


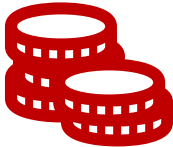


Analysis of needs – Housing sector issues

The profile of West Lancashire is one of a Borough which is sought after, with a strong demand for housing in both the private and public sector.

	<p>House price data suggests that there are three main housing markets. These consist of Skelmersdale, Ormskirk and the more rural areas of the Borough, containing smaller towns and villages. The housing issues within each area range from low to high demand for accommodation.</p>
	<p>Our population is growing – The 2001 Census recorded a Borough population of 108,400. In 2011, the population was 110,700. The 2021 Census records a population of 117,400, an increase of 6.1% since 2011. We need to cater for this confirmed growth while also being mindful of population and household projections, which are also factored into the development of Local Plans.</p>
	<p>It's ageing - Alongside population growth, we know that that our population is ageing, and this is in line with the national picture with Census 2021 results confirming there are more people than ever before in older age groups.</p> <p>The Office for National Statistics 2018-based national population projections to 2038, suggest the largest growth for West Lancashire, will be in people aged 65 and over. In 2038 it is projected that there will be 32,600 people aged 65 and over. This is an increase of 5,900 from 2023, representing growth of 22%.</p> <p>The population aged 85 and over is projected to increase by an even greater proportion, 56%. This is likely to increase demand for housing related support and other forms of social care to enable residents to remain in their own homes.</p>
	<p>It's expensive - We know it's expensive to buy a home in most parts of the Borough. The median house price to earnings in the authority is well above many other Lancashire authorities. Income to house price ratio for Lancashire in 2022 ranged from 4.17 to 7.22 times earnings with West Lancashire's ratio at 6.57, the third highest ratio in Lancashire, with authorities of Fylde at 6.63 and Ribble Valley at 7.22 showing ratios above West Lancashire.</p> <p>West Lancashire is seen as attractive place to live and this is reflected in the high demand for housing and high price values in many areas. While this is positive news from a demand perspective, we know that affordability is an issue for those seeking to buy a home.</p> <p>We know that economically active households, particularly those who would traditionally be classed as first time buyers, struggle to find housing at an affordable price in our Borough and as a result may move away.</p> <p>We will need to ensure we are providing the 'right' type of housing offer to retain and attract younger and economically active growing families and first-time buyers while at the same time provide suitable housing for older people and other specialist housing groups.</p>



Affordable housing supply - The Council commissioned Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) suggests an annual affordable housing shortfall of 277 homes per year (gross). While affordable housing has been developed in the Borough, we still have growing levels of unmet need each year.



Council Housing Register - Demand for Social Housing is increasing with the number of active applications with West Lancashire HomeFinder, the Council's choice based letting scheme, increasing from 938 in April 2018 to 1365 in April 2023. The proportion of applicants experiencing a higher level of Housing need has also increased with 20% of applicants now in the High Priority Category (Band B) compared to 10% in 2018.

There has been a significant increase in the time taken for applicants in the High Priority, Band B, to be rehoused, which is the banding awarded to those accepted as having a homeless duty owed to them. Applicants in Band B are having to wait on average over 5 months longer to be rehoused than in 2018/19.

It's clear that there has been an increase in demand for social housing and that the supply of accommodation to meet that demand is not there, leading to increased rehousing waiting times.



Temporary Accommodation - The numbers of homeless people needing to go into temporary accommodation is increasing as is their length of stay.



Rough Sleeping - Whilst the last rough sleepers estimate recorded five rough sleepers; there are a significant number of people particularly single persons who are sofa surfing and therefore at risk of rough sleeping at any time.



Housing Related Support – It has been noted that a higher proportion of those presenting as homeless have a history of mental health issues, rising from 41% in 2018/19 to 70% in 2021/22. Access to housing related support is becoming extremely challenging due to a lack of such provision in the borough. This means there are clients who may require support but are not able to access it. It is known that access to housing related support can help improve the chances of a client moving on to independent living and/or transitioning to successfully living independently.



Health inequalities in West Lancashire – We are aware that there are differences in both the duration and quality of life within our Borough. Although these disparities are typically addressed within the context of population health, it's important to recognize the housing aspect, where the provision of high-quality housing can play a role. As just one example, based on the data available, it indicates that the life expectancy of a female born in Birch Green is 12 years less than that of a female born in Parbold.



Private Sector Housing – Building brand new homes is one way of addressing housing and affordable housing need, however making best use of existing stock is also important, particularly when you consider that around 85% of the overall housing stock in the Borough is privately owned, when including the 13.5% private rented stock. This means it's important to ensure that existing private sector housing remains in good condition, and in the case of the private rented sector, ensuring those homes are well managed as well as maintained, with the homes being provided to safe and habitable standards – homes that are not a detriment to human health, both physically and mentally.

The private rented sector can assist, in part, with some of the matters mentioned above by providing rented homes as an extension to the social rented sector, where waiting lists can mean a significant wait before rehousing occurs. It can also act as an alternative tenure for households currently unable to access the home ownership ladder, although, the high cost of rent can also make it much harder for households to then save for a deposit to enable the purchase of a home. We are also aware that high demand for housing generally and a lack of overall supply nationally has driven up private rental levels, further creating affordability challenges for households.

We do know from the Private Sector Stock (PRS) condition survey 2016 that there are properties in the private sector that still need investment and in some instances, this can impact on the occupiers' health. Funding to address these issues is limited and so we need to consider how we can tackle stock condition issues and advise and support householders to make their homes more energy efficient. This will also help address the issue of fuel poverty experienced by some households in the Borough.



Skelmersdale - The new town of Skelmersdale was built in the 1960's, and was the first new town in the North West. It has a vibrant community, but like many former new towns, face specific housing challenges that are a legacy of its development history. These relate to its functional housing market (although has seen improvement in recent years), physical design of the housing and neighbourhoods, along with age of the housing stock and environment.

Despite these legacy issue, Skelmersdale continues to thrive as a desirable location due to its vibrant community, planned recreational improvements, existing green space, an improving housing market, evolving infrastructure, and promising prospects for a fulfilling lifestyle.



Office for National Statistics - www.ons.gov.uk
Land Registry - <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/land-registry>
English Housing Survey - [English Housing Survey - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
Shelter Databank - https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/housing_databank
West Lancashire Local Plan Evidence - [Evidence Base - West Lancashire
Borough Council \(westlancs.gov.uk\)](http://westlancs.gov.uk)