight month interest free period.

Improving resident engagement

- Improving access to face-to-face support and advice[53] and opening four new housing offices – bringing the total to eight. The *"Getting to Know You campaign"*[54] has helped the council build a better understanding of tenants' needs in order to tailor services. A new tenancy sustainment team is also being introduced to support vulnerable households, and we continue work on digital transformation to improve access to services.
- Giving residents a space to find out more about housing service developments, raise challenges, offer advice, influence the service and connect with others in their community through the new monthly Residents' Forum[55] which is open to all council housing residents. Also continuing to support and work with our Resident Panel who scrutinise our performance and help to shape improvements.
- Engaging with residents following our Resident Engagement Strategy[56] and using the "Your Voice Counts"[57] campaign to raise awareness of how residents can shape housing services.
- Working with residents to actively shape and inform services through task and finish groups to co-design improvements to our services.
- Developing new policies in consultation with residents through new task and finish groups to strengthen support and standards. Work has already included policies on repairs, damp and mould management, and window restrictors.

Sustainable tenancies

- Giving council tenants security of tenure after a one-year trial period, instead of fixed-term tenancies as set out in our new Tenancy Strategy and Policy.[58] Westminster was previously an outlier in local government by only offering new tenancies on a 5-year fixed term basis. Tenants previously awarded fixed term tenancies are being transferred to secure tenancies to help give them greater peace of mind. This gives people more security and helps build stronger, more settled communities. It also frees up substantial amounts of housing officer time to be refocused on residents' priorities.

Anti-social behaviour approach

- Continuing our robust partnership approach to anti-social behaviour which is set out in our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy[59] and was recognised by the Regulator of Social Housing in our recent C1 rating. Our approach tackles the root causes of anti-social behaviour and focuses on prevention.
- Taking robust action where appropriate, working with victims and perpetrators in line with our policies.

First Local Authority in London to receive a C1 rating from the Regulator of Social Housing

What we will do next

Building on the inspection result

- Continue to build on the results of the positive inspection result, acknowledging there is always more to do. We will continue learning through feedback from residents, staff and the recommendations from the inspection.
- Continue to ensure our services are of a high standard and continue our focus on compliance and completing all remedial activities, including Tenant Management Organisation oversight, meeting requirements of the Building Safety Act and ongoing compliance with Consumer Standards.

Boosting energy efficiency

- Continue with the Future of the PDHU Programme to progress through the Business Case process and select a preferred option for the PDHU.[60]
- Develop plans to decarbonise heating across the city as well as continuing to decarbonise our buildings. See Priority 5: Working together to make homes and housing services fit for the future for work being done to address the energy efficiency of council homes.

Improving repairs and major works

- Continue to improve performance on reactive repairs and improve case management of complex cases and leaks. We will also continue the work on our repairs improvement plan with a focus on improving resident experience of the service informed by feedback.
- Work towards a strategic alliance for our new repairs and works contracts from the end of 2027 and set up ways for residents to shape how things are delivered.
- Complete a new asset management plan which is data-led and deliver on its principles to better invest in our stock and deliver for our residents.

Improve resident experience

- Continue to work with tenants to ensure that resident engagement shapes services.
- We will evaluate the work of the Resident Forum and are aiming for Tpas Landlord Accreditation.
- Maintain and continue to improve our complaints handling, embedding learning and improving resident satisfaction, including through our resident task and finish groups. This will build on the work of the new Customer Advocacy Team.
- Learn from our locality-based operating model pilot for tenant and estate services – including digital opportunities for improved tenant experience.

Responding to Legislative changes

- There are significant regulatory and legislative changes which the council will respond to, including Awaab's Law, new heating network regulations, changes to the Decent Home Standard and the introduction of new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards. We will also respond to the new leasehold reform legislation once it is implemented, which aims to improve leaseholder rights, and communicate it to leaseholders.

PRIORITY 4:
Ensuring a well run, well managed and good quality private rented sector

Our aim: We want every private rented sector property to provide a safe, good quality and well managed home within which tenants can live healthy and fulfilling lives. We will do this by ensuring landlords and tenants are aware of their rights and responsibilities, empowering them to act when necessary, and through taking enforcement action where required.

Challenges and Opportunities

Private rented housing

Making up around 44,000 homes, the private rented sector is Westminster's largest tenure. There are privately rented properties in all wards, with the highest concentrations in Hyde Park and Lancaster Gate wards.[61] Properties range from luxury top end homes to the 10,000 houses in multiple occupation. There are also properties occupied by tenants who have low incomes and claim benefits, which make up 14% of the total. There is high churn in the sector making it hard to keep tenants informed about the help available.

Housing condition and standards

Compared to the Westminster population overall, private tenants tend to be younger and are less likely to have children. Nevertheless, the sector is still home to 10,000 children and 4,000 older people, who are more likely to be impacted by poor housing conditions.

An estimated 7,670 private rented homes have at least one serious housing hazard in their home and nearly 14% of private tenants are estimated to be living in fuel poverty all of which can impact negatively on health.[62] Over a five-year period nearly 4,000 complaints were made to the council about poor quality properties and there were nearly 8,000 reports of anti-social behaviour linked to private rented homes. The government's plans to extend the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector presents an opportunity to improve conditions.

Renters' Rights Act

When it comes into effect, the Renters' Rights Act[63] will create opportunities for a more stable sector by abolishing "no fault" evictions (Section 21) which is anticipated to help renters feel more settled in their homes and confident to report poor conditions and practices.

Less churn in the sector also presents an opportunity to better keep tenants informed of their rights and about services.[63] Timescales for implementing the Act are unclear and a reasonable lead in time is needed for the sector to adjust to it - for the council to prepare for its enhanced enforcement duties - and for landlords to their new responsibilities.

Unaffordable rents

The challenge of unaffordable private rents is a top concern for many tenants and contributes to homelessness, but it is hard to address. Not only is it beyond the council's direct control, it is also outside of the scope of the Renters' Rights Act (with the exception of limiting rent increases to once annually and improving the way tenants can appeal against excessive rents). That said, more stability in the sector, linked with the abolition of "no fault evictions", could help reduce the increase in rents seen over the past few years.

The Private Rented Sector Strategy Group

The Group is made up of local partners who represent tenants, and landlords and also includes tenants themselves, to look at issues relating to the sector and collaborate on solutions. The top challenges identified by the Group are supply shortages, tenants not being able to afford properties, rising rents, increasing repair costs and a challenging environment for landlords. The groups' activities will help the council to tackle the challenges in Westminster's private rented sector head-on.

What we are doing

- Implementing the new Private Rented Sector Action Plan (2025) developed with the Private Rented Sector Strategy Group.
- Delivering a new Selective Licensing Scheme[64] in 15 of our 18 wards and covering 40,000 properties from November 2025 to improve standards and address anti-social behaviour.
- Consulting[65] on renewing our discretionary Additional Licensing Scheme for houses in multiple occupation.
- Helping to address poor energy efficiency in the sector by recruiting two new officers and working with the Greater London Authority to deliver Warm Homes Grants in homes occupied by low-income tenants. This builds on our pilot grants scheme for landlords to make properties more energy efficient.[66]
- Taking action on poor conditions. The council in 2024/2025 responded to 1,066 enquiries and took enforcement action in 200 cases.
- Piloting a new Tenant Forum to hear their views about how we can best support them.

1,066
enquiries addressed in 2024/25

Case Study: The Westminster Private Rented Sector Tenants' Charter

Launched in May 2025, the Private Rented Sector Tenants' Charter was developed to inform tenants about the standards they should expect in their homes, the warning signs when things may be going wrong and who to contact to get help. It responded to feedback that tenants often don't know where to get help.

Co-produced with the Private Rented Sector Strategy Group, the Charter was also road tested with some private tenants working with Z2K as part of their Tenant Voice Project. Key tenant feedback included the need for it to be concise, accessible and easy to read and that it should be in hard copy as well as online. Nearly 500 Charters have been distributed across Westminster and feedback so far is that it is well used and received.

Private Rented Sector Tenants' Charter | Westminster City Council

What we will do next

With the Private Rented Sector Strategy Group and in consultation with the new Tenant Forum (should it become permanent), we'll develop a new Private Rented Sector Action Plan in 2026. That plan will focus on the following objectives, which were developed with the Group's input:

1. Drive up standards in the private rented sector, to ensure safe and secure homes and reduce anti-social behaviour.
2. Help the private rented sector to meet high standards for energy efficiency and healthy homes.
3. Support landlords to help them sustain tenancies and maintain a supply of much needed homes, improve tenancy management.
4. Shape the private rented sector with evidence-based strategies and interventions.

As a minimum we will:

- Renew the Additional Licensing Scheme for houses in multiple occupation (subject to the outcome of the consultation).



- Enforce the Renters' Rights Act, updating our policies as needed and working with landlords to help them understand their new responsibilities.
- Review the Tenants' Charter and continue to roll it out.
- Work with landlords to help them make properties more energy efficient (using the learning from the pilot).
- Continue to engage regularly with landlords and tenants and with our Strategy Group.
- Work with partners across the sector and government to make the case for Local Housing Allowance rates to be increased annually and for a review of rates to make the sector more affordable to low-income households, in ways that are workable for central London.
- Work to better understand if there are ways that all private rents could become more affordable.

PRIORITY 5:
Working together to make homes and housing services fit for the future

Our aim: We want to work together to ensure that every household in Westminster has a safe, healthy and sustainable home that meets their needs and adapts to changing lifestyles for future generations. We will do this by working in partnership to help improve the quality of homes of all tenures to reduce health inequalities, climate impact and risks, and fuel poverty.

Housing plays a vital role in the council meeting its wider Fairer Westminster aims such as its net zero council by 2030 target and for a net zero city by 2040. These aims are set out in the Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) and Climate Emergency Action Plan.

We also aim to transform Westminster to make it healthier through the #2035 programme, and to address poverty across the city. Many of the actions in this Strategy contribute to these aims with work started and progress made to address them in a coordinated way.

Challenges and Opportunities

Working towards net zero

In Westminster, homes are responsible for 15% of the city's total greenhouse gas emissions, making housing a key area to help meet the city's net zero targets.[69] The LAEP highlights the scale of the issue showing that up to 87,600 homes – across all tenures – would need to be retrofitted to be more energy efficient to meet the challenge.[70] We are also maximising opportunities for new builds to meet these standards. The Cool Neighbourhoods Strategy "cool buildings" theme also recognises the importance of good quality and well-designed buildings in mitigating the risks of overheating in a changing climate.[71]

Not only would funding be needed to make homes more energy efficient, but Westminster's older stock poses practical challenges and there are planning issues and heritage requirements to be considered. Works are often difficult in mixed tenure blocks of flats as they can have complicated management arrangements making works, responsibilities for carrying them out, permissions, and payment arrangements complex. Works can also be particularly expensive for leaseholders. However, despite these issues there are also opportunities to improve the quality of housing and reduce energy bills, particularly for the most deprived/disadvantaged groups who are most likely to live in poor quality and cold homes.

Building safety

Ongoing changes to the building safety regulatory landscape present challenges, including for major works and regeneration. For example, a high percentage (70%) of Building Safety Regulator applications were rejected because they lacked detail, did not show legal standards would be met, or were withdrawn by the applicant.[72] There is a clear opportunity to ensure higher risk buildings are safe due to clearer standards and lines of accountability.

Homes and health

Secure, affordable and good quality housing plays a vital role in helping people to live healthy lives. Housing is a wider determinant of health, although it is just one part in a complex, interconnected landscape. This is recognised in the Housing Compact with registered providers (housing associations), in its "safe and healthier homes" theme and also in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy's "good quality home" theme.[73]

While good progress has already been made there is further opportunity to build on it, joining up housing services and working with partners and residents in order to meet these aims.

Energy advice provided to

438

households

What we are doing

Improving energy efficiency and sustainability

- Driving strategic retrofit initiatives through our Retrofit Taskforce[74] and utilising the LAEP[75] to meet our city-wide net-zero targets.[76] Additionally, we are implementing a Cool Neighbourhood Strategy to help combat overheating in the city.[77]
- Through our Retrofit Taskforce, we are delivering initiatives such as; producing a series of "How-To" retrofit guides targeted at homeowners; seeking to introduce permission processes, such as Local Development Orders and Local Listed Building Consent Orders, which will enable the installation of retrofit measures without the need to make planning applications; producing guidance to address how those living in blocks of flats can start their retrofit journeys; and investigating the feasibility of a retrofit procurement club which could assist the financing of retrofit.
- Developing a "retrofit first" policy as part of the partial review of the City Plan which prioritises the retrofit and refurbishment of existing buildings over unnecessary demolition and redevelopment.[78]
- Providing energy advice and support to residents in fuel poverty through the Home Energy Advice Service with 438 households receiving energy advice between December 2023 and June 2025.[79]
- Continuing work to build on energy efficiency improvements in council homes with almost 1,000 council homes having improved EPC banding since 2022 and 500 kWh PV installations (solar panels) at Warwick Low Rise and Avenue Gardens.
- Working with Morgan Sindall Property Services, we developed a retrofit show home to demonstrate what retrofit can achieve and how it can be delivered.[80]



- Embedding energy efficiency, sustainability, and social responsibility into every stage of our new build projects, ensuring schemes align with and meet evolving regulations and recognised sustainability certifications, including net-zero benchmarks.
- Developing innovative approaches to low-carbon construction such as the 291 Harrow Road site which will be a test bed for low-carbon construction, waste reduction and biodiversity improvements, helping us meet our net-zero ambitions while contributing towards healthier, more resilient communities.[81]

Case Study: Queens Park Avenues Healthy Homes

Queens Park Avenues Healthy Homes is a project to help make homes of all tenures healthier for people and the environment. Residents told us that their homes can feel too cold in winter, too hot in summer and can be affected by damp, mould and also that their energy bills were high. These issues have a direct impact on residents' health, wellbeing and the amount being spent on energy bills. Retrofitting offers solutions, but is often complex, costly, and disruptive, meaning many households are unable to benefit from it. To help address this, the council created a Healthy Homes Forum of 24 Queens Park residents, including both renters and homeowners, to co-design:

- Upgrades tailored to Avenues homes and their special character.
- Clear, practical guidance to support all Avenues residents in improving their homes.
- Solutions to reduce barriers, such as finance and support services.



By combining residents' lived experience with technical expertise, the project is developing new ways to unlock home improvements at greater pace and scale across the city.

www.westminster.gov.uk/healthy-homes

- Investing in green skills and training opportunities, ensuring that regeneration not only reduces carbon impact but also contributes towards long-term benefits for residents, businesses, and the local environment.

Making buildings safer

- Continuing our Building Safety Programme for our council housing, prioritising our residents' welfare and putting them at the heart of what we do. Our Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy[82] outlines how we will keep our residents informed about building safety procedures and make sure they can communicate any concerns to us.
- Continuing to perform well nationally on building safety remediation (i.e. fixing defects mainly in high rise buildings) enforcement in the private rented sector.[83]
- Setting out advice for residents and those who hold fire safety responsibilities in the private rented sector about the legal standards that must be met.[84] We are also working to meet the government's ambitions to accelerate remediation works in private homes with unsafe cladding[85] and continue to work with the GLA in this area who coordinate London's Local Remediation Acceleration Plan.[86]
- Embedding the requirements of the Building Safety Act into our new build design process and governance framework, to ensure full compliance and resident safety. This includes early engagement with the Building Safety Regulator, rigorous gateway submissions, and the preparation of key documentssuch as building control plans, competence statements, and fire and emergency plans. Our governance model assigns clear roles and responsibilities and maintains the "golden thread" of information across the project lifecycle, ensuring transparency and robust oversight from design through to occupation.

Addressing the impact of housing on health

- Delivering housing-related projects which aim to improve health outcomes through the North Paddington Programme[87] and Queens Park Avenues Healthy Homes projects.[88]
- Implementing our Inequalities of Indoor Air Quality in Westminster project, (part funded by the Mayor's Air Quality Fund with match funding), which is running until March 2027.[89]
- Acknowledging the impact homelessness and rough sleeping can have on health in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, focussing on early upstream prevention.[90]
- Supporting residents with a wide range of services and joining up other areas such as health and social care through our housing offices and services. We want this to grow to become more embedded so that housing can continue to have a positive impact on the quality of life for our residents.

Jointly addressing housing challenges

- Collaborating with registered providers (housing associations) though the Housing Compact to look for joint solutions to a range of housing issues including homelessness, overcrowding conditions and service improvement for residents.[91]

What we will do next

- Continue to implement our energy efficiency and retrofit programmes across housing in Westminster to contribute to our net zero targets and health ambitions. Through learning from best practice, where possible we will look to accelerate this work and make it easier for residents of all tenures to get the improvements they need.

  This includes:

  > Continuing to improve the energy efficiency of council homes with an initial £10m match-funding programme for 2025/2026 focussed on the poorest-performing homes.[92]

  > Working in partnership with stakeholders to deliver innovative pilot projects such as continuing work on Queens Park Avenues Healthy Homes, Retrofit Your Block and testing of new planning tools to remove barriers to home upgrades.

  > Supporting homeowners and landlords to access government support including the Warm Homes Local Grant and any further support to be announced in the Warm Homes Plan (see National and Regional Considerations).

  > Maximising opportunities from the transition to heat networks and changes to heat network regulations.
- Continue to embed sustainability and building safety across our wider development programme to ensure schemes align with and meet evolving regulations and recognised sustainability certifications, including Building Safety Act requirements and net-zero benchmarks
- Continue to develop a Building Safety Strategy for our own stock, engaging with residents through our building safety residents' panel and improve the records management of our buildings.
- Implement the new Anti-poverty Action Plan and continue work on existing programmes and strategies including; the North Paddington Programme[93], Queens Park Avenues Healthy Homes[94], the Health and Wellbeing Strategy[95], and our indoor air quality project. We'll also continue to embed improving health into our response to homelessness and rough sleeping and work with registered providers (housing associations), through the Housing Compact, to jointly address housing challenges.

National and regional considerations

The national and regional policies which were considered when developing this Strategy include:

New homes

In 2024, the government announced its plan for 1.4m new homes, including through new mandatory housing targets for councils[96] and a new methodology[97] for assessing how many new homes each local authority needs. This means the Mayor of London will be setting a new housing target for Westminster. The 2025 Spending Review committed £39bn (with up to 30% for London[98]) for a ten-year affordable homes programme to deliver 300,000 new homes with 60% of these for social rent.[99]

Homelessness and rough sleeping

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places emphasis on preventing and relieving homelessness at an early stage. In 2024, the government announced a cross department, inter-Ministerial group to drive a new strategy to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.[100] The establishment of this group follows the announcement of increased funding to help prevent rising temporary accommodation and provide services to tackle rough sleeping.

Building and fire safety

Following the Grenfell tragedy, the Fire Safety Act 2021 clarified the parts of multi-occupied buildings that must be included in fire risk assessments, such as external cladding and entrance doors. The Building Safety Act 2022 introduced new regulatory standards for higher risk buildings (currently defined as those of least 18m or 7 storeys) from their development to occupation. Reporting in 2024, Phase Two of the Grenfell Inquiry included recommendations for local authorities, covering areas such as emergency responses, culture, resident engagement and relationships with Tenant Management Organisations.[101]

Social Housing Regulation

The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023[102] aims to "rebalance the relationship between landlords and tenants".[103] This includes through inspections, greater powers for the Housing Ombudsman, ensuring a more professional sector and introducing a framework for Awaab's Law. Awaab's Law requires landlords to address serious issues like damp and mould within a prescribed period.

Leasehold Reform

The Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024[104] has yet to be enacted but aims to strengthen leaseholder rights, including by making it easier and cheaper for them to extend their leases and to buy freeholds, and by giving them more transparency over service charges. Government also plans to consult on how to ban new build leasehold flats (and for them to be commonhold), and they are also considering how to make it easier for existing leasehold properties to become commonhold.

The private rented sector

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 will fundamentally change the sector including through abolishing fixed term assured shorthold tenancies and replacing them with "open ended" tenancies.[105] "No fault" evictions (Section 21) are therefore abolished. The Act restricts rent increases to once a year and extends the Decent Homes Standard and Awaab's Law[106] to the sector. Increasing the minimum energy efficiency rating from an E to a higher C rating by 2030 is also being considered as part of the Act.[107]

Climate change

The Heat and Buildings Strategy 2021[108] and forthcoming Warm Homes Plan[109] set the framework for improving the energy efficiency of homes to tackle fuel poverty and meet the UK's legal net zero targets. The forthcoming Future Homes Standard[110] will require all new build homes to be zero-carbon ready, and the Warm Homes Plan will set out how government's £13.2bn of investment[111] will support the retrofitting of existing homes. The London Plan (see next section) and Mayor of London's Environment Strategy[112] also set targets for net zero new builds and retrofitting.

The London Housing Strategy and London Plan

The London Housing Strategy[113] sets out the Mayor of London's plan to tackle the housing crisis. Its five priorities cover building new homes, delivering genuinely affordable housing, creating high quality homes and neighbourhoods, a fair deal for private renters and leaseholders and tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

The Mayor of London's spatial development plan (the London Plan) sets annual housing targets for local authorities and aims for 50% of new housing across the capital to be affordable (see Priority 1: Supplying the homes that Westminster needs and increasing the supply of social rent homes, for information on Westminster's current target).[114] The new draft London Plan for 2027–2050 will set new borough-specific targets to help provide the 88,000 homes needed in London per annum – a substantial increase from recent delivery levels and the current target of around 52,000.[115]

Health

The government's For the future: 10 Year Health Plan for England[116] aims to reinvent the NHS including through a greater focus on prevention and supporting people in the community. It recognises that housing has a role to play in this, and the impact stable housing can make on wellbeing and in preventing poor health.

Poverty

The government is developing a new child poverty strategy and lack of access to affordable and good quality housing, and the impact of homelessness, are acknowledged to be a factor in child poverty.[117]

Relevant existing plans

The council has a number of active plans relating to housing. This strategy aligns with the following:

- Air Quality Action Plan 2025-30
- Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy
- City Plan 2019-2040
- Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025
- Cool Neighbourhoods Strategy
- Empty Property Strategy Statement
- Fairer Westminster Strategy 2022-2026
- Fairer Westminster Delivery Plan 2025-2026
- Future of Westminster Commission Full Report 2023
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-33
- Homelessness Review 2024
- Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030
- Housing Allocations Scheme 2025
- Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2024-2028
- Leasehold Charter
- Local Area Energy Plan for Westminster
- Tenancy Strategy and Policy 2025
- Truly Affordable Housing Strategy
- Westminster Housing Compact

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Glossary

City Plan	Westminster's City Plan provides our vision and framework for how long-term housing, commercial and infrastructure growth will be delivered in Westminster. The policies within the plan cover a range of topics including housing, sustainability, heritage, transport, the visitor economy and employment. These policies are used to determine whether new developments including new housing and commercial floorspace are suitable to go ahead.
Council housing	Housing to rent (social housing) which is owned by the council. It can also refer to homes owned leaseholders where the council is the freeholder.
Decent Homes Standard	A legal set of minimum standards: To be considered "decent," a home must meet four criteria: 1. Statutory minimum standard – no serious hazards (e.g. structural risks, fire dangers) 2. Reasonable repair – key features (roof, windows, heating) are in good condition 3. Modern facilities and services (e.g. proper kitchen and bathroom) 4. Thermal comfort – sufficient insulation and heating (linked to energy standards) The Standard is being reviewed by government.
Floating Support Service	Provides support to residents in Westminster aged 18+ with an identified support need to enable them to live independently, sustain their accommodation and reduce the risk of homelessness.
Homelessness Application	An application for getting help with somewhere to live which is made by someone that is already homeless, or likely to become homeless within the next 8 weeks.
Homelessness Approaches	When someone initially approaches their local authority about their homelessness situation.
Housing Allocations Scheme	Every council has a housing allocations scheme, which sets out how they assess and prioritise peoples' needs to allocate social housing. It includes: • Who can apply to go on the social housing register • Who gets priority for housing • The type and size of property someone is eligible for.
Housing association	Independent not-for-profit organisations that provide social rented and low-cost housing for people in housing need. They may also be known as registered providers.

Housing tenure	This refers to how properties are occupied. The main tenures are: • Owned properties with a mortgage or owned outright • Private rented properties which are rented from a private landlord • Social housing (see above)
Local Area Energy Plan	The method being used by local authorities to identify the most effective route to net zero carbon emissions in their area.
Long-Term Empty Property	A property that is substantially unfurnished and unlived in generally for over six months.
Main Duty Acceptance	This is when a local authority accepts a homelessness application, which results in them having a legal obligation to provide accommodation.
Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document association	A non-statutory document that provides additional guidance to support a local authority's Local Plan policies on housing matters.
Registered provider	See Housing association above.
Sheltered housing	Self-contained flats that provide a safe and secure environment for older people.
Temporary Accommodation	Temporary housing for people that are homeless and waiting for longer term housing.
Void Property	An empty social rented property.



Westminster City Council • Westminster City Hall, 64
Victoria Street, London SW1E 6Q • westminster.gov.uk

City of Westminster