

Let's Go!

Business Plan
2020 - 2025



watford
community
housing

Let's Go!



At Watford Community Housing we believe in working in partnership to transform our communities and change lives for the better.

Our business is evolving rapidly as we find new ways to deliver great homes, improved services and much-needed new housing for customers in and around our heartland of South West Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

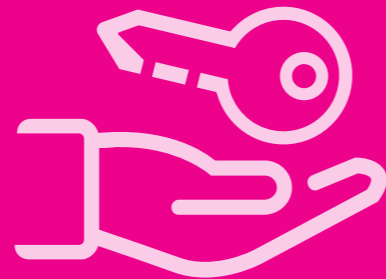
Over the next five years, we want to do even more.

Our main focus is on providing excellent housing at a price people can afford – so most of our homes are for rent or shared ownership. We are also committed to working with our partners to nurture strong communities in all the areas where we provide homes and services.

What we do

We find innovative and creative solutions to the challenges we face and we are a trusted partner. We already have two successful joint ventures with local authorities and we are keen to establish new ones – these partnerships will enable us to build even more homes over the next five years. We also manage homes for other housing providers and run community hubs that help people to get more out of life.

In the wake of the coronavirus crisis, the services we provide will be more important than ever. We are determined to be there for our communities and offer support to those impacted by the pandemic.



We know that partnerships are key to our success, as they allow us to build more new homes and provide better services than we could deliver on our own. This means engaging effectively with our customers, communities and other organisations who can help us to achieve our goals – as well as working closely together as one team within the Watford Community Housing Group.

Better together

As a Community Gateway housing association, we put people at the heart of our work. Our customers are invited to become members, and staff, stakeholders and local residents can become associate members. Because members have voting rights, they are empowered to influence our work and play a central role in our decision-making.



What we stand for

Our vision and our values underpin everything we do. These will remain central to our work.

Our vision

“Better homes, friendlier communities – together”

Our values



Professional

We are honest, open and respectful. People trust us to keep our promises.



Forward-thinking

We have a ‘can-do’ attitude and embrace opportunities to improve and innovate.



Collaborative

We work together as one team and build lasting partnerships to get results.

The heart of what we do

We have three interlinking priorities that will enable us to work in partnership to transform our communities and deliver on our promises.

- Our **Customer Promise**, which sets out our five key service priorities, has been created in consultation with residents – so it reflects what matters most to our customers.
- Our **Development and Partnership** plans, which will enable us to deliver much-needed new homes and services in South West Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire.
- Our **Resource** planning, which will enable us to deliver on our promises and make us the partner of choice for our customers, staff and stakeholders.

Our Customer
Promise

Innovative
***Development
& Dynamic
Partnerships***

The Right
Resources

We are committed to delivering what matters most to our customers. That's why we worked closely with them to co-create our Customer Promise, which sets out our main priorities for the next five years.

Our customer promise



Alongside our partners, we will deliver on this promise to ensure that people in our communities have the homes and services they need.



Our customer promise



First-class repairs service

We will deliver a first-class repairs service that is effortless and convenient for you. We will carry out property checks to spot repairs issues and fix them before they become urgent. When a repair is needed, we will give you a great experience.

This means:

- booking a repair will be easy and can be done at any time
- you will have a choice of appointment times that suit you
- we'll arrive on time and fix the problem on our first visit (on at least nine out of ten occasions)



Safe communities

We know that safety matters to you, so it matters to us too.

We will work closely with partners to ensure that you can feel safe in and around your home, including dealing with anti-social behaviour.

Our focus will be on working with partners in your neighbourhood to address incidents quickly and effectively, and to develop preventative measures.

Community development

We know that the community you live in can help to make a house feel like a home, so we will invest £1 million into projects that enhance the lives of our residents and help build strong communities.

To help deliver the biggest positive impact, we will work in partnership with other organisations in the community.



Flexible housing options

You should have a home that suits you and your lifestyle. We know how important it is to offer flexible housing options that meet people's diverse needs throughout their lives, so we will provide more suitable and attractive choices.

If you are moving to a smaller home, we will help you to understand your options and find a new home that is right for you – and we will support you throughout the process.



100 new homes for social rent

Providing people with genuinely affordable homes by building housing for social rent is a key goal of ours – and it will remain so.

To deliver more social housing in the places that need it most, we will:

- work with partners
- obtain grant funding
- invest money from Right to Buy sales



To make sure we deliver on our Customer Promise, we have a Road Map and a comprehensive suite of strategies that complement the Business Plan.

Keeping our promises

- The **Road Map** charts our transformation journey from 2020 to 2025, ensuring that we provide our services in a way that is effortless and convenient for our customers. This will include major enhancements to our repairs service, making use of the latest technology so that residents can manage repairs online and use their smartphones to see the name of the operative and track the vehicle all the way to their front door.
- Through our **Asset Management Strategy**, we will ensure that our homes are well-maintained and fit for modern life – giving people a solid foundation and the chance to live well. This will include investing £3.5m in energy efficiency improvements to put a combined £75,000 back into our customers' pockets.
- Our **Customer Experience Strategy** and **Housing Management Strategy** set out how we will provide services in a customer-centric way. By delivering these, we will achieve customer satisfaction of at least 90% and deliver high-quality housing management services that are effective and professional.
- Our **Communities Strategy** will be integral to how we deliver on our £1m community development promise and maximise the impact of our dedicated welfare fund, set up in response to the coronavirus crisis. It is based around our commitment to wellbeing, social enterprise, tenancy sustainment and increased engagement – which can help to build cohesive and prosperous communities that provide the foundations for people to live better lives.



We're committed to developing as many homes as we can, to give people valuable opportunities.

Innovative development

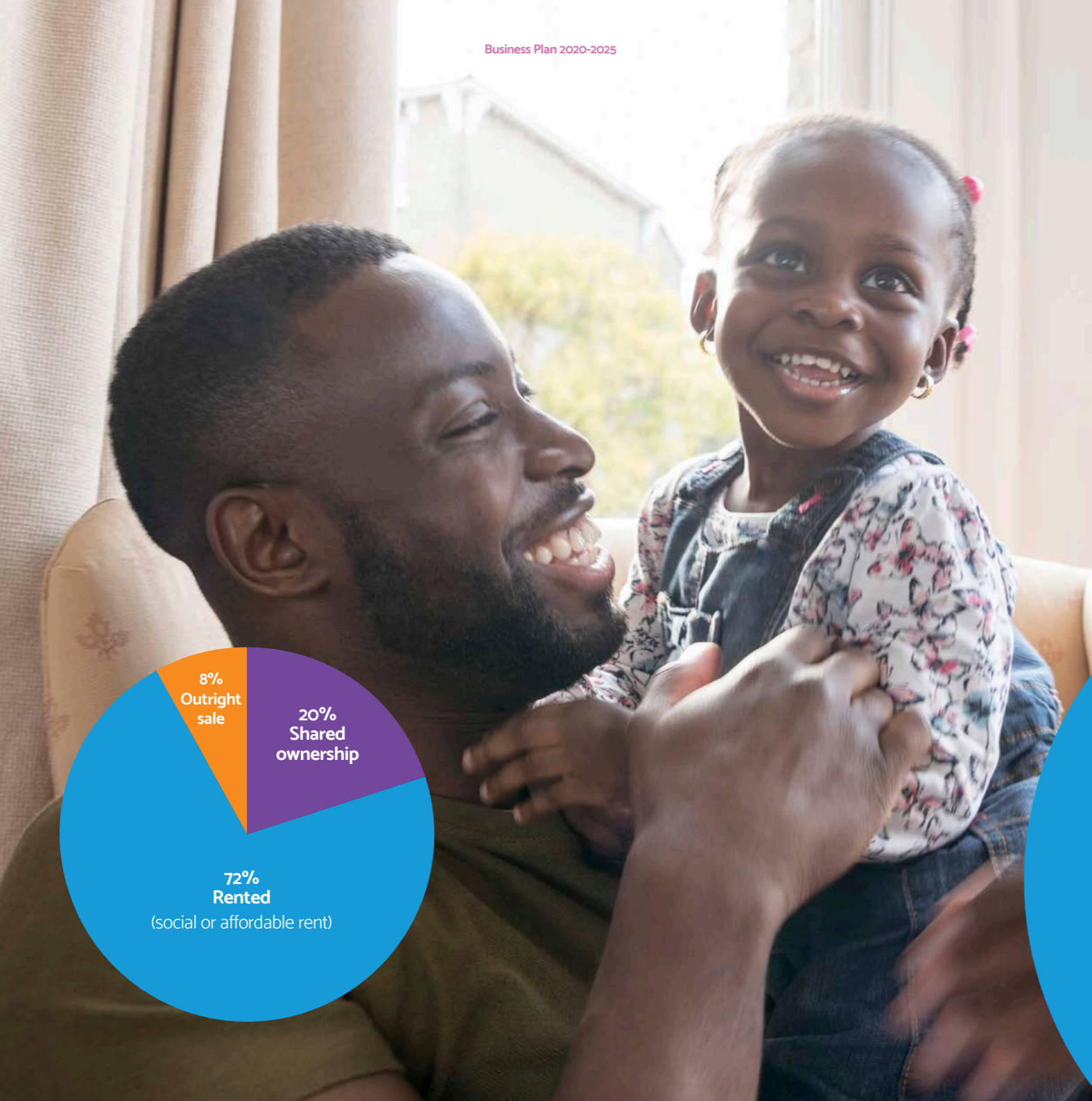
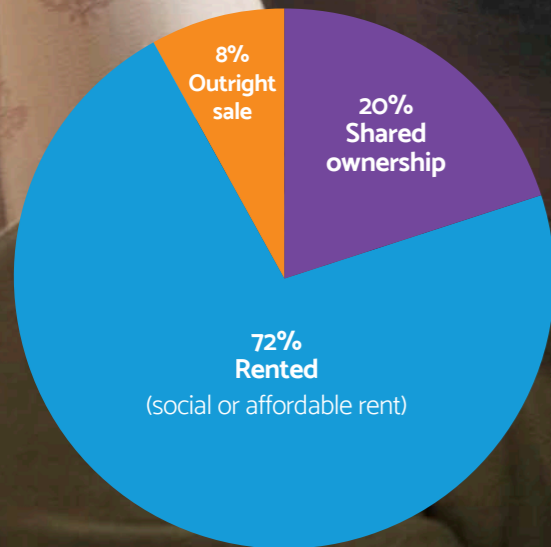
As a community-based housing provider that specialises in rented and shared ownership homes, our Development Strategy sees us consolidating our presence in six local authority areas in South West Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

We will build homes across a number of tenures to meet the needs of a wide range of people. For developments delivered directly by Watford Community Housing, we'll achieve a mix of 72% rented, 20% for shared ownership and 8% for outright sale.

Schemes through Clarendon Living and our joint ventures will include a larger proportion of homes for market sale, but we will always provide the number of affordable homes required by the local planning policies as an absolute minimum.

Building brighter futures

Our overall development programme will see **1,580 new homes** completed between 2020 and 2025. These will be delivered through both Watford Community Housing and our commercial arm, Clarendon Living.



Homes for those most in need

As part of our development programme, we will deliver on our Customer Promise commitment to build at least 100 homes for social rent – this is the most affordable tenure, providing for those who are most in need.

By working in partnership with others, we will own or manage 7,500 homes by 2025.

Achieving our ambitions

We have a number of key objectives that will help us to deliver our ambitious development programme.

- We will complete at least **180** new homes a year through Watford Community Housing, with the majority being rented properties in and around South West Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire.
- So that our community-based model can flourish and benefit all of our customers, we will achieve a critical mass of at least **100** homes in each of our six local authority areas.
- We will be a trusted partner for local authorities, working in partnership to deliver **680** much-needed new homes.
- We will make the best use of our assets to maximise our potential to deliver new rented homes – including our existing housing stock, garage sites and other land we own.

Owned and managed
by Watford Community
Housing

6,210

Owned by joint
ventures and managed
by Watford Community
Housing

790

Owned by others and
managed by Watford
Community Housing

500



Partnership working is central to our ethos because it allows us to get more done and deliver for our customers.

Dynamic partnerships

We embrace opportunities to work with others, whether it's through formal joint ventures or on a more informal basis, such as working together on a one-off project. We will develop and maintain a range of key partnerships over the next five years to help us achieve our goals.

A strong and influential membership

As a membership organisation, we will ensure that our customers shape our future. We will strengthen our membership offer to keep customers at the heart of our work, empowering them to influence the design of our new developments and improve our existing homes and services.

Delivering with local authorities

We will work with local authorities in South West Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire, through either joint ventures or management agreements.

These partnerships will enable us to deliver 680 more new homes by March 2025 than we could build on our own – and we will take on the long-term management and maintenance of the rented properties.



Off-site manufacturing

We will work with the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and 11 other local housing providers – including housing associations and local authorities – to promote and utilise off-site manufacturing facilities in the Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter (IQ). Collectively, the consortium will develop 300 new homes each year. By employing standardised dwelling types, together we will drive down costs and increase efficiency.

Independent living

To provide good-quality housing and support for older people, we will partner with a specialist provider that can help us to grow and enhance our offering. By March 2025 we will have 433 independent living homes – this will be made up of 183 existing homes and 250 new homes. These include our flagship scheme of 50 dwellings in the Meriden.

Working with other housing associations

We will work jointly with like-minded housing associations to develop best practice and improve the homes and services we provide to our customers. We will also explore merger opportunities when they produce win-win solutions for our customers.

Thriving communities

We will work with a range of partners to deliver our Communities Strategy and fulfil our Customer Promise commitment to invest £1 million in community development. Through these partnerships, we will secure at least 15% match-funding so that these projects and initiatives do even more to change lives and enhance our local areas.

One team

We will work together as one team throughout the Watford Community Housing Group, to deliver on our People Strategy and achieve our wider ambitions. By continuing to build a vibrant culture based on our values, we will help individuals to succeed and attract the best people so that we provide an excellent service for our customers.



To achieve our ambitious goals, we need the right resources in place.

The right resources

Robust financial performance

We will focus on growth and value for money, so that we are financially secure and deliver the maximum possible benefit for our communities from the money we invest. Over the next five years, we will consistently achieve an operating surplus of at least 30%.

To support our Development Strategy, we will also need to structure our finances with an expectation that the Group will need around **£350 million of debt** by 2025 to build the homes we want to deliver. This will be achieved through ongoing valuation work on our debt capacity, ensuring that future developments are used to leverage finance and having a Treasury Management Strategy that provides guidance and assurance on our viability.



Our digital journey

Through our Digital Transformation Strategy, we will build on the work we have done to embrace technology that allows us to operate more efficiently and provide more for our customers.

We have already launched a great selection of online services that are available through our website and we have implemented cloud-based solutions for a number of our IT functions, making us more resilient. We adapted quickly to the challenges of the coronavirus crisis, which demonstrated the strength of our systems and our ability to operate effectively while working remotely.

We will continue to innovate, with a focus on developing our digital offer. We will take a 'digital first' approach to our online services, making it easy for customers to engage with us using smartphones or tablets.

This will include enhancements to the repairs journey, making it possible to raise and monitor a repair online from start to finish – including tracking our operatives all the way to the front door.

To ensure that we operate as efficiently as possible, we will also build a resilient IT infrastructure, develop real-time business intelligence and analytics, and give our people the digital tools they need for modern working – so that they can achieve the best results for the organisation and our customers.

Investing in people

Our people are our greatest asset and they are central to our success. By delivering our People Strategy, we will evolve as an employer – we want to be an organisation that makes a real difference to the lives of our employees, as well as delivering for our customers.

We will invest in people to help individuals succeed and to develop tomorrow's leaders. By offering an enticing recognition and remuneration package, we'll also attract, develop and retain the best people.

Key to this will be a vibrant culture, built around our values, that helps us to become an employer of choice.



Strong governance

We are committed to the highest standards of governance. By continuing to deliver against the regulatory framework set out for housing providers, we will ensure that we are well governed as a Community Gateway organisation, providing excellent housing services and giving our customers a voice.

We will maintain our G1 rating from the Regulator of Social Housing, demonstrating that we are compliant, offer value for money and put our customers' interests and wellbeing first. We will have a clear strategy, robust decision-making, transparent reporting and appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure that we are viable and successful.

Let's Go!

Our key goals for 2020-2025

- Deliver the commitments set out in our Customer Promise to give people in our communities the homes and services they need.
- Develop and maintain a range of key partnerships to help us achieve our goals.
- Deliver an ambitious development programme, building homes to give people valuable opportunities.
- Carefully manage and develop our resources so that we are well-governed and have the finances, people and technology we need to succeed.





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