

Housing Strategy Refresh

2022/2024





“As the Leader of West Lindsey District Council, I am delighted to bring you a refresh of our Housing Strategy. Indeed, our refreshed strategy identifies how the Council intends to continue to deliver on its important vision for housing, as well as meeting the current and future housing needs of the residents of our beautiful district.

When I look back on the progress made so far against the existing strategy, I am extremely proud of what has been achieved as a Council over the past four years in this area. The amount of work and dedication which has been undertaken by colleagues and our partners needs to be acknowledged for having been

fundamental in enabling us to get to this point, where we can look forward with even more optimism and ambition with regards to the future of housing in West Lindsey.

Good quality, safe and affordable homes can contribute immeasurably to the health and wellbeing of our residents alongside playing a vital role in the success of our communities. This is paramount to meeting the main pillars of our corporate plan, and therefore as a result, benefit every member of our community. We know our vision for housing is ambitious, and achieving that vision will never be easy in these times of constant change, but it is important that we remain ambitious and innovative in our efforts and that we keep our Corporate Plan and our local communities at the heart of everything we do.

This is an exciting time for the District, particularly with the opportunities that Levelling Up will bring. This refreshed Housing Strategy acknowledges those opportunities whilst recognising the considerable challenges that are still arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and the longer-term impacts and legacy that the next few years will bring.

I would like to thank our residents, partners, staff and other interested parties who have contributed towards the delivery of the strategy over the past four years. I look forward to the positive impact the strategy will continue to have over the next two years and beyond, for every single West Lindsey resident.”

Cllr Owen Bierley, Leader of West Lindsey District Council

Introduction:

Access to good quality housing is the foundation upon which people can build happy and successful lives. This housing strategy provides an overarching plan to guide the council and its partners in tackling the major housing challenges facing the district. It aims to promote three key themes which affect housing and identifies the outcomes that the council wishes to achieve, through the implementation plan.

We are clear that our role as an enabling authority is a critical one if we are to realise our ambition to increase housing supply, meet housing need and aspirations to transform our neighbourhoods. To do so, we will need to work with a range of partners across all tenures, balancing the needs and aspirations of all within legislation and policy.

This strategy therefore aims to provide clear strategic vision and leadership in an increasingly uncertain national economic and policy climate. The strategy contributes towards the council's corporate priorities for West Lindsey and is intrinsically linked to a number of other plans and strategies, not only of the council, but also those of other key partners and stakeholders. At a time when the Authorities capacity to deliver services is reducing, the importance of maximising the potential to shape the work of partners, and work collaboratively, to deliver not only the built environment but existing housing, housing related services and to link the crucial role that housing has in health is at the heart of the West Lindsey Housing Strategy.

Strategy review:

The Housing Strategy 2018-2022 was adopted by West Lindsey in 2018. An implementation plan was put in place to determine how the strategy would be delivered.

As the Strategy was due to be updated in 2022, a review of the strategy along with the implementation plan has been undertaken and can be found in the progress so far document at appendix 1.

The themes of the Strategy remain as relevant today as they were when it was adopted in 2018. Even though the challenges and opportunities have evolved based on the huge amounts of work that have been undertaken over the past 4 years, the three themes are still the key areas of focus for West Lindsey.



Our Vision and Ambitions

Our vision for housing in West Lindsey is for a district where “Everyone has access to good quality housing which meets their housing need and aspiration, in a pleasing environment which enables a healthy lifestyle.”

This means that we want to ensure that every resident of West Lindsey has the opportunity to access good quality housing, which is affordable to them, within which they can build happy, successful and healthy lives.

Our challenge however is principally how can we meet the differing requirements of all 129 communities within the district where their needs, strengths, assets and opportunities vary so much and to do so within the context of national and local policies and strategies.

To achieve this vision we will require housing partners and providers to work together across the district to deliver priorities within three key strategic themes:

- Driving housing growth to meet housing need
- Improving homes and transforming places
- A partnership approach to support choice, wellbeing and independence

These themes are the building blocks and form the section headings of this strategy; they will underpin not only all of the Council's work on housing, but also the level of contribution we seek and need to secure from our partners to deliver our vision for the benefit of our communities.

Our ambition is primarily led by the development of new housing, West Lindsey is committed to housing growth and economic development. However, we must ensure that the level and type of growth we are seeking is supported by appropriate infrastructure and meets the needs of our residents and businesses alike. We must also ensure that the benefits associated with growth and increased investment are accessed and enjoyed by all of our residents.

Our desire through growth is therefore to create safer, stronger, more resilient and prosperous communities.

To achieve this ambition our housing strategy is embedded and aligns itself with a number of key locally adopted strategies and plans, most importantly the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2012-2036 (reviewed 2021) and West Lindsey District Council's own Corporate Plan 2019-2023.

We recognise that the successful delivery of our ambition through our strategic themes will require partnership working across a number of areas within the council and through collaboration with a number of key partner organisations. It will involve not only delivering new housing that meets the housing needs of our residents but raising standards and making best use of existing housing stock and by doing so reduce health inequalities, promote healthy lifestyles and maximise health and wellbeing within the district.

It is important that we consider both challenges and opportunities moving forward in an ever-changing local and national picture. These challenges and opportunities are varied and include the following;



- Need for additional new homes across all tenures
- The impact and implications of new legislation and regulation across planning, homelessness and the private sector
- Innovative affordable housing solutions and specialist housing to meet identified housing need
- Viability of development sites in some areas of the district
- Government emphasis on the increased pace of new build housing
- Increased demand on homelessness services and ongoing emphasis on homelessness prevention
- Identifying new and innovative methods to finance housing development
- Removal of housing benefit support for 18-21 year olds
- A drive to integrate housing, health and social care
- Disproportionate challenges in areas of the district requiring a strategic 'place based' approach
- The continued use of private rented sector housing to meet need
- The use of regulatory tools and powers such as Selective Licensing to improve the Private Rented Sector
- The Council's successful Levelling Up bid
- Climate Change and sustainability agenda
- Covid-19 immediate and long-term impacts on the housing sector and beyond



West Lindsey: Who are we?

West Lindsey is the largest and one of the most rural districts within the County of Lincolnshire. West Lindsey includes villages to the north of the City of Lincoln, and covers an area of approximately 1,156 square kilometres (446 square miles).

The administrative centre of the district (and largest town) is Gainsborough, with the district also being home to the market towns of Caistor and Market Rasen.

- West Lindsey is home to some 95,667 residents and around 42,369 dwellings.
- West Lindsey has witnessed steady population growth since 2001 and ONS population projections suggest that the population of West Lindsey will rise to 105,700 by 2041, an overall increase of 10%.
- Situated in the north west of the county West Lindsey is bordered by East Lindsey, City of Lincoln, North Kesteven, Newark and Sherwood, Bassetlaw, North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire Councils.
- The district is rural in nature transacted by a number of 'A' roads.
- The proportion of ethnic minority residents in West Lindsey was approximately 3.5% as of 2011. Amongst ethnic minorities, those classified as Other White, White Irish and Indian comprise the largest groups.
- West Lindsey currently has an ageing population; between the 2001 and 2011 census the median age increased by 3 years, and the 0-14 and 25-44 age groups fell.
- The district saw an increase of 15.1% in dwellings between 2001 and 2011



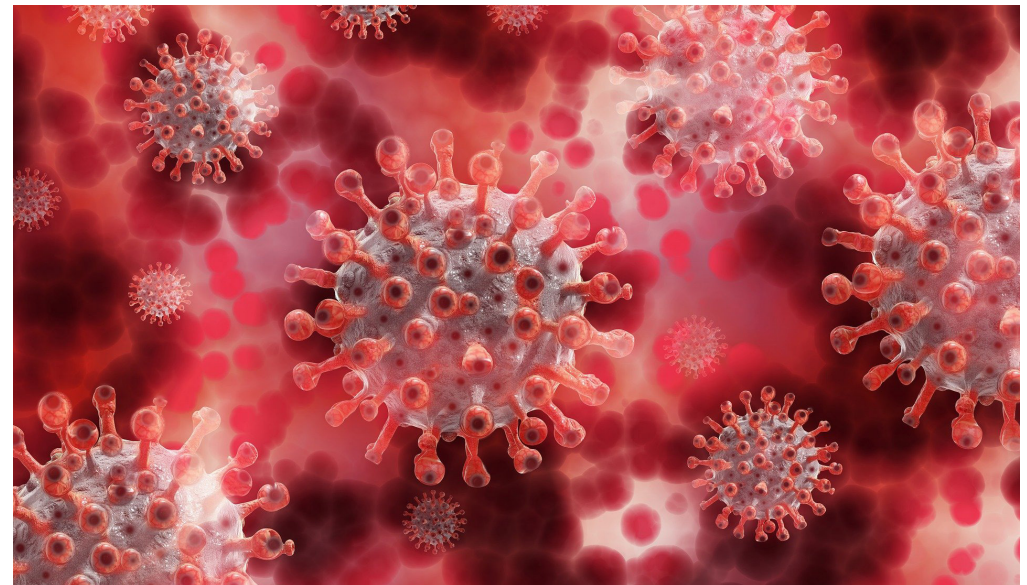
The impact of the pandemic on housing is still to be fully understood, but is clear is that it has touched almost every single aspect of the housing world.

- **Homelessness** - The 'Everyone In' campaign saw everyone rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping being offered temporary accommodation irrespective of priority need.
- **Private rented sector** - Changes were made to the rules around private landlords being able to give their tenants section 21 notices for eviction and court proceedings around eviction cases were halted. There are still significant delays within the court system as the backlog is tackled.
- **Domestic Abuse** - Approaches from victims of domestic abuse increased.
- **Mental Health** - A lack of access to support for people with mental health and substance misuse issues saw other cases increase in complexity and coupled with a lack of available properties in the social sector increased the council's use of bed and breakfast accommodation.
- **Private sector housing** - An increase in the number of housing disrepair issues were reported. With housing visits not being able to be undertaken for over 3 months and the courts not being available for landlord prosecutions, a backlog of cases built up making tackling poor landlords even harder.
- **The housing market** - The introduction of a stamp duty holiday saw a rise in the numbers of people looking to move house. It is anticipated that the pandemic has also changed people's thoughts on the types and location of housing they require or desire. A change people's working patterns as more people work from home or a realisation of the importance of outside space are some of the drivers for the shift in the housing market.

Challenges ahead:

The impact from the Covid-19 pandemic on housing is yet to be fully understood and realised - however, in the short term presents challenges such as the increased cost of building, both materials and labour and availability of housing across all tenures as tenants in social housing stock choose not to move and delays in completions of new homes. In much of West Lindsey, there are lower than average house values and much of the construction is undertaken by SME's with smaller profit margins, it is therefore becoming increasingly difficult to deliver housing, to meet need, with the required contributions to make the developments acceptable.

Learning from the pandemic and its impact on housing is fundamental to the council and this strategy. As we adjust to living with Covid-19, it is important that all aspects of housing are poised to respond to both the on-going impact and amendments from Government in terms of policies and approaches.



Levelling Up

Our 'Thriving Gainsborough 2021' proposal was successfully awarded more than £10million by central government in October 2021 as part of the Levelling Up Fund programme.

Gainsborough has one of the most deprived wards in the country and is currently facing issues around market failure alongside substantial deprivation.

Thriving Gainsborough 2024 is designed through regeneration of the town centre and local investment in cultural facilities, to revitalise the local economy and ultimately reduce the acute deprivation experienced across several wards. The five themes that underpin Thriving Gainsborough 2024 are as follows:

1. A thriving market place as the town centre piece
2. Heritage led regeneration
3. Placemaking and a green public realm
4. Transformed movement and connectivity
5. A place to live

Specifically, in relation to housing, the Levelling Up intervention will expand the successful Living Over the Shops pilot programme by bringing vacant and / or low-quality town centre properties back into use, with additional funds to ensure that high standards of heritage regeneration are achieved.

To be delivered by March 2024, the wider impact of the Levelling Up programme will be a catalytic improvement in Gainsborough Town Centre, adding to the attractiveness of Gainsborough as a destination for housing growth.

Whilst it may be acknowledged that priority on the Levelling Up agenda has been given by Government to primarily support cities and towns, we recognise that many rural places face similar challenges and levels of disadvantage. In our rural communities we will continue to work with our partners to improve access to quality and affordable housing, ensuring that new developments provide infrastructure to meet local needs.



WLDC are committed to help our district become a net-zero carbon emissions area by 2050 at the latest - in line with the UK's legally binding target.

Necessary reductions won't be achieved without the near-complete elimination of greenhouse gas emissions from UK buildings. Therefore, our Housing Strategy must aim to help drastically reduce carbon emissions. But we must also ensure homes are adequately prepared for the inevitable impacts of climate change too.

Our Sustainability, Climate Change and Environment Strategy and Action Plan was approved by Council in June 2021, with housing and protecting homes and people most at risk from climate impacts a theme that runs throughout.

There are a number of action areas that relate to our housing strategy that we are committed to here:

- 1. Retrofitting existing homes** - Ensuring existing homes are low-carbon and resilient to the changing climate is a major priority. We work with our partners to offer advice and support and help our residents to access financial assistance to encourage retrofitting of energy efficiency measures and switch to renewable energy. This cuts emissions, but also helps reduce fuel poverty, and can save money and improve living environments too.
- 2. Building new homes** - New homes should be built to be low-carbon, energy and water efficient, and climate resilient. With things like sustainable transport, waste management and access to services in mind too. These principles are enshrined in the new draft CLLP which provides a positive framework for enhancing sustainability and reaching net zero emissions.
- 3. Finance and funding** - We know that energy efficiency improvements and switching to renewable power can initially be expensive. WLDC are campaigning for more resources to help residents make those changes and positioning ourselves to bid for funding as it becomes available.

- 4. Performance and compliance** - Ensuring new homes are built and existing homes retrofitted to stated design standards and that landlords achieve minimum energy efficiency ratings.

The demographics of the district and make-up of the current housing stock are detailed elsewhere in this strategy, but factors such as older, less energy efficient, low density housing stock, combined with high levels of owner occupancy make the problem of tackling emissions more urgent but sometimes more costly to tackle at scale.

To help overcome these challenges we will need to work with partners to ensure local skills exist in housing design, construction and in the installation of new technologies.



National and Local Context

Much of the way in which housing services are delivered is governed by legislation and national or local policies. The legislation and policies provide context to this housing strategy and the impact they have on our district including:

Housing White Paper (2017) 'Fixing our Broken Housing Market':

The White paper identifies the following three main challenges facing the national housing market:

- an insufficient land supply for the required amount of housing development;
- the slow pace of development from permission to completion; and
- the need to diversify the housing market.

We recognise the need to build more homes at an increased pace and how these aspirations link to economic growth. By putting 'people first' at the centre of our strategy will do just that resulting in all sectors of the community benefitting including those trying to get onto the housing ladder, those looking for a better quality property in the private rented sector and vulnerable households seeking accommodation to meet their needs.

Although as a White Paper this was never legislated, it still informed many of the planning reforms that have been implemented since its publication and remains as the Governments most recent adopted policy position on Housing and the priorities in the sector.

National Planning Policy Framework (2019):

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the planning policies for England and how they are applied. It forms a significant part of the policy background for the delivery of this strategy.

The NPPF was updated in 2019 and with that came an updated methodology for assessing housing need to standardise it across the country. Alongside that, there were amended definitions of affordable

housing and a number of other housing related policies including the entry-level exception site policy, all of which have an impact on the delivery of affordable housing across the Country.



Localism Act 2011:

The aim of the Act was to devolve power from central government to individuals, communities and local councils. Key measures set out in the Act include new freedoms for local government, new rights and powers for communities and individuals, reform to the planning system and reforms about local decisions made in relation to housing.

Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017:

As with the Localism Act, the Neighbourhood Planning Act gives rights and powers to communities allowing them to shape development within their settlement or parish through the production of a neighbourhood plan. The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan provides the strategic planning guidance while neighbourhood plans set our policies and plans for settlements on a local parish level aiming to deliver locally specific community priorities. There are currently 21 Neighbourhood plans that have been made with 15 in process. Communities have embraced being able to make a difference in their areas with a considerable number coming to fruition since the legislation was enacted in 2017.



Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) (2017):

The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) amends Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. The legislation was enacted in 2018 and it introduced a number of new legal duties with resulting implications. Placing a renewed emphasis on homelessness prevention the HRA introduced duties to assess the needs of and seek to prevent homelessness for all eligible households within 56 days of them becoming homeless, irrespective of priority need or intentional homelessness.

Key changes and implications of the HRA included:

- Extension to the period of time within which a household is classed as 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 days to 56 days
- Initial duty owed to all eligible persons who are homeless
- Duty to provide advisory services
- Duty to assess every eligible applicants' case and agree a clear plan of the steps required to prevent or relieve homelessness
- Introduction of a 'prevention duty' for all eligible applicants
- Introduction of a 'relief duty' to take reasonable steps to secure accommodation for eligible homeless applicants regardless of priority need
- 'Duty to Refer' - The Act also places a duty on other local services to notify the local housing authority if they are working with an applicant who is homeless or at risk of homelessness

First Homes:

First Homes is a new Government initiative developed to assist first time buyers who are unable to purchase properties on the open market purchase the whole of the property with a set discount.

First Homes are discounted market sale units which:

- must be discounted by a minimum of 30% against the market value;
- are sold to a person or persons purchasing their first home

Brought in via ministerial statement on 24th May 2021 this will be the government's preferred discounted market tenure and will account for at least 25% of all affordable housing units delivered by developers through planning obligations. Sitting below the national strategies and policies are a range of regional and local plans. These include:



Greater Lincolnshire Local Economic Partnership and the Strategic Economic Plan 2016 Refresh (SEP) (2014-2030):

The Greater Lincolnshire Local Economic Partnership (GLLEP) is a partnership working with the Government to find solutions to enable the delivery of strategic projects that will drive local prosperity and economic growth. The Strategic Economic Plan 2014-2030 (SEP) is the primary document, which underpins everything the GLLEP aims to do. It sets out ambitious targets of creating 13,000 new jobs by 2030, and assisting in the creation of 100,000 new homes and helping 22,000 existing businesses grow across Lincolnshire.

Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (CLLP) (2012-2036):

The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan – adopted April 2017 and in the process of being reviewed in 2021 – establishes a total housing target of 1086 dwellings per annum up to 2036 with the focus for future housing growth falling within the main settlements of the City of Lincoln, Sleaford and Gainsborough and in settlements that support their roles. This approach makes the most of existing services and facilities, delivering growth where it is most needed, providing opportunities to regenerate urban areas and provide new jobs and homes in accessible locations.

For West Lindsey, the Local Plan sets out the delivery target of 334 new homes per annum with 156 of those being required to be affordable. Most of this growth is planned within the Gainsborough area which includes two new Sustainable Urban Extensions.

Outside of the main urban areas the smaller towns and villages in Central Lincolnshire and certainly in West Lindsey vary in size, demography, accessibility, facilities, issues and opportunities. The CLLP determines

how each community can contribute to the delivery of a sustainable Central Lincolnshire. To maintain and enhance their roles as market towns Caistor and Market Rasen are the focus for significant but proportionate growth. The plan also allows for larger villages such as Welton, Scotter and Nettleham, which provide housing, employment and key services for the local area to maintain and enhance their roles. Levels of growth for medium and smaller villages within the district are also set out within the plan.

Policies are also included to ensure that the infrastructure that is required to support the delivery of new homes is provided at the same time.



Central Lincs Infrastructure Delivery Plan (CLIDP):

Sitting alongside the CLLP the Central Lincs Infrastructure Delivery Plan identifies where and how appropriate physical and social infrastructure such as schools, roads, health facilities and open space will be needed and delivered; all which contributes to the overall quality of life for our residents.

West Lindsey Corporate Plan (2019-2023):

The West Lindsey Corporate Plan sets out the Council's priorities and objectives designed to meet the many and varied needs of our district. The vision within our Corporate Plan is "West Lindsey is a great place to be where people, businesses and communities can thrive and reach their potential". The plan has three themes: Our People, Our Place, Our Council.

A number of the strategic objectives within the plan are housing related and these include:

- Ensuring housing solutions provide choice and support independence
- Improve homes and transform places
- Deliver housing led economic growth and infrastructure
- Drive Housing growth and meet need and demand, using private sector solutions where appropriate
- Ensure those in need of housing or a threat of homeless receive appropriate advice and support
- Improve housing standards and take appropriate enforcement action where necessary

West Lindsey Economic Recovery Plan 2021-2024:

The Economic recovery plan sets out the interventions and actions that West Lindsey has taken during the pandemic in response to the devastating effects it has had on our communities and local economy. It then goes on to set out a plan and pathway that will inform the way forward towards long term recovery and economic growth centred around inclusiveness, sustainability and resilience.



West Lindsey Sustainability, Climate Change and Environment Strategy:

West Lindsey District Council is committed to reducing its carbon footprint to net-zero by 2050 at the latest and to also playing a leadership role to ensure that the whole District can achieve the same position within the same timescale.

The Council's Sustainability, Climate Change and Environment Strategy, agreed by Council in June 2021, sets out how this will be achieved and the matters that need to be addressed. It will support the Council's vision that West Lindsey is "a great place to be where people, businesses and communities can thrive and reach their potential."

Lincolnshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2017-2021:

The Lincolnshire Homeless Strategy and Rough Sleeping 2017-2021 has been given approval from the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities to extend until 2022 due to Covid-19.

The priorities of the current strategy are to protect, prevent, partnerships, place and possibility. This is focused on protecting those most vulnerable and tackling rough sleeping, preventing homelessness, working in partnership, accessing appropriate accommodation and ensuring a sustainable future for supported housing.

The Care Act (2014):

The Care Act (2014) makes a requirement for closer cooperation between health, care and services that address the wider determinants of health, including housing; to deliver outcome based support, systems and provision to meet identified needs.



Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy for Lincolnshire:

Informed by the Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Lincolnshire underpins the activity of the Health and Wellbeing Board. Housing is identified as a key priority for Lincolnshire in the current strategy. Activity to genuinely integrate housing, health and care has gathered momentum since 2018 in line with the national drive to better alignment resulting in the adoption by all district councils of the Homes for Independence Blueprint.

Lincolnshire Homes for Independence Blueprint:

The Homes for Independence Blueprint, developed on by the Lincolnshire Housing, Health and Care Delivery Group, a subgroup of the Health and Wellbeing Board which recognises the crucial role that housing plays in health, focuses on the following;

- growing the supply of appropriate housing to meet a range of specific housing needs
- aiming to influence the design, location and number of homes delivered
- secure better outcomes from existing resources
- increase choice of housing that is affordable, accessible and supports people's physical, mental and financial wellbeing
- enable residents of West Lindsey and Lincolnshire to plan ahead to meet their housing needs

The Blueprint, adopted by all districts, acknowledges that living in a safe, accessible, warm home promotes good mental and physical wellbeing and helps to reduce hospital admissions, social isolation and loneliness and will be fundamental to the success of this strategy.

People at the Heart of Care: Adult Social Care Reform White paper 2021
This white paper sets out how some of this money will be spent to begin to transform the adult social care system in England, such as new investments in:

- housing and home adaptations
- technology and digitisation
- workforce training and wellbeing support
- support for unpaid carers, and improved information and advice
- innovation and improvement

Together, these measures aim to put people at the heart of social care and move us towards our 10-year reform vision.

The current housing offer in West Lindsey is very diverse across the District reflecting the urban and rural locations and the dispersed nature of the district. The wider urban area of Gainsborough is characterised by smaller properties focused around terraced, semi-detached and flatted property, whereas in rural areas, the housing stock usually comprises of larger owner-occupied detached properties.

House prices accordingly vary greatly across the district with some smaller terraced properties in Gainsborough priced below £75,000 where in contrast prices in more rural areas can attract values in excess of £300,000.



Key housing facts in West Lindsey:

- Non-stock holding authority
- There is an identified need for 1086 dwellings per annum across Central Lincolnshire of which 334 are needed for West Lindsey
- Need for 156 affordable homes per annum (2021-2029) across West Lindsey
- 11% of housing stock is socially rented. Below the national average with the exception of Gainsborough East Ward
- 19.6% of housing stock in the district is private rent. Diversely spread with less choice in rural areas but with areas of higher concentration.
- 56% of stock is privately rented in South West Ward of Gainsborough
- In 2021 approximately 23% of all private rented properties in West Lindsey were estimated to contain at least one Category 1 Hazard under the Housing and Health Rating System
- The West Lindsey overall ranking for deprivation is 147 out of England's 317 local authorities. This places West Lindsey slightly above the median
- Selective licensing scheme undertaken in the South West Ward Gainsborough helping tackle anti-social behaviour, poor housing standards and poor standards of housing management practices by private landlords
- Decommissioning of MOD sites without a clear exit strategy has led to the emergence of vulnerable, unstable and unsustainable communities
- The demand for housing advice, homelessness and homelessness prevention services increases steadily year on year and has done for the past 5 years

- Loss of Private Rented Sector (PRS) tenancy is the leading cause of homelessness in West Lindsey
- 12% of West Lindsey are currently living in fuel poverty
- Assistance to remain in a PRS tenancy through proactive homelessness prevention intervention is key prevention tool
- Housing people through the housing register is the number one way homelessness is prevented in West Lindsey

Selective Licensing:

In 2016, West Lindsey embarked on a Selective Licensing scheme for a small area of the Gainsborough South West Ward. The reasons behind focussing on this area were:

- High levels of private rented sector
- Evidence of significant anti-social behaviour
- Increase resource and enhance proactive work in the private rented sector
- The area is one of the most deprived wards in the country with fuel poverty and house standards at a record low

The selective licensing scheme helped to ensure that the Council had a much more coordinated and proactive approach in regards to ensuring compliance within its private rented sector and offered methods to proactively improve the private rented sector using different legislative tools and a more focussed approach.

In addition to this, through the development of the selective licensing scheme, a greater understanding of need was evidenced, specifically the role that the private rented sector played in masking housing need. This led to an opportunity to intervene in the housing market and develop a 'Viable Housing Solution'.

Alongside reducing anti-social behaviour, the scheme actively sought to improve and then maintain property conditions. The proactive nature of the scheme enabled the Council to deal with a broader range of issues across multiple work areas such as Council Tax, Planning and Environmental Health and then to take a more joined up approach to address them. Offences and violations such as illegal eviction, sub-letting and conversion of garages and annexes without permission have all been identified in delivering the scheme. The scheme also enabled the Council to work in a more focussed and intelligence based manner with agencies such as the Police and Trading Standards.

The scheme ended in 2021 with the outcomes as follows:

- 98% of licensable properties licenced (810 properties)
- 249 properties improved as a direct result of WLDC action
- 75% reduction in housing disrepair issues
- 83% reduction in anti-social behaviour over the 5 year scheme period
- 32% decrease in empty properties in the designated area (in comparison to only 3% in the rest of the district)

Moving forward, how West Lindsey can expand Selective Licensing to some of the other challenging areas across the wider district will be key to tackling issues that are associated with a growing private rented sector, within which property conditions are poor in comparison to the national average. This will require robust evidence to determine the areas of the district where improvements can be made by introducing a Selective Licensing scheme.

Selective Licensing can also contribute to tackling some of the rural inequalities faced across the district by increasing proactive work in the private rented sector outside the South West Ward of Gainsborough.

Positioning ourselves to meet the need and aspirations of our communities:

To address the future housing challenges and aspirations of the district our strategy sets out three key strategic themes identified through evidence gathering, to deliver our ambition. Crucially, the council cannot and will not aim to do everything itself and we are clear that leadership and service delivery on housing in West Lindsey extends beyond the council. Our approach is that the strategy should apply to all homes in the district, which means everyone involved in building, managing and supporting the people who live in West Lindsey's homes has a role to play.

We recognise that this document does not contain all of the detail, challenges, issues or possible solutions for housing in West Lindsey. In part this is because we do not have or have not yet developed all of the answers. More detail is available within the accompanying Housing Strategy Implementation Plan where, within each theme, we have identified a number of key areas of priority actions, which need to be addressed in order to meet the objectives, detailing the measures and resources required. The Implementation Plan is a working document, which forms the basis of a programme of work being delivered by the council to address issues and meet challenges and aspirations for housing and housing related services within the district.

In order to ensure this strategy is effectively implemented and meets its objectives, progress against the key actions will be monitored quarterly and reviewed annually. An annual review enables us to ensure that we have the flexibility to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing housing environment and to ensure we can be responsive to both local issues and changes to the national legislative and policy environment that will occur over the lifetime of the strategy.

This strategy is therefore a public document, which we want to be accessible to everyone. There are some groups of people that we expect will be particularly interested in some or all of the document. These include:

- Existing residents and those looking to move into West Lindsey
- Private developers and Registered Providers proposing to build new homes
- Private landlords and Registered Providers who let homes in West Lindsey, so they know what standards are expected and how those standards might be enforced
- Regional and central government agencies such as Homes England and the newly named Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly MHCLG)
- Public bodies and voluntary sector organisations that provide services or advice to current or future residents, so they can make sure their own work with residents is consistent with the council's approach and is linked properly to the work being done by housing providers.
- The council itself, to ensure that our approach to housing and the future challenges are consistent with our overall strategic / corporate approach
- Providers of supported housing



An aerial photograph of a large, cleared construction site. The site is mostly bare earth with some construction equipment and materials scattered across it. To the left of the site is a row of residential houses. To the right is a river with a green embankment. In the background, there are more houses and a large industrial building. A white text box is overlaid on the center of the image.

Theme 1:

Driving Housing Growth to meet housing need

Challenges and Opportunities:

This theme seeks to increase the supply, mix and quality of new homes across all tenures. An increase in supply encourages greater choice to meet the housing needs of existing and future residents within the district and at the same time delivers the additional benefits of infrastructure to improve not only the built environment but also the social role in improving the lives and wellbeing of our residents.



Housing growth targets for the district are set within the Central Lincs Local Plan (CLLP) which was adopted in April 2017 and is currently in the process of being updated with the revised plan due Spring 2022. Whilst a large proportion of the growth for the whole of Central Lincolnshire is planned for Gainsborough, larger villages situated in the Lincoln fringe area and the other market towns within the district will accommodate a number of new homes over the plan period.

Market Rasen, defined as a market town within the CLLP, will be the focus for significant but proportionate growth. Residential development land is allocated which can accommodate over 600 dwellings. The town has also seen the introduction of the Market Rasen Historic Building Grant programme, which is designed to be the first phase of improvements to some of the important historic buildings in the heart of the town. Alongside that, the emerging plan for markets across the whole district recognises the value of the weekly market in Market Rasen and through partnerships with Market Rasen Town Council will come the ability to strengthen the market to be the key historic feature and attraction that we know it can be in the town.

The housing market in West Lindsey has seen improvements in recent years and alongside that, there has been a vast increase in the rate of housebuilding in both the rural areas and the town of Gainsborough itself. During the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan period 2012-2036, Gainsborough will seek to accommodate a target of 4435 new homes. A major catalyst for a portion the development in Gainsborough was the designation of the town as a housing zone site in 2015 by Homes England. This provided West Lindsey with the additional capacity and expertise to focus on development of brownfield land by removing barriers, such as the cost of addressing flood risk, in areas where values may be low, that are preventing delivery and assist to bring them forward as housing.

The Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP) is a business led partnership made up of private and public sector leaders working with the government to find solutions to enable the delivery of projects, which will drive local prosperity and economic growth. Alongside opportunities that present as part of the GLLEP, there is also significant investment into the town centre as part of the Levelling up bid, which secured £10.7million to create a self-sufficient and thriving market town.

Whilst investment in the town on this scale is welcomed and will certainly have a positive impact on delivery of housing, the challenges associated with delivering this level of growth in the town are considerable. The Housing Zone designation and the successful bid to the Levelling UP fund has enabled us to raise the profile of the town but the viability of the area

remains a key issue in the centre of Gainsborough. In order to meet our ambition for growth, we need to take positive and proactive steps as an enabling authority to ensure that residential development proposals are both viable and deliverable in all parts of the district.

We want the balance of housing in the district to ensure that there are enough homes of the right types, sizes and quality for people at all stages in their lives to aspire to. Critical to West Lindsey's future economic success will be ensuring there are a number of larger homes in attractive environments, providing more choice, to attract economically active households as well as providing appropriate housing for our aging population, which will free up existing properties.



Further evidence of the diversity of the district is demonstrated by the fact there are areas where house prices are lower than average and it is assumed that because of this that these houses are 'affordable'. However, in reality, these houses may not be of the type or quality expected to meet modern expectations or in locations currently viewed as desirable. These houses therefore cannot be seen as the solution to the evidenced need for affordable housing across the district. They do however have the potential to provide other innovative opportunities to the Council and our partners.

The challenges facing the authority and our Central Lincolnshire partners to deliver the number of affordable homes in Central Lincolnshire to meet the full needs set out in the Housing Needs Assessment (2020) are considerable. The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (adopted April 2017) policy has needed to have regard to what can viably and reasonably be achieved when taking the other policy 'asks' and developer contributions needed to deliver other forms of essential infrastructure, such as education provision and healthcare into consideration.

Another challenge which will need considerable consideration will be the Governments plans to bring in the Future Homes Standards by 2025 which should produce homes that reduce carbon emissions by 75-80% compared with current levels and become net carbon zero as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise. Homes England also have a clear strategic priority around the requirement for all Local Authorities and developers to start to understand the barriers of delivering new housing by way of Modern Methods of Construction and ensuring that these challenges can be explored and overcome. The inability to meet affordable housing need through the planning process alone is not exclusive to West Lindsey, nor indeed to the Central Lincolnshire sub-region, and is in fact reflective of a country-wide issue that is well evidenced and is a common concern for nearly all local authorities.

The challenge for West Lindsey will be to deliver additional affordable housing to help mitigate the known undersupply that the planning system can deliver. This issue will be a concern in all parts of the district. An undersupply of additional affordable homes to meet housing need will not only occur in areas where there is less delivery across all tenures but will also occur in areas where the housing market is more buoyant such as the villages on the Lincoln fringe. Clear evidence of need will be required to ensure a targeted approach can be taken to the delivery of all types of housing.

A national focus on home ownership through the government's new First Homes initiative will undoubtedly generate opportunities to support households into home ownership across the district. However, it is likely to result in fewer homes being developed for affordable rent. This creates further challenges for West Lindsey in relation to how we plan to meet the needs of those for whom home ownership is not a viable housing solution. A further challenge is for us to understand how many households will be able to afford low cost home ownership products.

As an enabling authority, we aim to continue to work in a flexible manner so that supply can adapt as the housing market and demand for homes changes ensuring that the places where we want development to happen are both viable and attractive.



Theme 2:

Improving Homes and Transforming Places

Challenges and Opportunities:

Improving the existing housing stock and the resulting benefits to residents, and communities is a key priority for the council. Whilst we do not own or manage any housing stock we wish to work with others to achieve a number of outcomes including raising housing standards, addressing energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty. Reducing the number of empty homes in the district will also be addressed under this theme.

As it has grown in size, the private rented sector in West Lindsey has become increasingly more important. A healthy high quality private rented sector helps to support economic and social mobility, and can provide an affordable housing option for those households on lower incomes. As well as encouraging the development of more homes for owner occupation, we are keen to support and encourage the continued growth of the private rented sector where the accommodation (and management services) meets the required standards. We are also committed to ensuring that minimum energy efficiency standards are met in the private rented sector and will be working to actively enable this.

The quality of housing within this sector has however not always kept pace with the demands of the market and so, in places, it detracts from our vision for a thriving and prosperous district. Nowhere is this more evident than in parts of Gainsborough and in the former MoD estates. To address this, we want to raise standards and competition within the sector by increasing the quantity of new good quality homes for rent. We want private landlords to improve their offering and in doing so provide homes and the residential environments that meet aspirations. Where private landlords either cannot or choose not to respond to these challenges, we will provide advice, assistance and where necessary utilise our statutory powers to ensure standards are improved.

We recognise that the majority of landlords provide a good standard of accommodation and service to their tenants and we aim to build a more trusting relationship with landlords alongside our formal enforcement approach. The council will therefore continue to support these landlords

through a range of assistance and advice based services. Our advice will be focussed on ensuring that landlords understand their legal obligations and are signposted to the appropriate resources and advice to enable them to manage their properties effectively and to a high standard.

The Council, in partnership with other agencies will actively seek out criminal landlords and will utilise its statutory powers to deal with them. The Council has already undertaken a successful selective licensing scheme in the South West Ward of Gainsborough to address issues such as anti-social behaviour and low housing demand. This approach is in line with the Government's increased regulation for the sector and is an approach that may be required across other parts of the district. The move towards increased regulation in the sector is seen as a positive step and the approach to dealing with poor housing standards is in line with this.



There is an increased desire to consider taking a broader approach to the improvement of property conditions within the private rented sector and this is supported by the most recent stock condition survey undertaken in the district that shows that every ward in the District except one, has higher than the national average for Category 1 Hazards within the sector (13%).

This approach is in line with the Government's increased regulation for the sector and is an approach that the Council is currently exploring in further detail on the back of its first successful selective licensing scheme. There is a desire to consider whether this approach can be delivered across wider parts of the District and a robust evidence base has been developed to enable these plans to progress. The move towards increased regulation in the sector is seen as a positive step and the approach to dealing with poor housing standards is in line with this.

We also recognise the impact that empty properties can have upon all neighbours and wider neighbourhoods. As well as a wasted resource and potential blight within a community, empty properties can present a health risk, can become a focus for unwanted or anti-social activity and can adversely impact upon the image and values within a neighbourhood.

We have a strong track record of identifying and working with owners to help them bring these properties back into use and there has been a large reduction in empty properties in the past 3 years. It is key this momentum is continued through proactive work to ensure as few properties as possible are left empty. Where owners are either unable or unwilling to take the necessary steps to re-use their properties, again we are able to utilise and deploy a range of powers to aide this process.



An elderly couple is standing in front of a brick house. The man, on the left, is wearing a light blue shirt and a striped tie. The woman, on the right, is wearing a white top. They are both smiling. A semi-transparent blue box with a white border is overlaid on the image, containing the text 'Theme 3: A Partnership Approach to support Choice, Wellbeing and Independence'.

Theme 3:

A Partnership Approach to support
Choice, Wellbeing and Independence

Challenges and Opportunities:

Housing is about more than the built environment – it is about people and communities. We will only be successful in our ambition if the provision of housing and housing related services helps to meet the wider needs and aspirations of all of our residents and communities as recognised by the 'People' theme of our Corporate Plan.

We want our neighbourhoods and communities to be mixed and inclusive. To achieve this we need to ensure greater equality, resilience and stability through improvements in the amount, mix and quality of our homes. Therefore, whilst much of the early focus of this strategy prioritises the delivery of new homes and physical improvements to existing properties, we need to balance this against the need to ensure that housing in West Lindsey provides a foundation upon which people can build happy and successful lives, promoting stability, independence, health and wellbeing.

This means that we and our partners become more than landlords and service providers but take a more proactive approach to helping residents find and keep a home and by working together with them improve their health, education, skills and employment prospects and maintain their independence.

At its most extreme, the very real issues of rising homelessness and decreasing access to housing mean that there needs to be a focus on early intervention, prevention and enabling access to housing. Whilst we already placed emphasis on homelessness prevention, the duties associated with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) enhanced our responsibilities to prevent homelessness for a much broader cohort of customers. Even though this increased the required workload, it also increased the ability to prevent homelessness and gave additional flexibility and opportunity to improve the proactive work that can be done to prevent homelessness.

We will continue to shift resources to tackle the causes of problems rather than just treating the symptoms. This focus upon intervention aims to reduce the number of specialist interventions and prevent crisis. In order to achieve this, we will focus on working in partnership to bring



resources together in order to maximise the impact of any interventions. Additionally, we must consider a number of challenges that are likely to impact heavily upon those who are marginalised and vulnerable to experiencing homelessness. These challenges include changes to government policy where careful management of the possible impacts are required, a continuous demand on resources in the face of tightening budgetary pressures, a fragile national economic picture and various policy areas that have the potential to impact on preventing and tackling homelessness but are not necessarily coordinated. This is all over and above the impact that Covid-19 is continuing to have and the changes that will bring about to ensure the Country is capable of withstanding another pandemic as we emerge from the impact of the current pandemic.

Alongside our ambitions for growth, we will continue our emphasis on preventing homelessness and developing a range of housing and support options to assist us to do so. Placing our homelessness prevention, growth and social regeneration efforts in the context of the Councils Growth agenda through this Housing Strategy allows us to approach this in a more holistic way. We are committed to working with a range of partners to meet the needs of those who are vulnerable to or experiencing homelessness in our district.

Homelessness is a complex issue that cuts across many policy areas. Lincolnshire continues to experience an increase in homelessness, alongside an increase in the complexity of the needs of individuals and households affected by homelessness. Now more than ever we need to work together to respond to an environment of rapid change.

Local Authorities are reliant on social housing stock to meet housing need and prevent homelessness. A decrease in the supply of new social housing has the potential to significantly impact on our ability to meet our statutory duties in relation to homelessness households. A reduction in supply may also limit our ability to utilise social housing to prevent and/or alleviate homelessness before it arises, and also to limit the options available for those in need of independent accommodation (such as those presently residing in supported accommodation). We must seek to ensure that the available supply of affordable rented housing is prioritised for those in greatest need, and that those who can meet their housing needs through alternative tenures, including a good quality affordable homes in the private rented sector are supported to do so.

The loss of private rented accommodation continues to be a leading cause of homelessness in West Lindsey. Similarly, our homelessness prevention activity focuses on supporting people to remain in the private rented sector. Ensuring that the private rented offering in West Lindsey is suitable, affordable and well managed and that by seeking to intervene earlier we can prevent the loss of accommodation where possible.

In common with many areas, the population of West Lindsey is also set to witness a significant level of growth amongst older person households. As well as living for longer, many older person households prefer to continue to live in their own homes before seeking specialist accommodation. Support should therefore maintain a focus upon developing the range of services which will help many older people maintain and stay within their own homes for longer.

We do however also recognise that housing options for older people is often limited. In partnership with providers of housing and support services, we need to consider the appropriateness of more specialist accommodation with support, including retirement housing and extra care housing models alongside reviewing existing sheltered housing, which may no longer be fit for purpose to respond to long term demographic changes and support the future needs of specific groups.

Housing also plays a key role in supporting health and wellbeing. As a district council, we are well placed to have a leading contributory role in the strategic infrastructure surrounding housing, health and care as key policy areas and their associated interdependencies. Our commitment to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for communities is rooted in our Corporate Plan.

Whilst the role of housing in health, in terms of prevention and early intervention, is increasingly acknowledged, the Government's push to have all areas serviced by the new Integrated Care Systems by April 2022, bringing together partners across the system to meet health and care needs, will ensure that the role of the district council is further embedded in health. Through this housing strategy, we aim to explore the opportunities that will enable us to maximise our role.



- **Affordable Housing** - Social rented, affordable rented and low cost homes ownership options for households who cannot afford to meet their housing needs through the market. Affordable housing tenures are defined in the NPPF.
- **Affordable Rent** - Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or Registered Providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).
- **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)** - The central government department with responsibility for all housing and planning matters and has recently aligned itself to the Government's new Levelling up agenda.
- **Fuel Poverty** - A household is considered to be in fuel poverty if they have required fuel costs that were above average and were they to spend that amount they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.
- **Homes England** - The national housing and regeneration agency for England that provides investment for new affordable housing, improving existing social housing and working with Local Authorities to unlock barrier to development.
- **Housing Needs Assessment** - A study into the local housing market that assesses housing need and demand to inform the development of the Local Plan and the Housing Strategy.
- **Marginalised** - Those with lack of access to resources, opportunities and rights.
- **National Planning Policy framework (NPPF)** - The Government's overarching planning policy document setting out planning priorities for England and outlines an expectation for how the associated policies should be applied.
- **Owner Occupation** - Properties owner outright by the occupier or being bought by the occupier with a mortgage.
- **Priority Need** - A priority for accommodation given to specified groups of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.
- **Private Rented Sector** - All rented property other than that rented from Registered providers and local authorities.
- **Registered Provider (RP)** - Provider of social housing registered with Homes England.
- **Sheltered Housing** - Accommodation for sale or for rent exclusively to elderly or vulnerable people often with estate management services, emergency alarm system and warden service.
- **Social rent** - Rented housing owned and managed by local authorities and housing associations.
- **Stakeholders** - Individuals or groups or organisations with an interest or concern in something.
- **Universal Credit** - A new type of benefit designed to support people who are on a low income or out of work. It replaces six existing benefits and is currently being rolled out across the UK. The new system is based on a single monthly payment transferred directly into a bank account.
- **Vulnerable** - Those at risk for a reason which means they may be unable to take care of or protect themselves from harm or exploitation.

With Thanks to:

Central Lincolnshire Housing Needs Assessment 2020,
Selective Licensing justification report 2021
Acis Housing Ltd, Lace Housing Associations,
Ongo Homes Ltd, ONS 2019, Census 2011,
WLDC State of the District 2020

Get In Touch:

www.west-lindsey.gov.uk
01427 676676

