

Denbighshire County Council

Denbighshire's Housing Strategy: Summary 2015 - 2020



Local Context

Population & Households

 **94.5k**

2013 mid-year population estimates for Denbighshire

 **41k**

2013 mid-year estimate of Denbighshire households

 **1.1k**

Forecasted increase in households 2015-2020

 **£23.8k**

Median household income in Denbighshire 2014

 **£1.5k**

Decrease in median household income since 2007

 **21%**

Population in Denbighshire aged 65 and over

 **24%**

Population in Denbighshire with an activity limiting illness or disability

 **64%**

Increase in full homelessness decisions awarded in 2014/15 from 2013/14

 **14%**

14% of Denbighshire is classed as being in top 10 of the most deprived areas in Wales (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation - WIMD)

Housing Market

 **176**

New properties completed 2014/15 up 17 on 2013/14

 **50%**

Population cannot afford a 2 bedroom open market house in Denbighshire

 **1.1k**

Forecasted increase in households 2015-2020

 **37%**

Households in Denbighshire who own their homes outright

 **32%**

Households in own properties with a mortgage

 **732**

Properties purchased under Right-to-Buy between 2000 and 2014.

Rental Market (Based on 2011 Census)

 **3.2k**

Households in Denbighshire renting from council in 2011 (decrease of 0.5k from 2001)

 **2k**

Households renting from housing associations in (increase of 0.5k from 2001)

 **6.4k**

Households renting in the private sector (increase of 1.5k from 2001)

Why do we need a Housing Strategy?

Ensuring access to good quality housing is a key priority for the Council and fundamental to the well-being of Denbighshire's residents. The Housing Strategy provides the framework for addressing this.

The intention of the Housing Strategy is to provide a clear statement of the Council's vision and aims for housing in the County for the next 5 years. It sets out the key challenges and issues affecting the County and what the Council intends to do to help overcome these challenges.

Our strategic vision:

"Everyone is supported with pride to live in homes that meet their needs, within the vibrant and sustainable communities Denbighshire aspires to."

Our key themes:

1. More homes to meet local need and demand
2. Creating a supply of affordable homes
3. Safe and healthy homes
4. Homes and support for vulnerable people
5. Housing's role in delivering sustainable communities

Underlying principles:

- **Supporting the local economy** – through house building and regeneration
- **Reducing inequalities** – by aiming to ensure that decent homes are available for all and vulnerable people are supported
- **Engagement and involvement** – with partners to help to collectively deliver decent homes and with residents in the regeneration of their neighbourhoods
- **Sustainability** - supporting a sustainable housing market and delivering sustainable communities
- **Welsh Language & culture** – consideration & promotion in new development

- **Monitoring & review** – an annual review report will be produced to outline progress and any changes to agreed actions
- **Outcome focussed** – the strategy will focus on the delivery of the identified outcomes

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Theme One: More Homes to Meet Local Need and Demand

We need to ensure that sufficient suitable homes are provided to meet local needs and demands. Housing need and demand is largely identified through the statutory Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA). This must be carried out every two years from 2016 onwards. This enables the strategic planning of housing development/supply across the County. Increasing the supply of homes includes all types of accommodation:

- open market housing and low cost ownership schemes,
- private, intermediate and social rented accommodation
- gypsy and traveller pitches.

Our desired outcomes:

1. An increased supply of new homes of all types and tenures to meet the needs and demands of households and communities in Denbighshire as defined by the two-yearly Local Housing Market Assessment, which provides current need and demand data for the county.
2. Better use of the existing housing stock by continuing to target empty homes across the county.
3. Gypsies and Travellers accommodation needs are identified and addressed

Issues and Challenges

New Homes

- A two yearly completed Local Housing Market Assessment is a statutory requirement
- Population profile of older people is increasing currently 21% of Denbighshire's residents are aged 65 or over
- Expected increase in number of households and consequently a need for approximately 1000 new dwellings to be built by 2020.
- Decrease in in the number of new build dwellings since 2007
- Low levels of planning applications for residential development
- Delivering the allocated housing sites within the Local Development Plan.
- Decrease in volume of house sales in the county since 2007 and static house prices.

Empty Homes

- Approximately 600 residential empty properties in Denbighshire

- Difficulty in engaging owners to bring empty homes back into use
- Complexity of legislation and the risk of additional costs to the council

Gypsy & Travellers

- The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 makes it mandatory for all councils to carry out an assessment of Gypsy & Traveller accommodation needs, and take action on the findings.
- We have regular unauthorised Gypsy & Traveller encampments although generally small, indicating there is some need
- We have no authorised Gypsy & Traveller sites in the County

Key Actions

- 1 Develop Site Development Briefs , Supplementary Planning Guidance and Site Directories to provide clarity and information about allocated housing sites for developers and investors
- 2 Develop housing need and demand data to produce an up to date Local Housing Market Assessment
- 3 Review Local Development Plan housing policies and land allocations
- 4 Investigate the use of a reduced commencement period on planning conditions, to discourage land-banking
- 5 Take action to bring forward stalled sites in the County
- 6 Produce an Infrastructure Plan for Denbighshire to identify and address infrastructure issues
- 7 Update and implement the Empty Homes Delivery Plan and continue to innovate to bring the dwellings back into use
- 8 Undertake an up-to-date Gypsy & Traveller accommodation needs assessment

Theme Two: Creating a Supply of Affordable Homes

A significant proportion of Denbighshire's residents are unable to afford general market housing (either for sale or rent). We need to ensure that the supply of affordable housing is improved to meet these needs.

Our desired outcomes:

1. Improved supply of affordable housing of all types and tenures across the county
2. Working with partners to maximise affordable housing development
3. An increase in applicants registered on the affordable housing register

Issues & Challenges

Affordable Housing

- Personal income levels in Denbighshire have fallen in recent years, with severe deprivation identified in areas of Rhyl, Denbigh and Henllan
- Levels of affordable housing development have fallen
- Significant gap between affordable housing need and supply
- Affordable Housing provision through planning obligation has reduced to 10%
- Financial challenges being faced by the Council and partners
- Low turnover of Council/Housing Association stock
- Welfare Reform changes combined with a changing population profile necessitating a need to build smaller properties
- Public perception of affordable housing

Funding and Registered Social Landlords

- Lack of financial certainty for Council & Housing Associations partners
- Reduction in public funding for affordable housing through Social Housing Grant (accessible to Housing Associations only)
- Increasing costs for building
- A limited range of partners able to access funding which the Council currently work with

Affordable Housing Register

- Negative perception of affordable housing
- Lack of awareness of different affordable housing schemes
- Complexity of application process

Key Actions

- 1 Establish an affordable housing delivery / investment programme
- 2 Review of Local Development Plan policies such as affordable housing in rural areas and commuted sums
- 3 Undertake a review of public landholdings, working with partners, to identify suitability and availability for affordable housing
- 4 Investigate alternative mechanisms for the funding and delivery of affordable housing
- 5 Investigate developing a council protocol for the disposal of council land and property assets to consider best value
- 6 Active promotion of the affordable housing register to increase applications, as more applicants will evidence demand to developers. Review registration process
- 7 Publicise successful affordable housing schemes

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Theme Three: Safe & Healthy Homes

We need to ensure that our residents are able to live in safe and healthy homes. This needs to be addressed across all types of accommodation: affordable housing, private rented accommodation and owner occupied homes including mobile home sites.

Our desired outcomes:

1. Council and Housing Association accommodation is brought up to and is maintained at the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS)
2. Improved standards in the Private Rented Sector
3. Accommodation will be of good quality and will be adaptable to residents changing needs
4. Limited financial assistance to support the Private Housing Sector
5. Properties will be more energy efficient helping the environment and improving housing quality
6. Controls over the use of holiday caravan parks for residential purposes are improved

Issues & Challenges

Welsh Housing Quality Standards

- 4% of Council properties have not been renovated to Welsh Housing Quality Standards
- Maintenance of homes to the recommended standards

Enforcement & Licensing

- Challenges in developing good relationships with landlords
- Establishing an accurate database of landlords in the County.
- Poor quality multi-occupation dwellings (particularly in the north of the county)
- Improving the quality of private rented sector stock

Planning

- Response to the changing demographic of the county (smaller household size, disabilities and increasing older person profile)

Regeneration

- Large scale regeneration projects such as Rhyl West End

Private Sector Grant Scheme

- Capital grant schemes reducing

- Need to introduce more innovative schemes including offering different loans
- Raising awareness on what is available
- **Energy Efficiency**
- Challenges with securing funding to support projects
- No dedicated capital budget
- The reduction of fuel poverty requires funding for energy efficiency
- **Caravans**
- Occupation of holiday caravans as permanent homes
- Some are longstanding and/or include unsuitable accommodation
- Pressure on local public services as they are not being funded

Key Actions

1. Welsh Quality Housing Standards are achieved by all social housing providers in Denbighshire
2. Implement Landlord Licensing Scheme
3. Develop and implement an Energy Conservation Delivery Plan
4. Establish a priority database of people affected by fuel poverty
5. Develop a Private Rented Sector Action Plan
6. Establish relevant data of all caravan parks within the county
7. Develop a regulatory procedure for holiday caravans
8. Sharing intelligence across departments

Theme Four: Homes & Support for Vulnerable People

This theme aims to address the issues surrounding vulnerable people, their housing choices and what is needed and offered in housing related support. In this theme we also concentrate on the homelessness services that are available and what changes need to be taken, in light of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Renting Homes (Wales) Bill, which is currently being debated in Welsh Government and expected to be passed as legislation in early 2016.

Our desired outcomes:

1. A range of housing choices for older people
2. A range of housing choices and support placements for younger people
3. Vulnerable people are assisted to lead independent lives in appropriate accommodation to meet their needs
4. Suitable accommodation options are available for the prevention of homelessness
5. Those that are declared homeless are provided with appropriate temporary accommodation and assisted in finding suitable long term accommodation
6. A Common Housing Waiting List (Single Access Route to Housing SARTH) is introduced to simplify the accommodation process for those in housing need
7. Fuel poverty is targeted and affected residents are assisted

Issues & Challenges

Accommodation for older people (Supported Independent Living, Extra Care, Residential & Nursing Homes)

- There is now more emphasis on people retaining independence by remaining in their own homes.
- Older people require a greater range of housing options to meet their varied needs.

Vulnerable Adults accommodation & placements

- Lack of availability of community living schemes
- Reactive housing options rather than proactive
- Financial insecurity for supporting organisations, due to the reduction the Supporting People budget

- Need for varied work and care placements for vulnerable adults of all ages

Supporting People

- Financial insecurity for the organisations providing advice and support
- Welfare Reform challenges such as introduction of the benefit cap, and Universal Credit
- Increase in personal debt levels

Homelessness

- Availability and suitability of emergency accommodation
- Additional duties on placed on local authorities through the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, regarding homelessness prevention measures
- Shortage of appropriate affordable housing across all tenures

SARTH

- IT capability to manage new allocations method
- Staff resources to manage triage system to begin process

Fuel Poverty

- Targeting people affected by fuel poverty

Key Actions

1. Two Extra Care Facilities in development by 2017
2. Review Supported Independent Living provision and demand
3. Investigate the formation of a social lettings agency
4. Investigate options for homelessness emergency accommodation
5. Develop a pre-move programme for vulnerable people to maximise successful placements
6. Progress SARTH implementation by early 2016
7. Anti-Fuel Poverty Plan continues to be implemented and monitored

Theme Five: Housing's Role in Delivering Sustainable Communities

Housing has a key role in creating and maintaining sustainable local communities. We will be working with housing and third sector partners to develop communities where people want to live and work, which have a sense of ownership by the people who live there.

Our desired outcomes:

1. Neighbourhood based activities help people remain safe and independent
2. Sustainable communities are maintained through innovative 'eyesore' site projects with partners
3. Council housing estates are regenerated to help create and sustain desirable neighbourhoods
4. Community initiatives are supported and maintained with partner organisations

Issues & Challenges

Neighbourhood Development

- Contacting and involving hard to reach groups, such as young people
- Neighbourhood disputes between residents
- Keeping resident's interest in projects and helping them take ownership of them.

Eyesore Sites

- Viability of sustainable schemes
- Challenges in engaging owners to enable a solution to be found.
- Council Estate Regeneration & Rhyl West End Regeneration
- Capacity & ability of residents to participate
- Achieving commitment from residents and sustaining the projects without external involvement
- Prioritisation of areas to be regenerated
- Partnership working

Key Actions

1. Development of Neighbourhood Engagement Strategy
2. Prioritisation of the areas to be regenerated
3. Building a business case for funding from the Housing Revenue Account
4. Review Resident Inclusion Strategy
5. Tackling housing sites and empty properties