

# Knowsley Housing Strategy

2011-2014

## Housing Choices for All



Knowsley Council

# Contents

		Page
<b>Foreword</b>		1
<b>Section One</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	2
<b>Section Two</b>	<b>Policy context</b>	3 - 7
<b>Section Three</b>	<b>Key Housing Issues and Strategic priorities</b>	8 - 12
<b>Section Four</b>	<b>Priority One</b> Achieving the right quantity and quality of housing	13 - 15
<b>Section Five</b>	<b>Priority Two</b> Continuing to raise the quality of the existing housing stock, services and neighbourhoods	16 - 20
<b>Section Six</b>	<b>Priority Three</b> Connecting people to the improved housing offer	21 - 25
<b>Section Seven</b>	<b>Action Plan and Contacts</b>	26-27
<b>Appendices</b>		28

# Foreword

As Chair of the Knowsley Housing Partnership I am delighted to present our new Housing Strategy 2011 - 2014, which sets out our plans for housing over the next three years. During the development of the strategy we have listened carefully to the views of local people and stakeholders about the challenges for housing in the borough and as a result I can genuinely say that its priorities and actions address these issues. I am grateful to the members of the Housing Partnership and the related thematic groups for their efforts, which have set some challenging objectives for the next three years.

Our new strategy is different from those produced previously. It not only addresses the housing issues experienced by local residents but also clearly connects these with all the other big challenges residents face in terms of economic prosperity, educational attainment, health, climate change and overall sustainability. These are very real and enduring problems especially in these times of recession and of economic hardship.

It addresses residents everyday experiences, embracing all tenures, targeting key local issues, for example providing more affordable homes, improving the homes we have, creating better neighbourhoods and supporting vulnerable people and households. These are the issues raised by stakeholders and local people and the strategy responds to this by focusing on three key objectives:

- 🏠 Achieving the right quantity and quality of new housing
- 🏠 Continuing to raise the quality of the existing housing stock, services and neighbourhoods
- 🏠 Connecting people to the improved housing offer

The Knowsley Partnership is helping the development of our local partnerships. Beyond this, we are working with the Homes & Communities Agency and the Tenants Services Authority, the national investment and regulatory bodies for affordable housing, to deliver much needed homes and to place residents at the centre of decision making processes.

Delivery of the new strategy will be guided by the Council's performance management systems, but it will also require more of our valued external partners - housing associations, private landlords, developers and the third sector - they will more than ever be key to future housing success.

The new strategy reflects the centrality of housing to our aims for attractive, supportive communities and economic prosperity. It is ambitious but I believe achievable and I encourage everyone to play their part in ensuring its successful delivery.



**Cllr David Lonergan**  
**Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Economy and Skills**

# Section One

## Introduction

### Purpose of the Strategy

This strategy and subsequent action plan will make ensure that our current and new homes meet needs and aspirations and that the neighbourhoods in the borough are thriving. Through the delivery of our Housing Strategy for the next three years, we aim to ensure that all major investors and interested parties see clearly how local housing contributes to broader social, economic and environmental programmes, and aligns with the sub-regional and regional priorities.

This strategy highlights the issues that are currently affecting housing as well as attempts to address the hurdles that are preventing people from accessing housing services, affording their own property and from living in a good quality home.

The Housing Strategy is supported by other key documents that provide strategic direction and actions for specific areas of work, for example Affordable Warmth and Empty Homes. References to these other documents are included in Appendices.

The action plan at the end of this document highlights the many actions and outcomes that will be delivered over the next four years. It is important that Knowsley's Housing Partnership uses this strategy and its subsidiary documents to focus our resources and priorities in addressing these issues.

### Consultation

This strategy has been prepared with the advice and support of partners from a wide range of other fields such as health, planning and economic development. It has also drawn on input from regeneration professionals from the public and private sector across the borough.

Building upon the update of our previous housing strategy, we have held various Housing Partnership events, workshops and planning events steered by a Strategy Development Working Group to guide the look, flow and priorities of the new strategy.



We have consulted extensively on the draft document with partners in housing, and it has been considered in detail by the Knowsley Housing Partnership and wider Knowsley Partnership.

We have also undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment, and a Health Impact Assessment on this strategy to ensure that health, equality and diversity issues have been fully recognised and embedded in the strategy. The details of these documents are included in the appendices at the end of the document.

### Knowsley Housing Vision

The vision for this strategy was initially born from workshops and discussions at the Knowsley Housing Partnership in July 2010. Partners were tasked with analysing the most challenging issues affecting housing and residents in the borough. Partners were then asked to translate these issues into a suitable housing vision, with the top three visions to be taken to a public vote.

Knowsley Council received over 150 votes from members of the public via email, postal vote and from Tenants Away Days held at Knowsley Housing Trust. 62% of voters believed that 'Housing Choices for all' was the most appropriate vision for the borough. We believe the vision successfully underpins the ambition of both the authority and the residents in providing good quality housing and choice for all.

# Section Two

## Policy Context



**This section introduces the borough and sets out the flow of the Strategy, explaining its key role in helping deliver our Sustainable Community Strategy and how we support sub regional and national policy.**

### Knowsley: the borough

The Borough of Knowsley comprises a belt of large suburban towns, villages and open areas between the city of Liverpool to the west and St. Helens to the east. To the north is Sefton and West Lancashire and to the south is Halton. The Borough has very good links to: Liverpool City Centre; The Port of Liverpool; Liverpool John Lennon Airport; and the national motorway network via the M62, M57, M58 and A580 (East Lancashire Road). Four rail lines pass through the Borough. Links by public transport to Liverpool are generally good while in the north to south direction through Knowsley they are generally weaker.

#### Key Facts about Knowsley

- About 150,000 people live in Knowsley;
- The Borough covers an area of 8,620 ha, 54% of which is designated as Green Belt;
- The Borough has approximately 64,500 dwellings, of which a very high proportion (31%) are social rented;
- There are projected to be about 7,000 more households in Knowsley by 2026;
- Around 56,500 people work in the Borough and there are just over 3,000 firms;
- Over 18,000 Knowsley residents commute into Liverpool each day to work;
- Deprivation levels are among the highest in the country, particularly in Kirkby, Huyton and Stockbridge Village;
- Over half a million people visit Knowsley Safari Park each year.

Knowsley plays a major role as a location for employment, housing and recreational opportunities within the Liverpool City Region. There is a very high level of commuting to and from the surrounding area, particularly to Liverpool. The Borough forms part of the City Region's Northern Housing Market Area which comprises the boroughs of Wirral, Sefton, West Lancashire, Halton and Liverpool.

Most Knowsley residents live in the suburban towns of Huyton, Kirkby, Prescot, Whiston and Halewood. The majority of the development in these towns took place from the 1920s onwards, with much of the growth having been as a result of Liverpool overspill. The exceptions to this include the older historic town of Prescot and a few pockets of older development in the other towns.

The townships provide several major large suburban housing areas served by small town and/or district centre's providing a range of mainly local shopping and other services. The housing offer varies between townships ranging from swathes of 3 bedroom post war accommodation to 2 bedroom Victorian properties in Prescot and Knowsley Village. The townships vary in levels of deprivation, with Kirkby, Huyton and Stockbridge Village for example ranked in the very highest category of deprivation.<sup>1</sup>

The Borough contains a number of employment areas which play a crucial economic role in the City Region, including Knowsley Industrial Park (in Kirkby), the Jaguar / Land Rover car plant (in Halewood), and Kings, Huyton and Prescot Business Parks in the central belt of the Borough. Knowsley Industrial Park is the second largest industrial area in the north west, with only Trafford Park covering a greater area. Whiston Hospital is another major employer of sub-regional significance. The employment and housing areas of the borough are generally highly segregated.

<sup>1</sup> Indices of Multiple deprivation 2010 <http://www.imd.communities.gov.uk/>

## Knowsley Sustainable Community Strategy: The borough of choice

The Knowsley Partnership, Knowsley's Local Strategic Partnership, worked together to set the strategic vision and direction for the borough, delivered through the Sustainable Community Strategy. Making Knowsley 'the borough of choice' is an aspiration that all partners and residents are working towards. The strategy which runs until

2023 states that the quality of our neighbourhoods and suitable housing provision for people in need should be at the top of our agenda. Knowsley Housing Partnership has set out how housing activity supports the Sustainable Community strategy in the table below.

**Table 1.** How Knowsley's housing priorities will support the Sustainable Community Strategy

Theme and Priorities	Summary of Housing Related Priority
<b>Unlocking Potential and Raising Aspirations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for low cost home ownership - shared ownership, Homebuy Direct and other affordable housing products</li> <li>• Promoting greater housing choice through Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings, Landlord Accreditation, Housing Options, Homeshub and new developments</li> </ul>
<b>Raising attainment and Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good quality housing is an important factor in educational achievement, address overcrowding, elimination of use of temporary accommodation and promotion of decent homes across the borough</li> <li>• Reducing Child Poverty and Youth Homelessness through coordinated prevention</li> </ul>
<b>Increasing economic activity at all levels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing the standard and quality of properties across all sectors - increases employment and investment priorities in the borough</li> <li>• House building - creates employment and investment priorities</li> <li>• Neighbourhood working - opportunities to address worklessness in the most deprived housing areas and wards</li> </ul>
<b>A diverse and prosperous economy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of thriving private sector</li> <li>• Support an effective affordable warmth strategy to reduce fuel poverty</li> <li>• Employment Initiatives linked to housing schemes</li> <li>• Develop a BME Housing Strategy / G&amp;T Assessment</li> </ul>
<b>A well connected Knowsley</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking current housing and new developments to good effective transport links. Supporting the borough's communication infrastructure</li> <li>• Further develop links with the Knowsley Partnership</li> </ul>
<b>Improving the offer and quality of place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable housing where people need it and which meets people's needs - Affordability has become a problem for the Knowsley residents, reflecting lower than average incomes in the area</li> <li>• We also need to improve the range of accommodation which can support people to live independently</li> </ul>
<b>Safer, more cohesive communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighbourhoods that are free from crime and anti social behaviour</li> <li>• Promote Community Cohesion</li> </ul>



Through the actions of our strategy and successful partnership working, Knowsley will seek to have:

"Attractive, sustainable neighbourhoods with a wide choice of housing and excellent community facilities; vibrant and welcoming town centre's; residents and local communities who are able to make positive lifestyle choices; high quality employment areas which help to drive economic growth in the Liverpool City Region; and narrowed the gap in deprivation levels, both between different parts of the borough and between Knowsley and elsewhere."

Knowsley's Sustainable Community Strategy is available to view on the Council's website at:  
<http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/your-council/plans,-policies-and-procedures/community-plans.aspx>

## Knowsley Local Development Framework

The Unitary Development Plan adopted in 2006, along with a series of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), which contain guidance for specific areas of the Borough or for themes such as design or greenspaces is the current statutory local plan for Knowsley. This is to be replaced by The Local Development Framework, currently in development.

The Local Development Framework (LDF) will be a primary delivery vehicle for the Sustainable Community Strategy, used to guide strategic investment decisions and in the determination of planning applications for new developments.

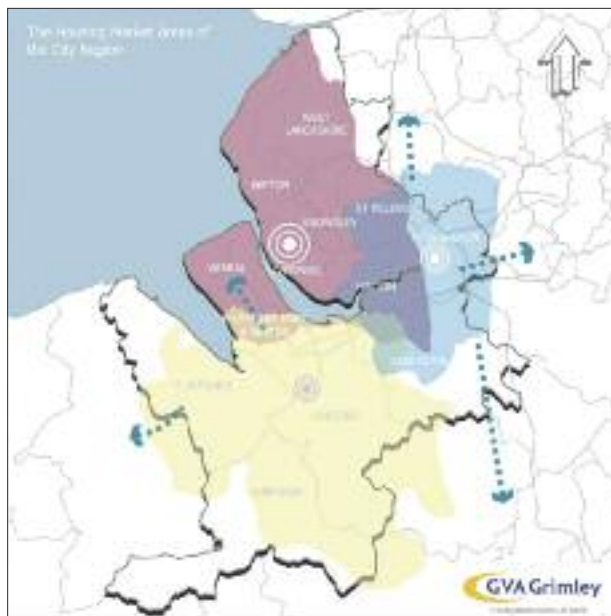
The LDF includes elements of strategic planning, site allocations, infrastructure planning, and thematic guidance and development management tools. The Core Strategy development plan is the key component of the LDF and this is currently being developed. This will set the overall levels of residential growth for Knowsley, as well statutory planning policies for residential development, on matters such as tenure, size, type and design of new housing. There is an important relationship between the LDF Core Strategy and the Knowsley Housing Strategy, particularly in terms of shared and common evidence base and in terms of the complementary policies contained within the strategies

Further information about the Knowsley LDF is available on the Council's website at [www.knowsley.gov.uk/ldf](http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/ldf)

## Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy 2008<sup>2</sup>

We have developed our housing strategy in the context of the Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy so that the two are complementary. Knowsley recognises that Housing Markets do not respect administrative boundaries and overlap with other local authority boundaries. Therefore, this strategy will also recognise housing issues in the Liverpool City Region (North) Housing Market containing areas Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, West Lancashire and Wirral.

The main priority for the Liverpool City Region Strategy is to build on economic rationale and strategy contained in the Liverpool City Region Development Programme. It aims to provide a range of housing in all neighbourhoods to ensure that residents throughout the region have a good place to live.



## North West Regional Housing Strategy 2009<sup>3</sup>

The North West Regional Housing Strategy published early in 2009, had three objectives, which have been mirrored in the priorities of the housing strategy these are:

1. Achieving the right Quantity of housing.
2. Continuing to raise the Quality of the existing housing stock
3. Connecting People to the improved housing offer.

<sup>2</sup> Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy <http://www.merseyside.org.uk/dbimngs/LCRHS%20nd%20Draft%200702.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.nwda.co.uk/pdf/nwra\\_1238084704\\_09\\_0120\\_RHS\\_Statement\\_2009.pdf.pdf](http://www.nwda.co.uk/pdf/nwra_1238084704_09_0120_RHS_Statement_2009.pdf.pdf)

This important regional context sets a framework for funding decisions, and we have therefore aligned our work by using these three themes, with some adaptation, to structure Knowsleys own strategic objectives.

## Regional Spatial Strategy<sup>4</sup>

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for North West England provides a framework for development and investment in the region over the next fifteen to twenty years. It establishes a broad vision for the region and its sub-regions, priorities for growth and regeneration, and policies to achieve sustainable development across a wide range of topics - from jobs, housing and transport to climate change, waste and energy. The RSS plays an important role in defining local authorities housing targets for development, currently set at 450 new homes per year and spatial priorities for the Liverpool City Region. This strategy remains in place until being abolished in the Localism Bill.

## Key national policy developments

This strategy takes account of three important themes of government policy established firstly by the previous labour government and now brought forward by the coalition government after 2010.

Firstly, there is an emphasis on housing's key role to provide the right conditions for realising future economic potential. This was set out in "Prosperous Places"<sup>5</sup> the 2007 review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration and the subsequent "Transforming Places" papers.

Secondly, the increased pressure on local government finances will have an effect on the ability of authorities to develop and support new housing schemes. Knowsley will be working hard to maximise developments to areas of most need, working in a partnership approach. The Council clearly recognises the heavy reliance which will be placed on the private development industry in delivering new housing in Knowsley. There is very limited scope for the local authority to develop any new housing stock, and there are increasing limitations on the budgets of registered providers and on funding streams available for the delivery of affordable housing.

Finally, the coalition government's Localism agenda provides the basis for change in how power and local government should provide the stimulus for economic growth, housing development and successful decision making. The coalition believe that local authorities can do their job best when they have genuine freedom to respond to what local people want, not what they are told to do by central government. In challenging

financial times, this freedom is more important than ever, enabling local authorities to innovate and deliver better value for taxpayers' money. As part of this local authorities will be responding to new funding streams and policy implications.

### New Homes Bonus

The New Homes Bonus commenced in April 2011, will match fund the additional council tax raised from new homes and properties built and brought back into use, with an additional amount of bonus given for the development of affordable homes, for the following six years.

The government proposes that this will be a simple, powerful, transparent and permanent feature of the local government finance system, ensuring that the economic benefits of growth are returned to the local area. For the year 2010/11, Knowsley is to receive a bonus of £57,000, although it is anticipated that this will increase in future years with the level of completions of the borough increasing and the level of demolitions decreasing.

### Strategic Tenancy Policy

Communities and Local Government have tasked all local authorities with promoting greater flexibility into the social housing system by introducing a Strategic Tenancy Policy. This approach will enable social landlords to broaden the rental offer to meet the changing housing needs of a more diverse range of people. It is also changing the way that new affordable housing will be funded.

All District and Unitary authorities will be required to publish a Strategic Tenancy Policy, to provide the framework for the future delivery of new affordable homes. This will also set out the broad objectives to be taken into consideration by social landlords regarding policies on the grant and reissue of tenancies.

### Affordable Rent Model

As part of the Strategic Tenancy Policy, the Introduction of the new Affordable Rent tenancy forms a key part of the Government's proposed new affordable housing delivery model. Housing associations will be able to charge rents of up to 80% of market rents. The Government's intention is that Affordable Rent tenancies will broaden the rental offer to a more diverse range of people and in particular to provide an alternative to social rent. The new tenancy will be available for offer by housing associations from April 2011, initially on a proportion of empty properties, and new properties in due course. Tenancies will be for a period of at least two years, although housing associations will still have the option of offering lifetime tenancies. During the life of this strategy, Knowsley will develop a common affordable rent framework

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.gos.gov.uk/497468/docs/248821/457370/NorthWestEnglandRSS>

<sup>5</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.berr.gov.uk/whatwedo/regional/sub-national-review/page40430.html>



## Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan (LIP)

This strategy has a key role in supporting the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Local Investment Plan for 2011- 14. It is well known that local housing market conditions bear a significant impact on the economic, social and environmental future of the City Region and by continuing to understand these in detail, LCR partners will continue to be able to respond to changes in line with the LIP vision. The Liverpool City Region aims to create ‘quality places’, which through regeneration, create truly sustainable communities. The LIP will look at how Local Authorities will work together to maximise opportunities; especially how affordable homes are to be developed in an ever changing environment; and consider the challenge to generate additional revenue through the new affordable rent model. The plan will also adopt objectives that will seek to maximise income from New Homes Bonus through the delivery of new homes.

## The role of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)

Under recent housing reforms, in 2010/11 the HCA will become a smaller yet more strategic agency that will work closely with local authorities, registered providers and communities to support local ambition, housing and economic development needs along with taking over the role (from April 2012) of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) to ensure that registered providers are financially viable. The HCA will provide coordinated support to assist local development whilst maximising private investment to assist with local growth.

## The role of the Voluntary Sector

The voluntary sector plays a wide-ranging and important role in housing. The sector provides support and advice to a wide range of households who may require help to stay independent, campaigns on issues related to housing, and helps to empower communities. Representatives of the voluntary sector sit on Knowsley’s Housing Partnership and Housing Association Liaison Group to help plan and support housing provision for the borough.

## Where this Strategy fits?

The relationships between all these strategic documents is summarised in the diagram below, including the main components of our overarching Housing Strategy.



# Section Three

## Key Housing Issues and Strategic Priorities



**This section summarises the key issues arising from a mix of recent evidence and policy influences, mainly the Knowsley Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2010<sup>6</sup>, planning policy, the private sector house condition survey, housing support requirements set out by Supported Living and factors that are affecting our vulnerable residents.**

The final part of the section shows how these key issues relate to the priorities of this strategy and how they compliment the Knowsley Sustainable Community Strategy, the objectives of the Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy and the Regional Housing Strategy.

### Existing Housing Market Conditions

Since the early 1990s, the choice of housing in the Borough has been improved considerably by development of new private estates and the investment programmes of Knowsley Housing Trust and other Registered Providers of social housing.

However, Knowsley's housing stock is still unbalanced and there are identified outstanding needs and demands for affordable and market housing within the Borough. In some parts of the Borough there are shortages of some housing types, sizes and tenures while in other areas they are in excess. Particular shortages exist for larger, executive market homes, and for smaller one- and two-bedroom units in the affordable housing sector. There is also a clear need to provide housing which is suitable for occupation by older people across the Borough, reflecting the predicted demographic trend towards an older population.

A very high proportion of Knowsley's housing stock (around 30%) is social rented, proportionally higher

than any other authority in Merseyside. The highest concentrations of social rented housing are in Kirkby and North Huyton, with nearly 50% of North Huyton's housing stock falling into this category of tenure.

Under-occupation of units in all sectors is a major issue, and there is a need to reorganise stock to make the best use of existing housing units.





A key issue is the affordability of the housing stock in Knowsley. Although prices in the Borough are generally low compared to other places, in 2011 the average price for housing was over 5.3 times the average income level.<sup>7</sup> This reflects the generally low income levels of Knowsley residents. The well-established issue of housing affordability with regard to availability of finance and mortgages affects Knowsley as elsewhere in the country.

The delivery of new housing in Knowsley since 2000 has generally been at a slower rate than in the 1990s. Net completions have also been slowed by the high rates of demolition particularly associated with the North Huyton New Deal for Communities programme. A significant proportion of housing which has been delivered in recent years has been on previously developed land in accordance with national planning policy. However, Knowsley's urban area is now relatively constrained in terms of housing land availability. This is a key issue which the council proposes to address in its Local Development Framework.





### Future Housing Requirements

A Strategic Housing Market Assessment was carried out in 2010 by David Couttie Associates. This showed that Knowsley is part of a wider functional housing market area that includes parts of Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Halton, and includes strong commuter linkages with Liverpool.

The high-level messages from this research are:

-  Knowsley's housing market is relatively self-contained in terms of household moves, but many people travel in and out of the Borough for work.
-  There is a large projected rise in the number of older people (aged 65+) living in Knowsley (an increase of over 10,000 people in the forecast period to 2031), which will have implications for housing policy and delivery.
-  There is a major housing affordability issue in Knowsley, with a shortfall of over 550 units per annum, which would be required to meet unmet demand for affordable units; There is a major demand for new market housing in Knowsley, amounting to over 700 units per annum, which would be required to meet unmet demand for market units; This must be taken in context with the requirement of Knowsley to satisfy Regional Spatial Strategy target of 450 new homes per year.
-  Under-occupation of units in all sectors is a major issue, and there is a need to reorganise stock to make the best use of existing housing units.

In response to these findings, the SHMA sets out policy and strategy recommendations, as listed below. It should be noted that these are recommendations within the evidence base, and will be addressed as part of both the Local Development Framework and this Strategy:

-  Affordable housing provided in Knowsley should split between social rented units (75%) and intermediate units (25%) such as shared ownership products;
-  The delivery of market housing should focus on larger three and four bedroom houses and the delivery of affordable units should be focussed on two bedroom units, but without overlooking the need to accommodate larger families;
-  Housing strategies should seek to address the problem of under-occupation and make the best use of existing stock; and
-  That the needs of older people's households across all tenures are considered, including the need for support services, sheltered housing and extra care accommodation.

## The Economy, Employment and Skills

Housing has a clear and critical relationship with Knowsley's prosperity being one of the drivers of



the local economy, as well as being driven itself by the need to provide suitable housing to support a developing economy.

Manufacturing accounts for a relatively high proportion of employment opportunities in Knowsley reflecting the importance of key sectors such as advanced manufacturing and engineering. Public services have also expanded and Whiston Hospital is one of the Borough's largest employers. The Council has recognised the need to broaden the employment base and target growth sectors including business services, ICT, creative, tourism, leisure, financial services, communications, logistics and distribution.

There has been significant investment in new employment opportunities, reflecting efforts by public and private sector partners to expand the business base and promote enterprise. Key successes have included the introduction of new models at the Jaguar/Land Rover car plant at Halewood and high profile inward investments by companies such as QVC, Vertex, and Sonae. King's Business Park has also developed into a high quality business park.

There is a disparity in income levels, with Knowsley residents having the lowest incomes on Merseyside, while those who come to work here have the highest. This indicates that Knowsley residents can find it difficult to access the higher paid jobs, whilst higher income earners are generally not choosing to live in the Borough, partly due to the current housing offer.

Some of the key economic and employment issues affecting our housing market that need to be addressed are:

-  With the slow rate of economic growth in the last few years, and the relative reliance on the public and manufacturing sector the borough's resilience to bounce back from the economic slowdown has been affected.
-  Although recent improvements in school facilities through the Building Schools for the Future programme have improved the quality of the school offer, their remain low educational attainment levels. Knowsley also suffers from high levels of 16 to 18 year olds not being in education, employment or training, reducing the ability of people to afford rent or mortgages.

Poor employment and educational attainment prospects twinned with a slow rate of growth in the economy, is likely to significantly affect the housing market in the borough. Partners across all sectors must work together to mitigate the problems associated in the future.

## Knowsleys Private Housing Sector

Homes in the private sector constitute over 70% of all homes in Knowsley with relatively few households renting from a private landlord. The council values the private rented sector as an important source of accommodation, not just for homeless households, but also for families with children who can benefit from property locations that are convenient to community services and neighbourhood facilities. The council does wish to make a much greater use of this sector and to work with landlords to improve standards of accommodation and bring empty homes back into use.

Since November 2009, Knowsley's Tenancy Bond Scheme has helped priority homeless households take up tenancies in the private rented sector. In May 2010 the Tenancy Bond Scheme was linked with the newly launched Landlord Accreditation Scheme. The benefit of this approach is to continue to increase access to the private sector but also to ensure that properties used through the bond scheme are of a suitable standard.

The Landlord Accreditation Scheme has already begun to increase the level of communication between the Council and landlords. By developing further incentives and development opportunities this will broaden the scope and effectiveness of accreditation as a means of improving standards. Unfortunately not all landlords are willing to work with us. In such cases the Council will take effective and targeted enforcement actions to drive up standards and to ensure confidence amongst tenants and compliant landlords.

Knowsley Council also provides discretionary assistance to eligible homeowners to help improve their home. Assistance may be in the form of a non repayable grant or loan which is repayable when the property is sold or the homeowner no longer lives in the property.

## Housing Support

In Knowsley a wide range of Supported Living Options have been commissioned and these options are considered as a spectrum of support that people can access according to their individual support and accommodation needs. Supported living can be accessed on a short or long term basis and people can progress through a range of services, possibly living without any support or they may choose to stay in a permanent supported living option that suits their long term needs.

Aspirations and demand for supported living change as the population of Knowsley changes and it is crucial that commissioners of supported living work in partnership with Housing Strategy and housing stakeholders to identify gaps or difficulties as they occur. Stakeholders must use information from regular engagement with users of supported living services to commission flexible, personalised and cost effective models of support. Knowsley and its stakeholders will strive to provide higher quality services at a time of reducing budgets and opportunities.


## Sustainability

It is Knowsley's ambition to encourage new homes to be designed and constructed in a sustainable manner using products and processes that reduce environmental impact, better adapt to climate change, with lower running costs and incorporating features that enhance the health and well-being of constructors, occupiers and the wider community. We also believe that Housing design should take account of the need to accommodate as wide and diverse range of user groups as practicable. Multicultural societies need designs that reflect diverse living options.

## Regeneration Areas

The areas below, taken from the Principle Regeneration Areas in the Local Development Framework will support with new housing provision. It is essential that key housing stakeholders work together to support the regeneration initiatives proposed:

 **Kirkby Town Centre**  
Retail led regeneration of Kirkby Town Centre will help attract new residents and sustain the population of existing residents by providing a wide mix of town centre uses, services and facilities. New retail development and other town centre uses will hopefully also encourage retail led regeneration leading to an increase in the housing offer.

 **North Huyton and Stockbridge Village**  
These areas represent two of the most vulnerable areas in Knowsley with high levels of deprivation and an unbalanced housing market with high levels of socially rented stock. North Huyton although benefitting from 1450 new dwellings through the Revive scheme<sup>8</sup> will see new housing developments offering a range of housing which are suitable to local housing need; to replace unpopular stock and balance the housing market. Stockbridge Village will also see further investment.

<sup>8</sup> North Huyton Revive Programme <http://www.revivehomes.co.uk/index.htm>






**Knowsley Industrial and Business Parks**  
The option of providing new employment through the remodeling of Knowsleys industrial parks, in close proximity to some of the most deprived areas will have positive outcomes for the housing areas and residents who live there; reducing poverty, social deprivation and economic exclusion.

**Towerhill, Kirkby**  
During the 1980's and 1990's the medium and high rise housing demolition has left a disjointed urban structure with poor accessibility, poor open space and with a need for remodeling. New significant housing development will be provided to meet local housing need.

**South Prescot**  
New residential development is needed to ensure availability of a wider choice of housing types suitable for identified local needs.  
  
It is important to note that regeneration need extends outside of these areas, and the council and partners are committed to monitor needs, and address when resources allow.

## Defining the Authorities Strategic Objectives

Given the complexity of the issues highlighted and with the high need to support vulnerable residents not just through housing initiatives, but through a partnership approach, this strategy has been developed in the context of:

-  Current national, sub-regional and local agendas, strategies, plans and guidance
-  Recent research and information on housing issues
-  Consultation and views of partners and stakeholders

Through consultation and discussion we have set the following priorities and objectives for this Housing Strategy:

**Table 2.** Knowsley Housing Strategy 2011 - 2014 - Priorities and Objectives

Priority	Objective
<b>Priority One Achieving the right quantity and quality of new housing</b>	To develop a Strong Strategic Housing Role
	To Increase the provision of Affordable Housing
<b>Priority Two Continuing to raise the quality of the existing housing stock, services and neighbourhoods</b>	To support a Strong Private Sector
	To assist Vulnerable Residents
	To help Improve neighbourhoods
	To address Climate Change and promote Affordable Warmth
<b>Priority Three Connecting people to the improved housing offer</b>	To maximise Supported Living
	To Support Older and Younger People in Housing Need
	To Provide good quality Housing Options
	To Harness Innovation
	To Promote Health in Regeneration

The above strategic objectives are cross cutting and will not be viewed as supporting only each individual priority.

The diagram below illustrated how the strategic housing objectives compliment the Knowsley Sustainable Community Strategy<sup>9</sup>, Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy<sup>10</sup> and Northwest Regional Housing Strategy<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Knowsley Sustainable Community Strategy [http://inquiry.knowsley.gov.uk/Docs/scs\\_strategy.pdf](http://inquiry.knowsley.gov.uk/Docs/scs_strategy.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy <http://www.merseyside.org.uk/dbimgs/LCRHS%202nd%20Draft%200702.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Northwest Regional Housing Strategy [http://www.nwda.co.uk/pdf/nwra\\_1238084704\\_09\\_0120\\_RHS\\_Statement\\_2009.pdf.pdf](http://www.nwda.co.uk/pdf/nwra_1238084704_09_0120_RHS_Statement_2009.pdf.pdf)



Strategic Objective	Key Identified / Issue	SCS	LCRHS	RHS
1	To Increase the provision of Affordable Housing	IQUP / UPRA	AH	QN
2	To support a Strong Private Sector	IQUP/ IEA	EG/HLA/ AH/NEI	QN
3	To assist Vulnerable Residents	SACO	AH/HLA	CP
4	To help Improve neighbourhoods	SACO	NEI	QN / QL
5	To address Climate Change and promote Affordable Warmth	IQUP / UPRA	NEI	QL
6	To maximise Supported Living	SACO / IQUP	NEI	P
7	To support Older and Younger People in Housing Need	UPRA	NEI/AH	P
8	To provide good quality housing options	WCK	AH/EG/HLA	P
9	To harnessing Innovation	IEA	EG/HLA/REG/ AH/NEI	QN / QL
10	Promote Health in regeneration	SACO	EG/HLA/REG/ AH/NEI	QL

Key	
<b>Sustainable Community Strategy</b>	
UPRA	Unlocking Potential and Raising Aspirations
RAS	Raising attainment and Skills
IEA	Increasing economic activity at all levels
DPE	A diverse and prosperous economy
WCK	A well connected Knowsley
IQUP	Improving the offer and quality of place
SACO	Safer, more cohesive communities
<b>Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy</b>	
EG	To support the economic growth and regeneration of the City Region
HLA	To identify sustainable locations for growth, linked to economic development prospects, sustainable levels of infrastructure, service provision and housing land availability
REG	To maximise the contribution that regeneration areas can make in supporting the economic development of the City Region;
AH	To provide for a range of affordable housing products across the City Region in recognition of the growing mismatch between income levels and lowest quartile house prices
NEI	To secure investment in the quality of neighbourhoods as a major economic asset of the City Region in attracting and retaining population
<b>Regional Housing Strategy</b>	
QN	Achieving the right quantity of housing
QL	Achieving the right quality of housing
CP	Connecting people to the improved housing offer

# Section Four

## Priority One: Achieving the right quantity and quality of housing

### Key Challenges

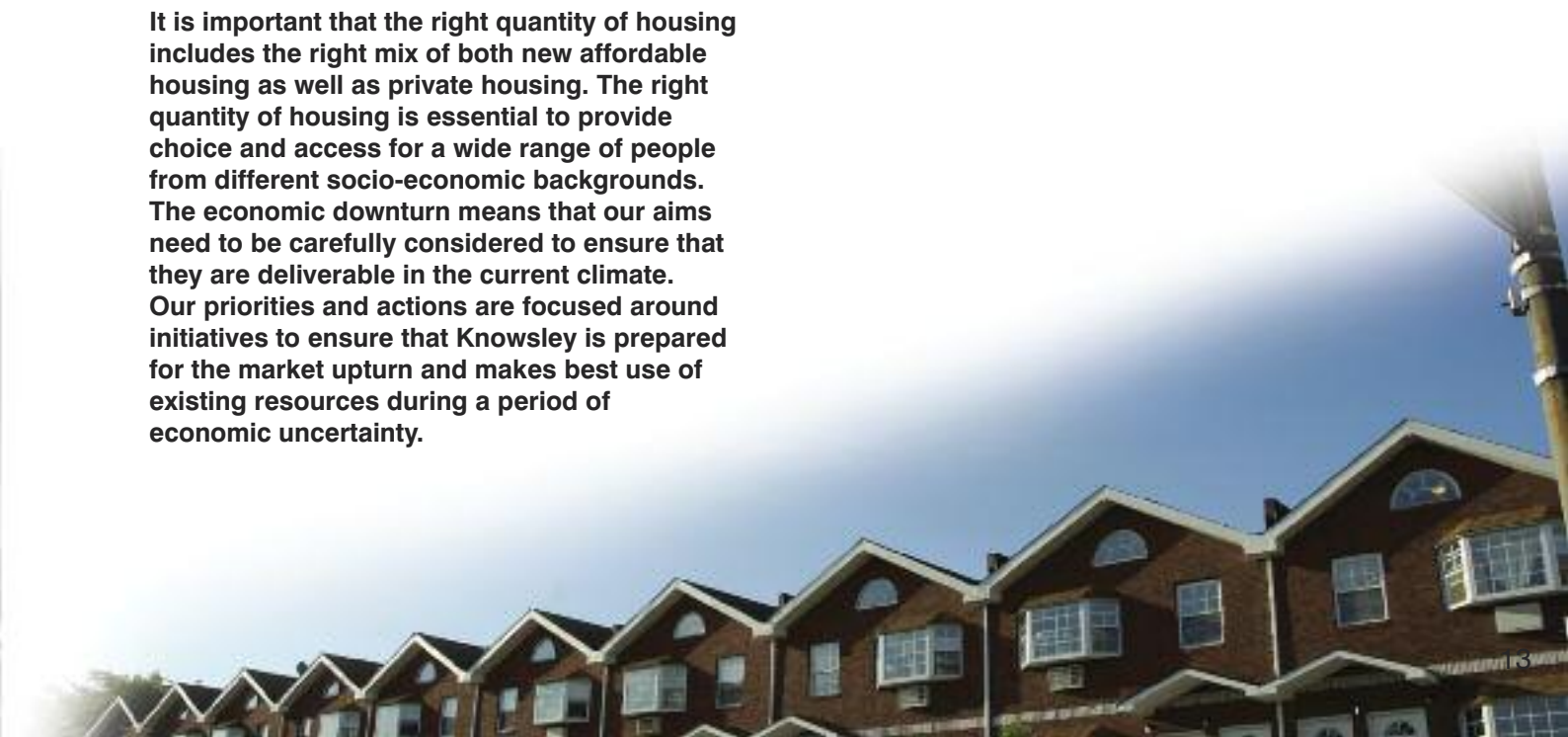
- Meet the challenge to increase the number of Affordable homes and larger family homes.
- Link housing to economic regeneration and the Local Development Framework ensuring it supports complementary growth, regeneration programmes and sustainable development.
- Ensure that the appropriate amount of all types of housing is developed to meet the needs and demands of all Knowsleys residents.
- Build the right quantity and choice of housing despite having a shortage of easily developable housing sites in the borough.
- Ensure our evidence base and housing strategies are kept up to date in turbulent times, so that robust frameworks are in place for the delivery of the right type of homes across the borough.
- Define the role of Strategic Housing and its partners in delivering this strategy.

### Quantity of new housing

A key influence for Knowsley in assessing the amount of new housing required within the Borough is the aspiration to maintain a sustainable population within the local authority area. In order to achieve this aim, there is a need to supply a suitable range of housing that meets the needs and aspirations of the local population over an extended time period, reflecting that over a lifetime, the size and type of housing required will change. This should ensure that a lack of appropriate housing would not be a driver for a resident to seek to move out of the local authority area. Knowsley proposes to deliver 450 new homes per annum under the targets set by the Regional Spatial Strategy. With an average of 345 dwellings delivered in the past 15 years in Knowsley, housing partners must work together to reach this target.

Affordable housing provided in Knowsley should be split between social rented units (75%) and intermediate units (25%) such as shared ownership products; The delivery of market housing should focus on larger three and four bedroom houses and the delivery of affordable units should be focussed on two bedroom units (but without overlooking the need to accommodate larger families).

**It is important that the right quantity of housing includes the right mix of both new affordable housing as well as private housing. The right quantity of housing is essential to provide choice and access for a wide range of people from different socio-economic backgrounds. The economic downturn means that our aims need to be carefully considered to ensure that they are deliverable in the current climate. Our priorities and actions are focused around initiatives to ensure that Knowsley is prepared for the market upturn and makes best use of existing resources during a period of economic uncertainty.**



## Quality of new housing

Knowsley is committed to delivering new housing developments to consistently high standards. Over the coming years, it will be imperative to meet increasing standards and challenges around carbon emissions, Building for Life, Code for Sustainable Homes, Lifetime Homes and Design and Quality Standards.

It is important, however, to recognise that the quality of buildings alone is not the only factor affecting the quality of people's lives. It is becoming increasingly important to focus on the quality of the place, the neighbourhood and the quality of service we offer to all residents.

This will be delivered through two Supplementary Planning Documents "Design quality in new development" and "sustainability through design and construction" as part of the LDF Core Strategy.

## Affordable Housing Provision

National and local evidence tells us that we require more affordable homes. Without a new supply of homes, demand for housing related support and applicants attempting to access social housing will continue to rise. There are established issues regarding the ability of local people to afford housing within the borough. These affordability problems are based on the difficulties faced by local households in seeking to purchase or rent a house which suits their needs, due to their level of income and their ability to access housing finance.

The target for delivering future affordable housing provision outlined in table below is drawn from the recommendations of the SHMA. This indicates in basic terms that a split between tenures is needed to supply the large quantity of affordable units to fully meet all housing need, over 5000 units over the next ten years.

The SHMA also recommends a target of up to 25% of any future housing development should be affordable housing. This to be developed through the LDF Core Strategy.

**Table 3.** Future Affordable Housing provision recommendations: Knowsley SHMA 2010<sup>12</sup>

Social Rented Housing	Intermediate Housing
75%	25%

In 2010 - 11 Knowsley successfully developed nearly 180 units of affordable housing.

**Table 4.** Knowsley New Build Developments in 2010/11

Scheme Name	Lead Partner	Description
New Field Lane Hostel	LHT	42 unit homeless hostel
Leathers Lane Supported Scheme	LHT	12 unit supported living accommodation
Holly Vale Extra Care Scheme	Cosmopolitan	34 unit self contained 1 and 2 bedrooms Extra Care
The Gate North Huyton	KHT	25 homes 2, 3 and 4 bedroom
Hillingden Avenue	KHT	7 homes 2 and 3 bedroom
Tiverton Close	KHT	14 homes 2, 3 and 4 bedroom
Mercer Avenue	LHT	19 homes 2, 3 and 4 bedroom
Quarryside Drive	Plus Dane	25 homes 2, 3 and 4 bedroom
<b>Total</b>		<b>178 Units</b>

## The HCA Affordable housing programme 2011 - 2015

The HCA published its framework for affordable housing for the next four years. All Registered Providers needed to assemble their offer for the 4 year programme with offers to be submitted with support by the Local Authorities and City Region Local Enterprise Partnership. Knowsley have submitted their proposals as documented below:

**Table 5.** HCA Four year Affordable Housing Delivery Programme 2011 - 2015

Provider	Dwellings to be delivered				
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Knowsley Housing Trust	72	149	82	74	<b>377</b>
Plus Dane Housing Group	81	41	56	7	<b>185</b>
Liverpool Housing Trust			43	19	<b>62</b>
Villages Housing			48	40	<b>88</b>
Cosmopolitan Housing		32	92		<b>124</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>836</b>






We want, therefore, to increase the level of new affordable housing built or bought each year. We also want to make sure that registered providers can continue to maintain and manage their properties at a high quality standard. During the life of this strategy we will develop an Affordable housing policy in line with the adoption of Knowsleys Core Strategy. This is currently being prepared and is due to be adopted in late 2012.

Our role will be ever changing and will adapt to new government thinking and ideas. Knowsley will adapt to changing Housing policy to continue to support residents appropriately through the effective planning of actions delivered by the Housing Partnership.

## The Role of Strategic Housing

The Knowsley Housing Partnership's role in Strategic Housing and the role of this strategy is defined by the Housing Green Paper, Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable<sup>13</sup>. This document explains that the strategic housing role is made up of the "strategic decisions and activities associated with effective planning and delivery to meet the housing needs of all residents across all tenures".

It also identifies the following five key elements which comprise our strategic housing role to:

-  assess and plan for the current and future housing needs of the local population across all tenures
-  make the best use of the existing housing stock
-  plan and enable new housing supply
-  plan and commission housing support services which link homes and housing support services
-  work in partnership to secure effective housing and neighbourhood management on an on-going basis



<sup>13</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/439986.pdf> - Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable



# Section Five

## Priority Two: Continuing to raise the quality of the existing housing stock, services and neighbourhoods

### Key Challenges

- Work in partnership to tackle the issues which create safe and secure homes and neighbourhoods.
- Maximise the return to use of empty homes
- Work together to reduce the level of underoccupation across all sectors
- Help address climate change by reducing carbon emissions from homes
- Reduce fuel poverty through affordable warmth programmes
- Continue to improve the condition of poor quality private sector homes
- Encourage and promote healthy living in neighbourhoods







**The Knowsley Sustainable Community Strategy (2008 - 2023), complemented by Strategic Housing Market Assessment and customer feedback, indicates that although good progress has been made through the previous housing strategy, the overall quality of the borough's housing areas and the effectiveness of our housing services are as important for Knowsley residents as the quality of the housing stock itself.**

We have now achieved a stock of social housing that mostly meets the decent homes standard, and a private housing stock that is overall in better condition than the average for England. We have improved the safety and quality of our homes but there is more that can be done to ensure people remain safe.






The following headlines indicate the need to maintain and establish partnership working to address the issues raised in this strategy and also to support objectives in the borough SCS.

### Community Safety and Improving Neighbourhoods

Community safety is a key priority for our communities; residents have stated that living in homes and neighbourhoods which feel safe and secure, is one of their highest priorities. Issues which affect people in the homes and neighbourhoods they live in can include:






-  Fear and perception of crime and anti-social behaviour
-  Acquisitive crime (including burglaries & vehicle theft)
-  Anti-social behaviour
-  Noise and nuisance
-  Domestic abuse and violent crimes
-  Community cohesion

Knowsley MBC, in partnership with other agencies, works hard to address these concerns and priorities. Besides directly tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, other activities have included:

-  Clean-up projects
-  Diversionary activities
-  Targeted crime prevention projects in hotspot areas
-  Awareness raising, both of crime prevention steps that residents can take and also of how to contact agencies linking into specific support for families, including the Family Intervention Project
-  Working directly with offenders to challenge behaviour, supporting re-housing and more in an effort to reduce re-offending







The benefits of tackling these issues, and helping people to feel safe and secure in their homes include:

-  Improved health and well-being
-  Improved mental health
-  Reduced costs of crime, anti-social behaviour and nuisance
-  Reduced hospital admissions and impact on health services
-  Creating stable communities where people want to live and stay

We will therefore continue to work in partnership to tackle the issues which create safe and secure homes and neighbourhoods. This Housing Strategy is committed to supporting the drive to create safer neighbourhoods through a variety of actions in the action plan at the end of this strategy.

## Improving the quality of existing homes - Decent Homes Standard

A home is Decent if it meets all of the four criteria below:

-  It meets the statutory minimum standard for housing - this means there should not be any serious hazards at the home.
-  It is in a reasonable state of repair - this means the home should not be in serious disrepair.
-  It has reasonably modern facilities and services - this means kitchens or bathrooms should not be very old.
-  It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort - this means the home should have effective heating and insulation.

Knowsley Council provides assistance to eligible homeowners to help improve their home. Assistance may be in the form of a non repayable grant or loan which is repayable when the property is sold or the homeowner no longer lives in the property as their main or principal home.

The assistance is available for any essential works needed to bring a property up to Decent Home Standard. Within the borough's private sector, there remain a significant proportion of properties, 27.4%, which fail to meet the decent homes standard. Over the last 12 months 149 vulnerable households have received housing assistance in the form of a small grant to enable them to improve

their property standards. In addition to this assistance, owner occupiers who do not qualify for grant aid are routinely signposted to the Care & Repair Service which enables owners to undertake minor repairs at minimal cost.

Using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System as a measure, almost all properties in the Borough meet the standards for Decent Homes with only a small amount of all stock having Category 1 Hazards.

Knowsley and its registered providers will continue to support households that live in homes that don't meet the decent homes standard both in the social and private housing sector.

## Disabled Facilities Grants




The Home Improvement Agency and the Council's Independent Living Team work in partnership to provide much needed help for people in need of aids and adaptations to their homes. Minor adaptations, such as lever taps, extra banister rails, flashing light door bells, simple ramps and alterations to property access are all funded directly by the Health and Wellbeing partnership.






Disabled Facilities Grants are available to make larger necessary improvements to homes, ranging from level access showers in bathrooms to mechanical stair or through ceiling lifts providing unaided access from ground to first floor levels. The Service is run in partnership with Wellbeing Services and the Primary Care Trust. Demand in Knowsley for aids and adaptation assistance has increased year on year for the last eight years, the Team help and provide advice where direct grant assistance is not eligible. In 2010-11, over 315 major adaptations and more than 1000 minor adaptations were fitted the majority of them within seven working days.

## Empty Homes

Empty homes can be an issue for the sustainability of the Borough and long-term empty homes can be the cause of a number of problems for residents.

They can:

-  deny homes to those in need, such as homeless and vulnerable people;
-  discourage new investment from potential developers;
-  have a negative effect on Community Cohesion;

-  attract crime and anti-social behaviour;
-  have a negative impact on the image of an area and devalue surrounding homes;
-  cost the Authority as a result of the loss of council tax revenue;
-  be a wasted asset for owners; and
-  increase the pressure for new housing in green and rural areas.



At the end of the 2010/11 financial year there were 2041 empty homes across Knowsley which equated to roughly 3% of the total housing stock and was a slight increase from the beginning of the year. Three out of four of the empty homes were owned privately and just under half had been empty for more than 6 months. In conjunction with this strategy, Knowsley has a new 2011 - 2014 Empty Homes strategy setting out how we will achieve a reduction in the number of empty homes.

## Underoccupation and Overcrowding



Under-occupancy is a major issue in the borough<sup>14</sup>; this is particularly evident amongst elderly and single residents living alone in larger homes designed for families ('empty nesters'). There is no comparable data against which to measure the overall under occupation figure of 35.1% but it is close to, albeit slightly lower than, the average figures found in other recent housing surveys (around 40%).

Under occupation in the social rented stock is currently around 23.0%, equating to 4,220 households. This is an issue for Housing Strategy to consider, both to make best use of the housing stock and address the needs of existing and new forming families in this sector. Knowsleys Housing Partnership are continually looking to reduce the impact of overcrowding and underoccupation and propose to evaluate the outcomes of a working group in the first year review.

Knowsley through this strategy will aim to tackle underoccupancy and overcrowding by:

-  Develop the established working group; consisting of representatives from Knowsley Council and Registered Social Landlord's to act as champions for the overcrowded and under occupied group.
-  Develop a range of incentives to encourage under occupiers to move from their current property. Incentives to be offered to

households that are in overcrowded or under occupied properties; the financial incentives will be monitored on a case by case basis and will be available until the funding has run out. Each household will be entitled to a maximum of £1000

-  Develop and implement cash incentive schemes to support under-occupiers in moving, in order to make larger properties available to overcrowded families, Under-occupation will have its own category as a priority.
-  Use of private sector housing is being promoted through the criteria of the tenancy bond scheme and Landlord accreditation. Making use of the accreditation scheme will help provide greater security for families who move to the private sector.

## Climate Change and Affordable Warmth

The Climate Change Act 2008 established a legal framework to tackle climate change with legally binding national targets (currently a reduction of at least 34% in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 and at least 80% by 2050). A quarter of the UK's carbon emissions come from the energy we use to heat our homes, so it is essential that this is addressed to meet national targets.

Knowsley's Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2023 includes actions on climate change under the key driver 'Improving the offer and quality of place'. The strategy states that by 2023, Knowsley will be a borough with low carbon emissions and that is adapted to future climate change. A borough-wide climate change strategy is in development that will incorporate actions to reduce carbon emissions from housing in Knowsley.




The Government provides each local authority area with details of carbon emissions from housing, industrial/commercial premises and road transport (excluding motorways). To date, data has been provided for the calendar years 2005 to 2008. In Knowsley in 2008, 31% of carbon emissions from these sources were from housing. The borough has a strong track record in improving the energy efficiency of our homes through grant schemes such as 'Warmstreets' and 'Warmfront'. Carbon emissions from housing have reduced from 2.3 Tonnes per capita in 2005 to 2.1 Tonnes per capita in 2008 (the lowest on Merseyside). This was a 9% reduction.

## The Green Deal

The Government's Energy Security and Green Economy Bill is anticipated to receive Royal Assent in Autumn 2011 and will set out the legal framework for the implementation of the 'Green Deal'. This is the Coalition Government's initiative to support the implementation of energy efficiency measures in private sector housing, without the need to meet upfront costs. The initiative will prioritise the most vulnerable and low carbon housing in the area and local authorities will be expected to take strategic ownership of the roll out of the programme. The Green Deal is intended to compliment other recently introduced incentives in the housing sector to stimulate a green economy such as the feed-in-tariff (whereby householders can install renewable energy technology and sell surplus green electricity to the grid at a profit) the renewable heat incentive (providing premium payments for the purchase of green heating systems) and roll out of smart energy meters to all households. Work is also being undertaken to develop low carbon communities in Knowsley, with a pilot 'Green Neighbour Challenge' underway in Bowring.

Fuel poverty is officially defined by the Government as when a household needs to spend more than 10% of its disposable income to adequately heat the home. It can be better described as "affordable warmth". Fuel poverty can be caused by any one of three factors (Income, Energy Efficiency, and Fuel Costs) with a household in fuel poverty being affected by one, or all three, of the factors. Research has told us that 11.7% of Knowsley households are currently in fuel poverty.

The following schemes have been developed to support households to reduce fuel poverty and household carbon emissions:

-  The Knowsley Community Energy Saving Programme is delivered in partnership with British Gas, ERDF and Villages Housing Association and will provide energy saving measures for over 1700 homes in the Stockbridge Village area in two phases.
-  The Knowsley Warm Streets Scheme is a thermal insulation scheme offering loft, cavity wall insulation and hot water tank jackets to Knowsley owner occupiers and privately renting residents. This scheme has so far enabled more than 400 residents to have Warm Front measures installed into their properties; giving them a warmer, more comfortable home.
-  Increasing the thermal efficiency of a property and ensuring a working programmable







heating system is in place has an impact in that it brings properties up to Decent Homes Standard. Both the Knowsley Warm streets scheme and the Knowsley Warm Front Excess schemes have helped bring homes up to decent homes standard.

Further information on reducing fuel poverty and supporting affordable warmth can be found [here](#).

## Private Sector Housing Priorities

The Private Sector House Condition Survey 2009 found that generally the stock in this sector is in good condition. However, we are aware that there are certain areas in the borough where quality and conditions are poor. Where poor condition combines with deprivation, housing markets are weakened, and it is crucial that action continues to focus on these areas.

Key Private Sector Housing Issues identified are:

-  The age profile of the 45,860 owner occupied and privately rented stock in Knowsley differs from the national average with much lower levels of dwellings built pre 1945( 24.7% compared with 40.6%), but with higher proportions of dwellings built from 1945 onwards ( 75.3% compared with 59.4%).
-  The building type profile in Knowsley again differs from the national pattern with much higher proportions of medium to large terraced and semi detached houses.
-  The tenure profile shows Knowsley has a much lower level of owner occupation 63.8% compared with 70% nationally. The private rented sector is also underrepresented 7.4% compared 12%.
-  The level of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) is estimated to be 30 dwellings, with none being identified as higher risk HMOs.
-  There are approximately 2300 empty homes in Knowsley, of which 1681 are vacant in the private sector.
-  Affordability of homes in the private sector due to low income is an issue. The overall levels of household income and benefit receipt do have a bearing on the affordability of repairs, meeting decent homes targets, vulnerability and fuel poverty. This will have implications on the range of support options available from the authorities' funds.





- 🏠 Estimations suggest nearly 13,000 households (28.9%) include one or more persons with a disability, indicating a large requirement for properties to be adapted.
- 🏠 An estimated 12,550 dwellings in Knowsley (27.4%) were non decent. The majority of dwellings were non decent due to Category 1 hazards (18.3%) and thermal comfort failure (11.1%). 7.8% of the stock failed the disrepair criteria and 1.3% because they lacked modern facilities. Non decent dwellings were mostly associated with high and low purpose built flats, small terraced houses.
- 🏠 The highest non decency score by sub area was in Prescot, Whiston, Cronton and Knowsley Village, followed by North Huyton.
- 🏠 Options to support the reduction of households with Category 1 hazards; reduce the 600 dwellings that are lacking modern facilities, and support the estimated 7330 properties suffering from thermal comfort failure and fuel poverty is a major objective to tackle.

The issues above will be supported and actioned by a separate Private Sector Housing strategy to be developed in 2011.

## Health and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

Health inequalities exist between people living in different areas, between groups of deprivation, differences in spending power, between different ethnic groups and by groups suffering from social exclusion. It is Knowsley's ambition to reduce the health inequalities that exist between different townships by regenerating the most deprived areas

The links between housing and health are well reported, with more recent studies reporting the significant financial costs generated by poor housing (Good Housing Leads to Good Health, CIEH, 2008). Evidence suggests that poor housing condition can be linked to increases in home accidents and falls. Damp and cold properties can cause increased prevalence of illnesses such as asthma, bronchitis and arthritis, resulting in excess winter deaths. Overcrowding may lead to low educational attainment within children and a number of mental health problems including increased stress, anxiety and depression.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment details the health problems associated with non decent housing. The Knowsley Housing Partnership will work in partnership with colleagues in both health and adult social care to support the outcomes of the assessment, reducing housing related illnesses in the borough. To access the JSNA please access

# Section Six

## Priority Three - Connecting People to the Improved Housing Offer

### Key Challenges

- Develop a Tenancy Policy for the borough.
- Maximise supported living.
- Maximise employment and training initiatives that can help support residents.
- Compliment Older and Younger people strategies to support their housing requirements.
- Realise the potential of the new Housing Options service and Choice Based Lettings scheme.
- Compliment the actions in the Local Transport Plan to support responsible housing development.

**Through this strategy and action plan we want to focus on delivering outcomes to meet the needs and demands people place on housing. This will ensure that people have the choice and access to housing which is suitable for them and enables them to live happy and healthy lives.**

Improving services is very important. This might not only be about direct housing services, but other services such as neighbourhood management and worklessness. We want to ensure that people have the appropriate access to and range of advice to enable them to live in homes which meet their needs.

### Strategic Tenancy Policy

Knowsley via the Housing Partnership will coordinate the development of Knowsley's Strategic Tenancy Policy. This policy will set out the broad objectives to be taken into consideration by social landlords in the area when setting their own policies on the grant and reissue of tenancies. In accordance with guidance we will develop the strategic policy in consultation with our social landlords. We will also consult, were applicable with tenants, local voluntary and community organisations to make sure that the policy reflects local housing need and demand.

The policy is to be developed and adopted in late 2011.

### Supported Living

Supported Living options and/ or Housing Related Support is currently offered within Knowsley to people who may fall into one or more of the groups below:

<b>older people</b>
<b>people with mental health needs</b>
<b>people with learning disabilities</b>
<b>people with physical disabilities</b>
<b>people who are homeless</b>
<b>ex-offenders and people at risk of offending</b>
<b>people who misuse substances</b>
<b>young people at risk</b>
<b>women at risk of domestic violence</b>
<b>refugees</b>
<b>travellers</b>
<b>people from black and minority ethnic communities</b>

There are a number of targets and national and local indicators for people who require housing related support to live in a stable and sustainable way within Knowsley's communities. A variety of intelligence has been gathered through the Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework and through national indicators since 2003 and some of the key themes for services within Knowsley are set out below:





Improvements in clients moving through services in a planned way from 55.04% in 2007/08 to 77.54% in 2009/10. This has been crucial to ensure that people are supported at a time when they need it but then move on to more independent living when appropriate freeing up space for new users.



The percentage of people sustaining independent living has also improved. In 2007/08 96.77% of people sustained independent living. Once people are living independently it is important to monitor progress to prevent housing issues developing that can lead to eviction and tenancy breakdown such as rent arrears or emerging mental health issues.

As well as increasing the capacity and range of services across the majority of vulnerable groups there have also been a number of major achievements and improvements to the choice and commissioned services available for people wishing to access supported living within Knowsley in the last five years.

These include:

-  Sheila Delaney House in Prescot - A small 5 bedded scheme of very short stay accommodation for 16-17 year olds with intensive support needs. This scheme is complimented by Octavia Court which is a supported living scheme for young people adjacent to Shelia Delaney House.
-  Increased floating support for all tenures to prevent homelessness. This is not linked to accommodation and can move seamlessly with people as they move on.
-  The development of Yates Court. This is a new build high specification supported accommodation in Prescot for families at risk of homelessness.
-  Improvements in the amount of service users moving on in a planned way.
-  A regular, well attended, provider forum chaired by a provider.
-  Updated provision of telecare systems within Knowsley's sheltered schemes.
-  Creation and sustained development of Knowsley's High Priority Resettlement Panel and the furnished tenancies scheme which deals with applicants who struggle to acquire housing through the usual waiting lists due to having high support needs or previous issues such as rent arrears.
-  Development of new schemes for complex adults with learning disabilities which has enabled some people to move back to Knowsley and be closer to their families.

## Future Challenges




There are still a number of challenges and issues for the future of our services for which commissioners, internal and external partners and providers will need to work together to resolve and improve the range of provision and choices for people who access Supported Living in Knowsley. These are in more detail within the action plan.

## Supporting Older and Younger People in Housing Need

There is a growing older population within Knowsley and as a group they have diverse housing needs and aspirations. Over the last few years we have become much more aware of how important good quality housing is in managing and maintaining the health and well being of older people.

There are now clear links between health and poor housing and there is an increased need for joint working between housing strategy, Department of health and wellbeing, planning and asset management strategies. This is an essential requirement in order to provide good quality accommodation which can be then complimented by support services which meet the needs and aspirations of older and vulnerable people and which help to achieve our aim of sustainable and inclusive communities.

Key objectives for this group are:

-  To support older and vulnerable people at home if this is what they want. This may be in their current home or by supporting a move into a smaller more appropriate home.
-  To provide a wide range of choices of both older persons housing and good quality general needs housing close to local facilities and support networks and provide a package of complimentary support services when required.
-  To support people retain their independence for as long as possible in accommodation that is suitable for their needs.


Strong links have been created since the writing of the Accommodation and support strategy for older and vulnerable people in 2008<sup>15</sup> with older peoples groups such as Knowsley's Older Peoples Voice and the Older Peoples Partnership board. Housing is a key issue for them and remains a challenge for Knowsley and its partners to listen to its older people and continue to meet the demand and aspirations of this group.


A strategy document has also been recently developed called 'A Positive Age' by the Older Peoples Partnership Board. There are eight themes in the document and Housing is one of the key priorities.


*'Older people want to know that housing is available that meets their needs, now and in the future, in order to maintain their independence. This theme includes actions to ensure that people can live in a warm, well maintained and accessible home, in an area of their choice, which supports involvement in their communities and with their families. It includes actions that support older people in awareness of the environment and use of renewable energies.'*

Since the 2008 strategy there have been a number of important changes and improvements in the housing choices available for older people which are:

-  Development of two extra care schemes to meet the increased support needs of older people. Both schemes are in Huyton. One is Crawshaw Court, a remodelled existing sheltered scheme. The other is Marsden Gardens, a purpose built new build scheme of 23 flats, most of which are available to rent as affordable housing with a small number bought by older people.
-  Development of virtual extra care services which will be operational by the end of 2011. This will offer a similar type support that can be given in Extra Care schemes but is offered in the older persons own home in their community.
-  A small number of older people have been supported to move into smaller, more suitable accommodation. The under occupation agenda will become more formalised during the lifetime of this strategy with increased incentives offered to tenants to move to smaller accommodation and free up larger family homes.
-  An improvement programme has begun to replace the assistive technology systems within the sheltered schemes. This is an important part of the support offered to older people who live in the schemes. This programme will continue into 2012 and will improve systems in Knowsley Housing Trust, Villages, Arena and Riverside sheltered schemes.

 The provision of the Home Improvement Agency has improved access for disabled and older people to minor works and minor adaptations within their home. Referrals are completed quickly and this service acts as a filter that can refer on to additional support services or assessments for major adaptations if necessary.

 A fully staffed Smart House has been developed in Prescot which is able to practically demonstrate to residents how adaptations and assistive technology works in practice. People can also see pieces of equipment which may assist them with mobility or independence issues.

 The Centre for Independent Living is due to open in June 2011 to the public which brings together a number of services in one place including advocacy services, wheelchair and equipment services, different therapy services and it will also be a one stop shop for advice and support for older and disabled people with a wide range of issues including housing related support.




As a borough we need to continue to build on what we have learned and developed since 2008 in terms of offering increased housing choice, responsive support in terms of both advice and actual services and also building in regular opportunities to engage with communities and older peoples groups about strategic issues, new developments and design standards.









Full actions for supporting the borough's older population can be found in the action plan.

## Housing Options

The Housing Options Service has been successful in the past in homelessness prevention, particularly in reducing youth homelessness and housing evictions. In May 2011, the new housing options service delivered through New Charter Housing Trust will be an active partner in assisting Knowsley to achieve its Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy objectives.

Amongst other actions the new service will:

-  Be a positive partner in the development of sub-regional Choice Based Lettings
-  Invest in a software system to improve case management and contract monitoring
-  Use customer profiling to identify hard-to-reach groups and non-traditional Options customers

-  Develop a Prevention Protocol with housing to minimise evictions
-  Introduce a Volunteer Programme
-  Minimise the use of Temporary accommodation
-  Develop partnerships with private sector housing organisations
-  Incorporate Mortgage Rescue/Debt Advice & Overcrowding specialism into the service
-  Involve customers on recruitment panels
-  Create customer panels with service development task & finish exercises
-  Develop an early intervention training programme for stakeholders to widen the prevention agenda

The service is monitored regular by Knowsley council to ensure that actions and priorities are being met. Full details of actions can be found in the delivery and action plan.

## Choice Based Lettings

Since 2005, the Government has had a clear aim of promoting Choice Based Lettings (CBL) schemes as the preferred method for the allocation of social housing. Central Government has also encouraged local housing authorities to work with neighbouring authorities to establish sub-regional schemes. CBL replaces the traditional way of allocating housing, whereby housing officers match applicants with a priority to available vacancies. Under a CBL system, vacancies are advertised widely, usually in the local press and/or on a website. Applicants can see the full range of vacancies and can bid (apply) for any home for which they are matched in terms of its size and type. The successful bidder is the one with the highest priority under the scheme.

Implementation of Choice Based Lettings will be in January 2012.

## Local Transport Plan

In Knowsley it is recognised that access to a good transport system is an important factor in building a sustainable local community. Transport is an enabler and can contribute to:

-  The achievement of stronger and safer communities, by ensuring the network promotes and enables improved health and wellbeing, where people can access the services they need
-  Healthier children and young people through the encouragement of active travel such as walking and cycling
-  Allowing people to connect easily with employment, services and social activities regardless of where they live
-  Environmental objectives such as a reduction in carbon emissions through sustainable transport initiatives
-  Stronger local economies by the efficient movement of people and goods on the network.

The Local Transport Plan is an important tool to help local authorities to work with stakeholders to identify how transport can be an enabler, and where improvements to the transport network may be required. Local Transport Plan Three will commence in April 2011 and run until March 2024, and may contribute to achieving the priorities set out in Knowsley's Housing strategy, particularly in connecting people to the housing offer.

## Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Show People

In June 2007, Knowsley Council was part of the Merseyside Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA)<sup>16</sup> group which was undertaken by Salford Housing and Urban Studies. This research and report were commissioned by four authorities within Merseyside (Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council and Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council) and finalised in 2008.

The key findings recommended the level of residential and transit pitch provision required to suitably cater for the needs of Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling show people, these are below:

Authority	Current provision	Additional residential pitch requirement (2007-2012)	Additional residential pitch requirement (2012-2016)	Total additional residential pitch requirement (2007-2016)	Total additional transit pitch provision (2007-2016)
Knowsley	0	4	1	5	10
Liverpool	14	11	3	14	
Sefton	16	12	4	16	
Wirral	0	9	1	10	
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>10</b>

An update to the Merseyside GTAA has yet to be undertaken by Knowsley Council or by any other Council involved in the study. We are mindful of the need to maintain an up-to-date evidence base, and therefore we have started to consider how best this may be undertaken, we hope to finalise our approach in late 2011.

Having an income and regular work enables people to have more housing choices - including home ownership. We therefore want to take the opportunities presented by housing projects in maintaining, building and renovating housing, to provide and sustain jobs, training and work experience for local people.

## Employment and Residents

Unemployment levels, and the proportion of people class as not working, is higher in Knowsley than in any other local authority the Liverpool City Region. Indications are that the number of people out of work, and seeking work, will increase over the next few years.

There are some deprived areas of the borough, where generations of families have not been in regular work, and we are aware that the percentage of unemployed households tends to be higher in the affordable housing sector than in other tenures. Those relying on benefits will have fewer housing choices than people in work.

We want to make sure that where housing is being built, renovated or maintained, opportunities are created to provide and sustain jobs, training and work experience for Knowsley residents. This could include indirect opportunities, such as using local companies to provide services, such as waste clearance, building supplies etc.

Through the Housing Partnership we will work with housing developers, housing associations, housing support providers, and other agencies to work together to create employment and training opportunities and monitor the impact for our residents.

## Harnessing Innovation

The Housing Partnership will seek to utilise any innovative methods and new ideas that can support the delivery of new homes. This will include:

-  Maximising the opportunities from new government bids and funding streams that are appropriate to Knowsley
-  Engage with new stakeholders who are willing to support the aims of the Knowsley Housing Partnership
-  Provide intelligence and information that can support housing bids and suitable developments.
-  Develop Task and Finish groups to explore new ways of working.



# Section Seven

## Action Plan and Contacts

**This section sets out our approach to delivering this Strategy, including the arrangements for annual review and performance monitoring.**

### The Challenge

We have been realistic about the capacity of Knowsley Council and its partners to deliver the proposals and programmes set out in this Strategy and action plan. Nonetheless, it is an ambitious agenda and it will be a challenge to deliver successfully. There are a number of key success factors considered in this section, including:

- The Action Plan, will be monitored quarterly and reviewed annually by the Housing Partnership to respond to changing circumstances
- Resourcing the work needed for delivery of the Plan through the staff of the Council and partners, and deploying these resources to best effect
- Funding the desired development, refurbishment and repair work, recognising the current and likely future pressures on both public and private funding
- Establishing performance targets so we can measure progress and recognise achievements
- Gaining and sustaining the support of all partners and the wider community for the policies and programmes set out in the Strategy



Inevitably the availability of funding for the proposals is perhaps the most difficult issue. The Strategy recognises that we will need to be innovative and find ways of being more effective, or doing things differently, rather than seeking overall increases in funding.

One of the most fundamental factors in funding the Strategy is likely to be the capacity of the private sector to meet the target of 450 new homes per year currently set by RSS, without compromising on quality. There will also be important decisions for the Council about the use of land assets to support affordable housing development, and for Housing Association partners about matching use of their assets. We will need to work closely with the Homes and Communities Agency to secure public funding in order to deliver our targets.

We see performance management as a critical part of delivering this strategy.

# Key Contacts

## Portfolio Holder - Regeneration, Economy and Skills

**Cllr David Lonergan**  
david.lonergan@knowsley.gov.uk

## Head of Regeneration

**Steph Byrne**  
Steph.byrne@knowsley.gov.uk

## Knowsley Housing Partnership

**Ian Cartledge**  
ian.cartledge@knowsley.gov.uk

## Housing Association Liaison Group

**Ian Cartledge**  
ian.cartledge@knowsley.gov.uk

## Supported Living

**Kath Glover**  
Kath.glover@knowsley.gov.uk

## Local Development Framework

**Jonathan Clarke**  
Jonathan.clarke@knowsley.gov.uk

## Strategic Housing

**Alan Broadbent**  
Alan.broadbent@knowsley.gov.uk

## Policy

**Jonathan Clarke**  
Jonathan.clarke@knowsley.gov.uk

## Private Sector Housing

**Alan Broadbent**  
Alan.broadbent@knowsley.gov.uk

## Housing Options

**Maureen Ashcroft**  
Maureen.ashcroft@newcharter.co.uk

# Appendix Action Plan

**Please see accompanying Action Plan.**

Strategic Housing  
Knowsley Council PO Box 26 Archway Road Huyton L36 9FB  
Telephone 0151 443 2287 Fax 0151 443 5833  
Email [housing@knowsley.gov.uk](mailto:housing@knowsley.gov.uk)  
[www.knowsley.gov.uk](http://www.knowsley.gov.uk)

**You can also get this information in other formats.  
Please phone Customer Services on 0151 443 4031,  
or email [customerservices@knowsley.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@knowsley.gov.uk)**