

**Let's
Go!**

Building brighter futures

**Development Strategy
2020 – 2025**



**watford
community
housing**

Building brighter futures

New homes give people valuable opportunities. That's why we're committed to building as many as we can, especially for people who cannot afford to rent or buy a good home from the private sector.

Independently, we will complete 180 homes every year – meaning 900 new homes between 2020 and 2025.

We believe that working with like-minded people gives us the opportunity to deliver more than we can on our own. Successful partnerships underpin many of our best projects and we will continue to build on existing relationships and create new ones.

Through our joint ventures, we will complete an additional 136 homes every year – to provide another 680 homes by 2025.

1,580 new homes

We will deliver 1,580 new homes in total by March 2025, working both independently and in partnership with others.



We're proud to build the homes that people in our communities need. This means providing a range of tenures, with a particular focus on homes for people with lower incomes. To do this, we'll deliver homes through both **Watford Community Housing** and our commercial arm, **Clarendon Living**.

The right mix

Social rent

Social rented homes provide very low rents for those in greatest need.

Building homes for social rent does come at a high cost, with the value of the rent not even covering the cost of construction – but we believe that providing homes for the people who need them most is the right thing to do.

Between 2020 and 2025 we will deliver at least 100 homes for social rent.

These 100 homes will be newly built, but we will also look at opportunities to make existing affordable rent homes available for social rent.

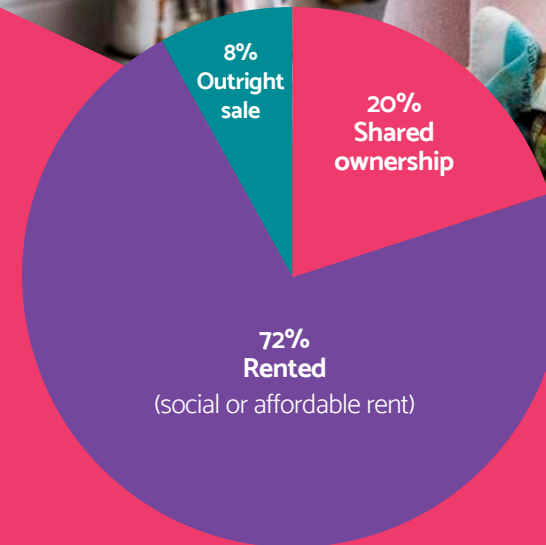
Affordable rent

Although it is higher than social rent, affordable rent still gives many people on lower incomes the chance to live in a good-quality home for significantly less than it would cost them to rent in the private sector.

We have been providing homes at affordable rents since 2012 and they are in high demand. To keep costs down for our customers, we do not set rents above the Local Housing Allowance cap level – this means they are around 35% less than market rent, making them affordable for people who receive benefits.

We will build 550 homes for affordable rent.

This will represent the majority of the rented homes which we build between 2020 and 2025. Affordable rent is a more viable option financially, as the rental income usually covers most of the cost of building them. This means that we can afford to deliver more homes, helping more people.



This shows the mix of different tenures we will build.

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



Shared ownership

Shared ownership allows more people to own a home of their own.

As house prices have soared over recent decades, more people are forced to rely on the private rental market for housing, as they do not qualify for social or affordable rented homes but cannot afford to buy their own home.

Shared ownership gives people in this situation the chance to buy a share in a property, while paying a low rent to us on the remaining share. Over time, shared owners can increase their share until they own the property outright.

Between 2020 and 2025, 20% of the homes we build will be for shared ownership – giving 180 households the chance to own their home.

And there will be even more on top of this, as some of the homes developed through our joint ventures will be for shared ownership.

By offering shared ownership, we can help more people to reach their dream of buying their own home. It also helps us to deliver more for those on the lowest incomes, by bringing in additional money through sales income that we can then use to support future developments.

Homes for sale

Developing homes for market sale allows us to increase the total number of homes we deliver – while raising money that we can invest back into affordable housing.

These homes will be developed by Clarendon Living, which then gifts all the profits back to Watford Community Housing. As we are a not-for-profit organisation, every penny that we make from selling market homes is reinvested into building more affordable housing and improving services for our existing customers.

Between 2020 and 2025, around 8% of the homes we build will be for outright sale.

Both the coronavirus crisis and the full implementation of the UK's withdrawal from the EU are likely to have knock-on effects, particularly in relation to property values and the confidence of people wishing to buy. As we don't yet know the full impact these will have on the housing market, we will plan to deliver the majority of our homes for market sale towards the end of the 2020-2025 programme.

Independent living

People have different needs from their home as they get older – and the homes we build should reflect that.

Where our developments include homes for older people, they will be designed and built in line with the most up-to-date thinking. We will work with specialist independent living providers to make sure that we deliver modern homes that meet the highest standards, as well as providing excellent management services for our customers.



While the majority of our existing homes are in Watford, we're proud that we now provide safe, secure and affordable homes to people across a wider area.

Where we'll build

We have a presence in six local authority areas across Hertfordshire - Watford, Three Rivers, Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans and Welwyn & Hatfield. We are also exploring opportunities in the area covered by Buckinghamshire Council, the newly created unitary authority, in locations that make good sense for us in terms of future management.

Our main focus over the next five years will be on continuing to deliver homes and strengthening our relationships with partners in the areas where we already operate. We will remain open to opportunities to work with partners in new places, as long as we are confident that we can maintain the highest standards in our homes and services.



The right sites

It is important that we build the right homes in the right places – where they are needed and where they will make a positive contribution to local communities.

We take a range of considerations into account when considering any new project, such as the location, proposed building heights, number of homes and the mix of different tenures. We thoroughly examine all of the possible risks and the impact the development would have, to make sure that it makes sense for us as a business and improves the local area.



As we are committed to delivering value for money, we need to make good use of land that we already own. Modern developments can give a lift to existing areas, so where we have land that is not working hard enough for the local community we will look at whether it is suitable for new homes. As well as putting roofs over people's heads, modern homes can breathe new life into our neighbourhoods.

We will also consider redeveloping homes we own that are no longer suitable for modern living. We measure how our buildings are performing so that we can identify any that cost us a lot to maintain, or cost residents too much to heat as they are not energy-efficient.

To ensure we are delivering value for money for our customers, we will consider whether homes that can't be brought up to modern standards could be redeveloped to provide new energy-efficient homes instead.

As well as putting roofs over people's heads, modern homes can breathe new life into our neighbourhoods



We have built a strong reputation as a valued partner, with an excellent track record in delivering new homes through joint working – and we want to keep building on this.

Better together

We are committed to forging long-lasting partnerships that help us to achieve our development aspirations and we believe that working with others will allow us to build even more homes.

As well as building directly under the Watford Community Housing banner, we will deliver more than ever before through Clarendon Living, our commercial subsidiary. Clarendon Living is actively developing through joint ventures with two of our key local authority partners and is in discussion with others, in addition to building homes for sale in its own right.

Hart Homes is the joint venture between Clarendon Living and Watford Borough Council, and Three Rivers Homes is between Clarendon Living and Three Rivers District Council.

Both joint ventures have already delivered high-quality developments, with more to come – and we will continue to seek new opportunities for both companies to build homes between 2020 and 2025.

Perfect partners

We will also look to work more closely with other local authorities, as well as exploring new opportunities to partner with housing associations and organisations in the private sector. In order to build more new homes, we are open to working in partnership with others – either on a scheme-by-scheme basis or through longer-term formal agreements.

Added value

As well as opening the door to new opportunities, working in partnership helps us to deliver more than we could by working on our own.

Partnerships allow us to attract additional funding, which in turn will generate income through sales and the management services we provide. This means that the Watford Community Housing Group can deliver more overall.

Wherever possible, we will look to attract grant funding to help us build more homes. Many of the homes we build for rent or shared ownership will be eligible for Homes England funding and we will also look to attract local authority grants where they are available.



We don't just want to build any old homes. We are committed to embracing innovation so that developments are cost-effective to construct and maintain, as well as giving residents high-quality homes that offer the best of modern living.

Build smart

Where possible, we will use off-site manufacturing methods that could allow us to build homes faster and more cost-effectively, enabling us to deliver more for less.

We will also look for opportunities to improve the specifications in our new homes, such as fitting them with energy-efficient and smart technologies that make life easier for residents and help us to manage and maintain buildings more effectively.

Building Information Modelling (BIM) technology is being embedded into our new projects, which offers a wide range of long-term advantages. It gives us a thorough understanding of the building and all of its services and systems - meaning we can protect, maintain and repair it more efficiently throughout its life.



Let's Go!

Our key goals for 2020-2025

- Build 1,580 new homes in total, including at least 100 for social rent.
- Strengthen our existing partnerships and forge new ones with like-minded organisations.
- Embrace innovative construction methods and smart technologies that allow us to build more cost-effectively and deliver homes that are better, more energy-efficient and cheaper to run.





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