

London Borough of Ealing
Housing Asset Management Strategy
Executive Summary

1. Introduction and Vision

The Housing Asset Management Strategy sets out Ealing council's vision as a social landlord in the maintenance and improvement of our housing assets for the next five years. It sets the key priorities for the maintenance and improvement of housing stock and how Ealing will continue to meet the needs of the borough. The strategy outlines seven key themes and the strategic objectives linked to these, furthermore, by incorporating a clear action plan into the strategy there is a practical guide to delivering on these objectives. Through successful delivery on the actions listed in the action plan the strategy will have a positive impact on the council's strategic aims.

The vision of the strategy is:

'Safety and Sustainability, Investment and Improvement, Equalities and Engagement'.

2. The Strategy in Context

The strategy outlines the council's strategic medium and long-term approach to maintaining and improving housing stock and needs of the borough will continue to be met against the wider context of national policy and legal frameworks.

In terms of key drivers in managing our assets, the Council has limited discretion over the retention of its assets due to residents being able to purchase the properties they occupy under the Right to Buy (RTB) scheme. As a result, like most boroughs, Ealing has had to sell many of its most desirable properties whilst attempting to meet the continuing high need.

The delivery of the Housing Asset Management Strategy overlaps and is informed by the new Tenancy Strategy, the Council's programme of estate regeneration as well as the strategic partnership between Broadway Living and housing services across the Place directorate. In addition, the strategy also reflects the ambitions of significant capital allocations from the Council's HRA capital programme. Consequently, the action plan included in the strategy highlights the importance of joint working.

3. Legal and Regulatory Requirements

There are a number of legal requirements that impacts the maintenance and improvement of housing assets such as: The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 which sets out the standards which must be met in all rented residential properties which uses the 29 hazards included in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System to determine the fitness of a dwelling.

The council is also regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing which refers to the Decent Homes Standard as a minimum standard for social rented homes.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 sets out the requirements for specific precautions to be in place in all 'multi-household' occupied buildings and places duties on

the 'responsible person' (i.e. owner) to carry out Fire Risk Assessments and act on their findings.

The strategy outlines that housing services must have resident safety 'front of mind' at all times and ensure that all applicable regulations are being followed and that risk assessments are carried out for all capital works programmes.

4. Housing Needs and Stock Profile

The council is the largest social landlord in the borough with an overall number of dwellings totalling 16,689, with 11,851 occupied mainly by tenants and 4,838 leaseholder properties. of which 45% are not occupied by the leaseholder themselves.

The overall condition of retained stock is good, reflecting the considerable investment made to date. However, demand for most properties remains high.

The tenanted properties can be broken down as follows:

Dwelling type	Number
Flats	8,704
Houses	2,809
Hostels (temporary accommodation)	264
Shared Ownership	55
Short Leases	19
Total	11,851

The recently completed Stock Condition Survey (SCS) is a key foundation for the strategy as it provides a more accurate baseline of actual and assumed costs and the results allow for a reliable basis for deciding on the prioritisation of works within the planned capital programmes for the lifetime of the strategy.

5. Key Themes

There are seven key themes to deliver the vision of the strategy;

1. **Resident safety** – ensuring residents are as safe as possible in their homes and that all compliance requirements are met or exceeded.

The Housing Safety Executive Board is an ambitious cross-tenure programme aimed at making all residents as safe as possible in their homes.

The compliance team has the overall responsibility for ensuring all social homes are safe and compliant with the safety standards applicable for each dwelling. This includes technical specialists responsible for each area of compliance such as Fire Safety. A number of Fire Safety strands have been progressed and the new Fire Safety Act 2021 will extend the scope of the Regulatory Reform Order (Fire Safety) which Ealing will comply to.

2. **Priorities for Investment** – Use of the updated stock condition data and other data to plan and deliver a comprehensive 5-year programme of planned and cyclical capital works to maintain and improve the quality of our homes.

A measured approach to asset management will allow for consideration of some of the improvements most requested by residents and will potentially lead to targets being set to deliver over the next 5 years.

3. **Resident engagement** – involving and empowering our residents to play their full part in the guardianship of their homes and estates; making sure their voices are heard in relation to building safety and other concerns.

The White Paper 'A Charter for Social Housing' intends to make sure that all social housing tenants are treated with respect and dignity, and it sets out a number of individual measures to empower tenants. Ealing Council's Legislation Project Board will keep the progress of the White Paper under review and respond to any new legal requirements as they emerge.

We are also in the process of creating the first borough-wide Building Safety Panel for residents of social housing in Ealing in order to hold the council accountable for its culture, practices and performance in relation to all elements of building safety.

The Nicer Neighbourhoods Fund has been activated to allow tenants and leaseholders to identify their own priorities for improving their estates with a budget of £1 million set aside each year to carry out works in shared spaces based on applications submitted by residents.

4. **Sustainability** – improving the energy efficiency of our homes; making the strongest contribution we can make across all services to reducing emissions and achieving the Council's environmental goals.

The Council has already made significant progress on reducing the carbon footprint of our stock with solar panels being fitted to 385 properties. In addition, Q-Bot Ltd have delivered underfloor insulation to 63 properties. The Energiesprong project to retrofit 68 existing homes is also in the final planning stages.

After embracing the aims of the CEE strategy, the challenge is to make these aims manifest at the level of planning and service delivery. Therefore, through the HRA Capital Investment Programme maintenance work will be funded to improve the sustainability of our stock. Further targets are set out in the action plan included in the strategy

5. **Value for Money** – maximising the value of the Housing Revenue Account through robust procurement and contract management; reducing revenue spend through effective planning; spending budgets on 'properties not processes'.

The strategy outlines how value for money will be achieved through delivering improvements to stock that are cost-effective and efficient, creating a circle of investment that will reduce wasted costs and optimise the value of HRA budget allocations.

Value for Money will continue to be balanced in the procurement process to achieve true best value. Tenders will be judged on 'most economically advantageous' rather than simply the cheapest, with factors such as employing local residents, sustainability and wider social value considerations being looked at.

6. **Equalities** – ensuring equalities considerations are at the forefront of our planning and services delivery; protecting vulnerable residents; advancing equalities wherever possible in the context of procurement and contract management.

As a service asset management will respond to the findings of the DWC report into Ealing as an organisation and the future recommendations of the Equalities Commission reviewing progress across the borough. Furthermore, steps will be taken to improve the diversity of our workforce and any 'hot zones' will be addressed which might be identified in the service or in the culture or practice of any of our suppliers.

7. **Future challenges** – anticipating the risks and opportunities which lie ahead, transforming asset management through leading-edge technology, transforming services and working more closely with residents.

The strategy outlines the move towards more digital forms of asset management, such as the use of Building Information Management (BIM) Systems to establish a 'golden thread' of building information for safety or compliance purposes. These models will be further investigated in the context of Ealing's overall digital strategy.

In addition, as well as improving the condition and performance of our residential properties in the short and medium term, a strategic approach involves taking a longer-term view of the purpose and viability of our assets. There may be justification in some cases for disposing of particular properties on the basis of their overall utility, and a cost versus benefits principle can be applied to properties as part of an ongoing strategic approach to our stock.

From 2013 to 2043 the Council aims to set aside a total of £1.9billion for investment in its housing stock, although the amount spent annually will depend on actual work that needs to be completed each year. By using a matrix of indicators for analysing the performance of assets to make future decisions and it is proposed that the Asset Management Strategy Core Group leads on developing tools required to carry out strategic reviews of this kind.

8. Delivering the Strategy

The Housing Asset Management Strategy sets out the strategic aims and vision for the next five years and the action plan enables the Strategy stays on track with projects, targets and aspirations grouped under the seven key themes. This will enable the Council to deliver on its goals and through the successful maintenance and improvement of the council's stock a significant contribution will be made to Ealing's key priority of providing '**good, genuinely affordable homes**'.

An Asset Management Core Group has been responsible for the production of the strategy and will continue to meet regularly to review progress against the action plan and make changes in response to changing circumstances.

A Steering Group including managers and Staff from other services has been established to monitor the delivery of the Strategy.