

## **Willenhall North, Willenhall South and Short Heath Area Panel**



### **Introduction**

This report will illustrate the approach whg take in terms of asset management and the affect that will have on the Willenhall and Short Heath area.

The report will show the panel the methodology used to provide a planned maintenance programme and how that is then turned into a delivery programme.

### **Report**

#### **Asset Managemnet Strategy**

In 2014 whg produced a new strategy for asset management;

#### **Purpose of strategy**

The strategy sets out a direction and rationale to ensure our homes and neighbourhoods are maintained, improved and provision increased to meet the future needs of our customers and the aspirations of whg to be an outstanding housing provider.

The strategy enables sound investment decisions to be made which:

- aligns provision of homes to future requirements
- optimises customer benefits and service provision
- protects the economic viability of our business in the medium to long term

#### **Methodology of strategy**

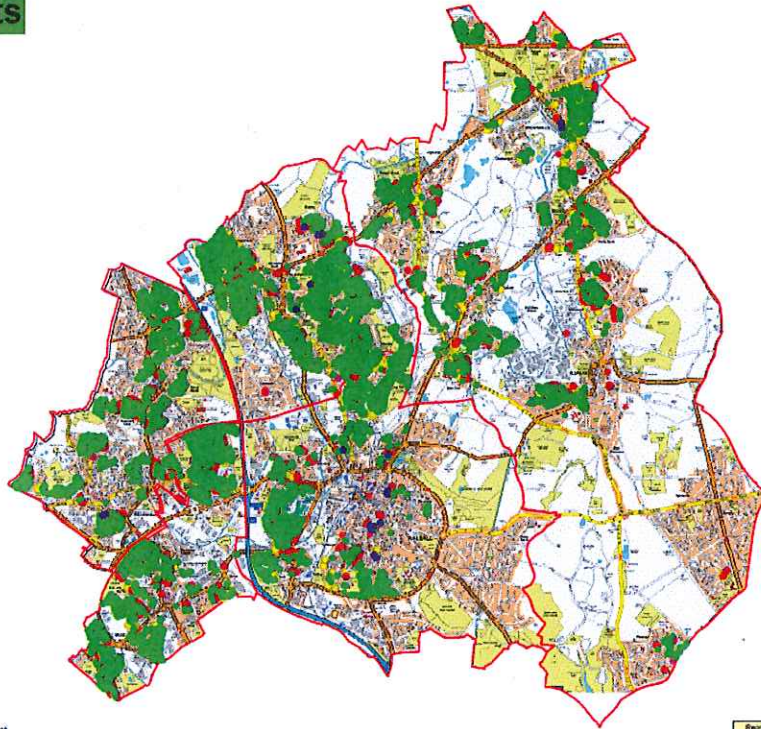
The Asset Management Strategy is a cross cutting collaboration between Asset Management, Development and Regeneration, Finance and Housing Services directorates to ensure its direction is aligned with corporate aims and that there is a balance between financial viability and aspirations.

The compilation of the strategy followed the following stages of work:

- Analysis of current portfolio and issues
- Predictions for future needs and issues
- Consideration of whg and customers aspirations and preferred direction
- Gap analysis
- Option generation, consideration and appraisal
- Strategy generation and financial model

As of October 2013 the total housing stock stood at 18,981 and consists of a variety of house and flat types which range from bed-sits to six bedroom homes.

## All Assets



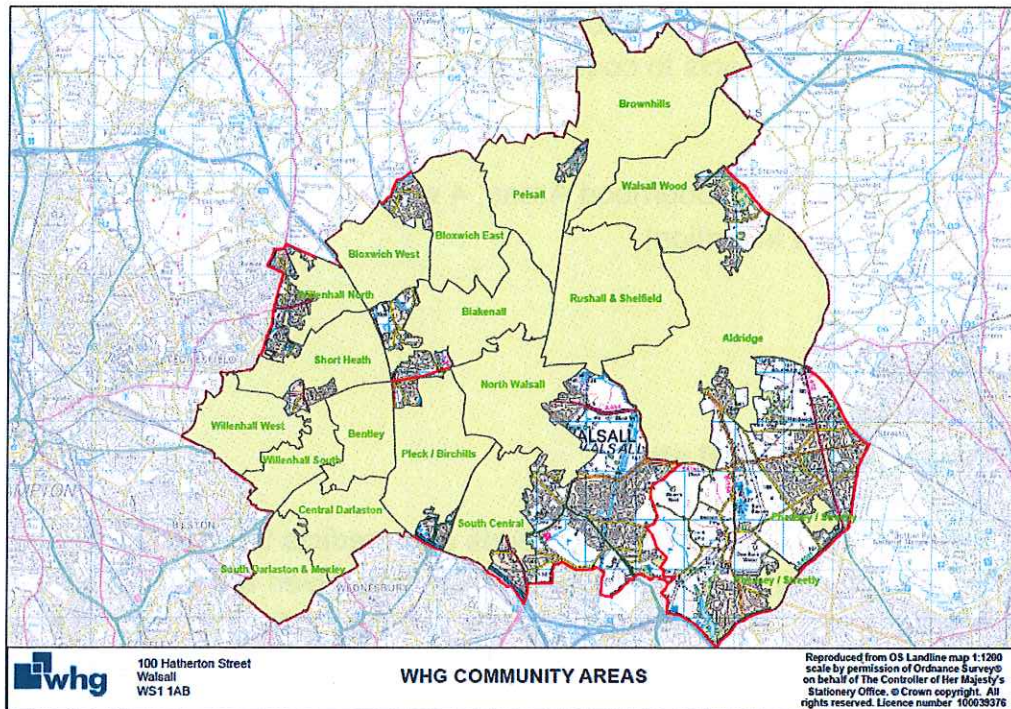
100 Hatherston Street  
Walsall  
WS1 1AB

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In addition to homes, whg own or is responsible for an array of other assets including its land bank, communal areas, office accommodation etc and land holdings around our homes.

Neighbourhood profiling was introduced in 2009 to allow investment decisions to be linked to the sustainability of neighbourhoods. The map below (figure 2) identifies the 19 community areas that were established and remain the basis of analysis and planning to ensure a local context to the strategy.





Maximising return on assets whilst maintaining a low level of risk is central to this strategy, active asset management determines investment in good homes in a sustainable neighbourhood whilst a poor home in a non sustainable area represents a risk; the diagram below illustrates active asset management principles.

### Active Asset Management



### Great Homes and Neighbourhood Standard

Developing great homes and neighbourhoods has to be viewed as a long term project that will always be on going and subject to change where success is getting more and more of the characteristics established in a neighbourhood, noticing positive change and maintaining a momentum.

Creating a Great home and Neighbourhood is about working on several fronts together to enable small and detailed projects to come together to make an impact greater than doing them individually.

Whg have 19 Community Neighbourhood Areas, 4 within Willenhall Trust.

- Willenhall North ( New Invention)
- Short Heath
- Willenhall South
- Willenhall West

### **Trends from local and national stats**

The paper 'Future Housing Needs' studies trends and predicts the housing demand in Walsall and for whg properties going forward. The figures given are estimates and are used to populate the gap analysis to give overall trends and issues for resolution. The overall conclusion is a requirement for more housing to be provided by whg in the region of 1,635 homes by 2018 and 3,425 in total by 2023.

The increasing demand requirement is considered in the growth strategy which looks at a detailed 5 year horizon and proposes building out whg's land bank as a priority.

### **Willenhall & Short Heath**

#### **Key facts**

- Located on the west side of the borough
- Unemployment is lower than the Walsall average with around one in 20 adults of working age unemployed.
- Slightly older population than the Walsall average with around one in five people aged 65 or over
- predominant mixture of Pre & post - war houses & low rise flats.
- Since 2003 generally all properties have received improvements and are now 100% compliant to Decent Homes Standards
- Short heath                      770 properties
- Willenhall North                980 properties
- Willenhall West                 500 properties
- Willenhall South                620 properties

The focus of future programmes will now be on Environmental issues as established on the 2010 surveys for Neighbourhood Plans and more recently an assessment of whg neighbourhoods for the Great Homes & Neighbourhoods surveys carried out in July 2014.

The development of the research methods used on this survey was led by customers themselves and the project offers a rigorous scrutiny of the quality of whg neighbourhoods.



## How did Short Heath score?

The project visited three sites covering nine streets and 280 homes, representing 36% of whg stock in the neighbourhood. One of the sites at Short Heath was exceptionally good and the neighbourhood as a whole only just fell short of an A grade.

Site	Grade
Shepherds Drive, Tildesley Drive and Queens Lea	A
Farmhouse Road, Sowers Close and Harvesters Road	B
Stroud Avenue, Wolverson Close and Douglas Davis Close	B

## What were the concerns?

At Farmhouse Road, Sowers Close and Harvesters Close concerns were raised about the poor condition of the garage areas.

At Stroud Avenue, Wolverson Close and Douglas Davis Close similar observations were made about garage areas and the condition of pavements was poor in places.

## Recommendations

whg	Walsall Council
Improve garage areas.	Improve pavement surfaces.

## Willenhall North – B

### Key facts

- Located at the north western tip of the borough covering an area also commonly known as New Invention. It borders Short Heath and the M6 on one side and open countryside on the other
- Willenhall North has higher levels of owner occupancy than the Walsall average with almost three quarters of homes inhabited by owner occupiers.

(ONS 2011 Census Willenhall North Ward)

### How did Willenhall North score?

The project visited three sites in Willenhall North covering eight streets and 337 homes, representing 35% of whg stock in the neighbourhood. One site performed very strongly but the results were consistently good across the sites.

Site	Grade
Tennyson Road, Wordsworth Road and Keats Road	A
Hilton Road and Stretton Road	B
Brereton Road, Huntington Road and Sandwell Place	B

### What were the concerns?

At Tennyson, Wordsworth and Keats Road drying areas and communal bin areas were in a poor condition and some rubbish had been dumped.

At Hilton and Stretton Road there were a number of comments about the poor condition of the garage areas and also evidence of rubbish being dumped and grass verges churned up.

At Brereton Road, Huntington Road and Sandwell Place it was observed that a number of pathways were in poor condition and bollards were damaged and graphitised. It was also noticed that the balconies to flats looked worn.



## Willenhall South – C

### Key facts

- Situated at the western end of the borough covering the residential areas immediately to the east and south of Willenhall Town Centre.
- Lower levels of owner occupancy than the Walsall average with only around half of properties owner occupied.
- At around 8% of working age adults, unemployment is slightly higher than the Walsall average.

(ONS 2011 Census, Willenhall South Ward)

### How did Willenhall South score?

The project visited two sites in Willenhall South covering four streets, two multi-storey blocks and 199 homes representing 30% of whg stock in the neighbourhood. The results for Willenhall South were mixed with one site performing well and one site performing poorly.

Site	Grade
Rosehill Gardens and Tyler Road	B
Gough Street and Slater Street	E

### What were the concerns?

Although Rosehill Gardens and Tyler Road performed well the B grade was a marginal one with a number of concerns raised mostly on the theme of feeling safe. It was noted that secluded alley ways felt unsafe, the high level of CCTV coverage was disconcerting and the drying areas were in a particularly poor state of maintenance. This site also rated poorly on the theme of residential blocks which looked rundown and had mildew on the walls.

At Gough and Slater Street many homes looked run down and poor quality pavements were identified along with problems of fly tipping and vandalism. There were particular concerns about void properties being damaged, gates being stolen and the prevalence of vandalism and graffiti.

## Willenhall West - D

### Key facts

- Located on the western end of the borough to the West of Willenhall Town Centre.
- With an average age of 36 years, Willenhall West has a slightly younger population than the Walsall average.
- Car ownership is lower than the Walsall average with almost a third of households not owning a car.

(ONS 2011 Census, Willenhall South Ward)

### How did Willenhall West score?

The project visited two sites in Willenhall West covering five streets and 259 homes, representing 35% of stock in the neighbourhood. Whilst one site did slightly better than the other the results for Willenhall West were consistently weak.

Site	Grade
Webster Road and Thorne Road	D
Aston Road, Park Avenue and Webb Street	E

### What were the concerns?

The most significant observation at Webster and Thorne Road was the tired appearance of the homes themselves with many doors and facades being in a poor condition. A number of walls required repair and many gardens were overgrown. In addition to this the pavements were found to be uneven.

Very similar concerns were raised at Aston Road, Park Avenue and Webb Street. The Tenant Inspectors were particularly concerned about the condition of the pathways and steps to some properties which appeared to be quite hazardous.



## **The Accord Group**

### **Report to the Willenhall and Short Heath Area Panel-Social Housing Standards and Maintenance**

The Accord Housing Group has 282 properties in the Willenhall and Short Heath area of which 194 are general needs homes and 88 in some form of home ownership including shared ownership and leasehold schemes for the elderly.

In terms of property type there are 36 Bungalows, 110 flats and 136 houses. There are no high rise dwellings.

Of the 282 properties 36 are refurbished dwellings and 246 new build homes.

The build or refurbishments date from 1982 to 2013 and the stock is in good condition overall with condition surveys and repairs history not indicating any significant problems.

The planned maintenance programme has focussed on older stock both new build and refurbished with 39 homes recently benefitting from new double glazed units and new external doors.

Within the next 5 years a further 7 properties are due to have new windows and doors, 73 properties new kitchens and 3 properties a full heating upgrade representing a significant improvement in the properties and an investment in excess of £250,000.

There are 31 properties with external solid wall and in order to improve thermal insulation the Accord Group is looking at funding opportunities for external or internal wall insulation.

There are also 21 properties with Economy 7 electric heating which is over 20 years old and heating provision is being reviewed in these schemes including the opportunities for leveraging in external funding.

#### Appendix 1 Stock Information summary

- Scheme Address
- Owning Body
- Property Type
- Build Date
- Tenancy Type
- New Build/Rehab
- Planned Works and current issues

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