

NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL

Housing Strategy 2022-2027



Contents

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----|--|----|---|----|
| Foreword | 3 | Action Plan | 15 | Appendices | 31 |
| Executive Summary | 4 | Aim – Deliver affordable homes in sustainable neighbourhoods | 16 | Appendix 1 – Local Statistical Context | 32 |
| Introduction | 7 | Aim – Improve and make the best use of existing homes | 19 | Appendix 2 – Glossary | 39 |
| Our Vision | 9 | Aim – Provide solutions and support to those in housing need | 23 | Appendix 3 – Key Achievements 2016-2021 | 45 |
| Monitoring and Resources | 10 | | | Appendix 4 – You Said, We Did | 46 |
| National Housing Context | 11 | | | Appendix 5 – Related Documents | 52 |
| The Local Picture: Evidence Base | 12 | | | Appendix 6 – References | 53 |

Foreword

I am pleased to introduce North Somerset Council's new Housing Strategy, setting out our housing priorities for the next five years.

North Somerset is a location in increasingly high demand as a place to live. This increased popularity is good news but brings with it extra pressure on our infrastructure and services.

A national housing shortage, coupled with rising rental and house prices, means that those who are at the start of their housing journey, or who have suffered some setbacks along the way, are finding it increasingly hard to find appropriate housing. Services are under more pressure than ever, and we must ensure that we are working efficiently to maximise opportunities and choices for our residents. Much has been achieved following the last strategy, but there is always more we can do to deliver for the people of North Somerset.

Having enough high-quality and sustainable housing and infrastructure is instrumental to building healthy and vibrant communities and meeting our vision of delivering **better, more sustainable, and affordable homes** by 2027.

Our strategy has three aims to achieve this –

- **Deliver affordable homes in sustainable neighbourhoods**
 - We are determined to ensure that those living in North Somerset can access good quality homes at an affordable price, with infrastructure that can support and sustain the new neighbourhoods.
- **Improve and make the best use of existing homes**
 - We must find more efficient and creative solutions to ensure that the standard of existing homes is of good quality, fit for the future and can meet the demands of the climate emergency.
- **Provide solutions, support, and choice to those in housing need**
 - We must provide services which are flexible and meet the needs of all our residents, enabling those with less resources to secure a home.

I would like to pay tribute to all those across our housing services teams within the council who do so much to support our community. Together with our partners in the private rented sector, social housing sector, and voluntary organisations, they are making a difference to the lives of people in North Somerset.

There can be few more important objectives than to ensure that people have a roof over their heads. This strategy intends to help us deliver upon that ambition and thereby create an open, fairer, greener North Somerset.

Cllr Mike Bell

**Deputy Leader of the Council,
Executive Member for
Adult Services, Health and Housing**



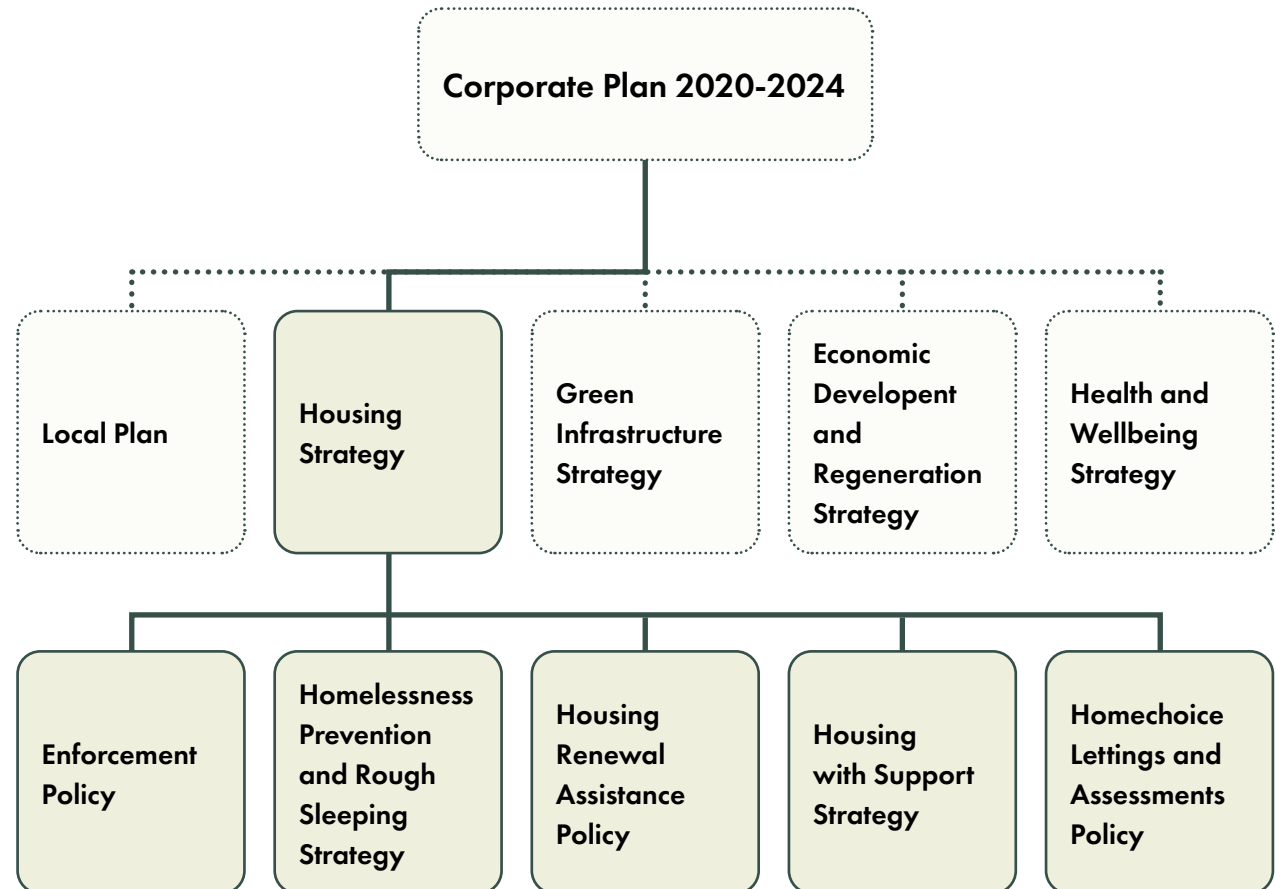
Executive Summary

Our ambitious new Housing Strategy for North Somerset sets out our vision, priorities, and direction for the next five years (2022-27) to meet housing need and deliver housing services in the area. The strategy has been compiled following extensive consultation, research, and analysis, looking at the national and local context and reflecting on the progress and changes since the previous strategy in 2016.

This is a high-level and overarching document which sits below the Corporate Plan and aims to deliver on its vision for a more open, fair, and green North Somerset. It also sits alongside other key strategies and plans which will deliver our priorities on the ground.

The strategy addresses the national context within which we are operating and focuses on the local issues and challenges which have informed our aims and priorities.

Projections suggest that North Somerset will see a population increase which is more than double the national rate. Furthermore, the proportion of our residents who are aged 65-and-over is already higher than the national average and is set to increase even further over the next two decades. With these dual pressures, we need to ensure that there is enough housing available, and that it meets the anticipated needs of our residents.



North Somerset Housing Strategy 2022-2027

Meeting housing need within North Somerset is made more difficult by spiralling housing and rent costs. This means that ownership is out of reach for many, and private renting is also increasingly unaffordable, particularly for those on low incomes and those in receipt of housing benefit. Waiting times for social housing are long, excluding this tenure as an option for most residents. It is essential that there is an increased delivery of affordable and sustainable homes to tackle these issues, and that existing homes are of a high quality and put to the best use.

North Somerset residents have a variety of circumstances which affect their housing need, including rough sleeping, domestic abuse, being a care leaver or ex-offender, and having mental and/or physical disabilities. Everyone's needs are different, meaning tailored personal support is essential to assist vulnerable residents and households. Only a small proportion of them will get allocated a social housing tenancy, so alternative choices need to be established, and a consistent, empathetic, and proactive service maintained to help them.

Our vision for North Somerset in 2027 to address these local issues is to have:

- Better, more sustainable, and affordable homes by 2027

The Housing Strategy has three strategic aims which will deliver this vision:

Deliver affordable homes in sustainable neighbourhoods

- Work with local, regional, and national partners to maximise funding and increase the supply of affordable housing
- Ensure planning and infrastructure policies deliver a broad range of housing, align with the council's climate goals, and reflect local needs

Improve and make the best use of existing homes

- Achieve higher standards in the private rented sector
- Work with partners to improve health, safety, and energy efficiency within existing homes
- Enable our residents and partner agencies to make best use of current homes where appropriate, including bringing empty homes into use

Provide solutions, support, and choice to those in housing need

- Ensure housing options are clear and that housing pathways for those in need are accessible
- Identify and meet the individual housing needs of our more vulnerable residents
- Address the causes of, and continue to prevent, homelessness and rough sleeping

Climate change, post-COVID recovery, health and wellbeing, economic opportunities, and equality of opportunities are at the heart of all our actions.

Each of these aims and priorities are supported by detailed actions showing how and when specific projects will be delivered and monitored. As the Action Plan is a live, evolving document, it will be

monitored and reviewed on an annual basis to make sure it reflects its current context.

Working in partnership is key to the success of this strategy. We wholly appreciate the support of our partners during its development, and we will continue to work closely with them to achieve our aims for the benefit of all our residents in North Somerset.



Curo's residential development of 154 new homes, including 30% affordable housing, at Eaton Park in Yatton. Photo by Curo



Introduction

About this strategy

This new five-year Housing Strategy (2022-2027) sets out our vision and priorities for meeting housing need and delivering housing services, and the actions we will take to achieve them. We believe that the key to a prosperous North Somerset is the provision of enough quality and affordable homes and effective housing services for all our residents.

Our Housing Strategy is an overarching corporate document with a strategic action plan. Several operational strategies and plans sit below and alongside it, which will deliver more detailed actions and targets. A list and links to these can be found in Appendix 5. To deliver this strategy we will continue to work even more with a wide range of partners and agencies.

In developing this new strategy, we have considered the pressing issue of the climate emergency and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the services and initiatives we deliver. Climate change, post-COVID recovery, health and well-being, economic opportunities, and equality of opportunities will be at the heart of all our actions.

We are very grateful to all those who contributed to our stakeholder consultation events and online consultation. Views were positive with many suggestions and comments which helped shape the



A social rented eco home on Severn Road, Portishead.
Photo by Alliance Homes

final document. A summary of issues and comments raised can be found in Appendix 4.

The new strategy will be monitored regularly with the Action Plan being updated on an annual basis. It will be available online and we welcome any comments throughout its span. A contact telephone number can be found on the back page of this strategy.

Why we have a strategy

Local councils often operate with limited resources and so it is vital that there is a clear strategic direction. A strategy allows us to focus our efforts on agreed priorities, use our resources as effectively as possible, and coordinate with our partners to reach shared goals.

This strategy will inform and set the direction for a number of operational plans. It is a high-level and overarching document, which ties in with the council's overall ambitions for North Somerset. Housing is recognised as an essential part of the council's Corporate Plan to create a more **open, fair, and green** North Somerset. It contains a specific priority to deliver **a broad range of homes to meet our growing need, with an emphasis on quality and affordability**, which has informed our own vision for this strategy. The strategy is also influenced by the vision of the council's Adult Social Care Directorate – **maximising independence and wellbeing for our residents**.



Breaking ground at Curo's affordable housing scheme at Scot Elm Drive in West Wick. L-R: Curo Chief Executive, Victor da Cunha; Leader of North Somerset Council, Cllr Donald Davies; Managing Director of Claywater Homes, Brian Webber. Photo by Curo

The strategy is closely linked to the council's Local Plan, which identifies the overall scale and pattern of future development. Likewise, it complements other key strategies, especially around health and wellbeing, our local economy, and the climate. The flowchart on page 4 shows how these strategies and plans are related.

There is insufficient housing of the right size and type to meet the diverse needs of all our residents, and some existing housing needs improving and/or will not meet the future requirements of the climate change agenda. Having a safe, warm, and affordable home has a huge impact on quality of life and general well-being. Affordability and rising fuel costs make it difficult for some households to sustain their current accommodation or access appropriate housing. Investing in housing, particularly for vulnerable people, can also affect and **avoid costs for other public services**, such as reducing the costs of health services and residential care. Having a strategy allows us to effectively address these challenges.

Our previous strategy delivered some positive housing outcomes for our residents, but we want to continue to drive improvement. See Appendix 3 for a list of achievements.

By having a framework of strategies and policies we can take a coordinated and strategic approach to issues in North Somerset and ensure that services are delivered in an integrated way.

Our Vision

Better, more sustainable, and affordable homes

Our Aims and Priorities

We have set ourselves three broad strategic aims, each with their own associated priorities. For these priorities we have identified the actions, projects, and success measures needed to fulfil them, which we will work hard to deliver by 2027 (see the [Action Plan](#)).

Deliver affordable homes in sustainable neighbourhoods

- Work with local, regional, and national partners to maximise funding and increase the supply of affordable housing
- Ensure planning and infrastructure policies deliver a broad range of housing, align with the council's climate goals, and reflect local needs

Improve and make the best use of existing homes

- Achieve higher standards in the private rented sector
- Work with partners to improve health, safety, and energy efficiency within existing homes
- Enable our residents and partner agencies to make best use of current homes where appropriate, including bringing empty homes into use

Provide solutions, support, and choice to those in housing need

- Ensure housing options are clear and that housing pathways for those in need are accessible
- Identify and meet the individual housing needs of our more vulnerable residents
- Address the causes of, and continue to prevent, homelessness and rough sleeping

Monitoring and Resources

Monitoring of the Strategy

In the five-year life of this strategy, new priorities may emerge, and the legal framework may change. We will review the priorities and Action Plan annually as it is important that it is a live document which reflects its present context and is subject to change where necessary. The update will be shared with partners and elected members and will be published on our website. Any significant change in direction will be agreed and endorsed by relevant partner agencies and elected members.

Resources

The historic reduction in funding from central government in local councils, the end of the emergency COVID-19 schemes, the demand for housing outstripping supply nationally, and the new requirements placed on local authorities in recent years have all presented new housing challenges to the council that require creative solutions. This means it is important that we work closely with partner agencies to identify and deploy our collective resources to effectively deliver this strategy.

Our housing initiatives and services are funded through a mix of council tax and government grant funding. This includes homeless prevention funding, NHS Better Care funding for Disabled Facilities Grants, housing benefit rebates from the Department of Work & Pensions, Homes England money, and some additional funding for Discretionary Housing Payments.

We have a limited ability to directly fund and deliver new housing ourselves, so we normally use local planning requirements to negotiate with developers on the construction of affordable housing. Where on-site delivery is not possible, we obtain financial contributions (commuted sums) from the developers to fund affordable housing on other sites.

We continue to secure extra funding wherever possible, for example our rough sleeping work is funded through the Rough Sleeper Initiative Programme 2022-2025.



National Housing Context

Housing continues to be high on the political agenda with several national policies and priorities having an impact on our local approach. The issues and targets can be complex and ever-changing, but are summarised here.

300,000 new homes built each year by the mid-2020s¹

Net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050²

Heat and Buildings Strategy 2021 – decarbonisation of heat in buildings³

Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) – new responsibilities for local authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness⁴

Rough Sleeping Strategy (2018) – committed to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it by 2027⁵

Affordable Homes Programme 2021-2026⁶ – invests £11.5 billion to build up to 180,000 new homes⁷

Rights and protections for tenants – banning lettings fees⁸, a review of the Decent Homes Standard⁹ for social rented properties, and new regulations around electrical safety standards¹⁰

Planning For The Future: Planning Policy Changes 2020 – A White Paper seeking to speed up housing delivery¹¹

National policies and priorities affecting housing

Adult Social Care Reform 2021 – reforms around housing, home adaptations, and move-on options¹⁸

Regulation of Private Renting (Value For Money Report) Dec 2021 – National Audit Office report looking at government interventions in the private rented sector¹⁷

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – created a statutory definition of domestic abuse and gave new responsibilities to local authorities to provide survivors with suitable housing¹⁶

COVID-19 pandemic initiatives – tenants given temporary protection from eviction¹³, the furlough scheme keeping people in employment¹⁴, and the ‘Everyone In’ initiative¹⁵ providing all rough sleepers with accommodation

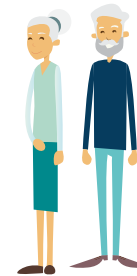
Mandatory licensing of houses of multiple occupation – including a minimum room size standard (e.g., 6.5m² for a single room)¹²

The Local Picture: Evidence Base

We have gathered data on North Somerset to give an overview of the local population and housing context. These figures have helped to inform the Action Plan, which can be found in the next section. The headline figures are featured here, and more information and case studies can be found in **Appendix 1**.

- There were 88,277 households in North Somerset in 2011,¹⁹ and ONS projections estimate there were 96,844 households in the district in 2021.²⁰ This represents a 9.8% increase over the decade.

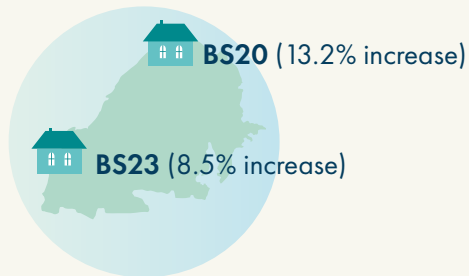
- Demographic projections suggest a 7.9% increase in North Somerset’s population between 2020²¹ and 2031²², compared with 3.2% nationally.²³
- 24.2% of residents are aged 65+ (compared to 18.7% nationally). This is projected to rise to 27.8% by 2041.²⁴ We have commissioned an Older People’s Housing Needs Survey to help us plan how to meet the needs of this age group in future.



Most deprived

10% most **221 / 317** 10% least

North Somerset has a large equalities gap. In the 2019 indices of deprivation, North Somerset as a whole ranked 221st most deprived out of 317. However, 8 areas were ranked in the 10% most deprived and 21 areas were ranked in the 10% least deprived.²⁵



Rental prices in North Somerset have risen between 2020 and 2021. The South West region saw a 9% increase – the highest in the country.²⁶ In comparison, the BS23 postcode area saw an average 8.5% increase, and BS20 a staggering 13.2% increase.²⁷

BS20 (North of the district)

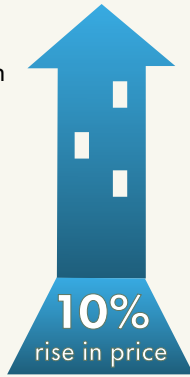
| Property size | Median monthly rent | Local Housing Allowance rate | Rent shortfall |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| 1-bed (<35 years) | £803.00 ^A | £390.43 | £412.57 |
| 1-bed (>35 years) | £803.00 | £692.94 | £110.06 |
| 2-bed | £970.00 | £822.72 | £147.28 |
| 3-bed | £1,258.00 | £948.48 | £309.52 |

BS23 (Weston-super-Mare)

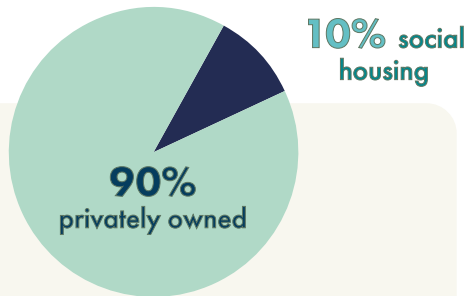
| Property size | Median monthly rent | Local Housing Allowance rate | Rent shortfall |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| 1-bed (<35 years) | £580.00 ^A | £429.00 | £151.00 |
| 1-bed (>35 years) | £580.00 | £473.72 | £106.28 |
| 2-bed | £726.00 | £598.34 | £127.66 |
| 3-bed | £922.00 | £748.28 | £173.72 |

^A Those under the age of 35 in receipt of Housing Benefit are normally given housing costs towards, and encouraged to live in, shared accommodation. This results in lower potential rent costs than shown here.

Average house prices rose by 10.1% in North Somerset between March 2020 and March 2021, reaching £291,790 – 10x the average yearly earnings of residents. This compares to a 10.2% increase in England to £274,615 – 8.6x average yearly earnings.²⁸



- In 2020/21, North Somerset had an economically active^A population of 111,600, with an average before-tax income.²⁹



North Somerset's housing market is dominated by the private sector. As of March 2020, 90% of houses were privately owned and only 10% were social housing.³⁰

- The percentage of those privately renting in North Somerset has grown. It almost doubled between 2001 and 2011 (from 8.2% to 16.2%) and had increased to 19% by 2018.³¹



The council's HomeChoice social housing register has 2561 applicants as of February 2022. On average, only 500-600 social houses are let out each year.³² This equals roughly 1 house for every 4 applicants.

| Waiting list need by property | No. of Applicants (% of total applicants) | % of applicants with annual income below £25,000 |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 bed | 1303 (51%) | 72% (937) |
| 2 bed | 811 (32%) | 73% (592) |
| 3 bed | 329 (13%) | 71% (232) |
| 4 bed | 100 (4%) | 65% (65) |

- In 2020, there were 599 long-term empty properties in the area.³³
- The 2017 housing stock survey showed that 14% of private sector and 16% of private rented sector dwellings in North Somerset had category 1 health and safety hazards (the most serious rating).³⁴
- Levels of fuel poverty in the district are below the national level. The national average proportion was 13.4% in 2019 compared to 8.5% in North Somerset.³⁵



71 households in North Somerset were at risk of or enduring homelessness with domestic abuse as a factor in 2020/21, an increase from 66 in 2019/20³⁶

- In 2020-21, 328 households in North Somerset were prevented from becoming homeless.³⁷ 210 of these (64%) were housed in the private rented sector.

^A Either employed or unemployed



Green spaces and new homes in Locking Parklands.
Photo by Alliance Homes

10 rough sleepers found during the first outreach walk of December 2021



Around 6 in every 1000 North Somerset households were threatened with homelessness in 2020-21.³⁸ 10 rough sleepers were found during the first outreach walk of December 2021.

- 58 households were waiting for extra care housing on HomeChoice as of February 2022. With an ageing population, we expect demand to increase in future.³⁹
- 46% of applicants on HomeChoice considered themselves or a member of their household to have a mental or physical disability as of February 2022.⁴⁰
- For those in receipt of Housing Benefit, rent rises mean the proportion of their income spent on housing costs has increased, with many rented properties becoming unaffordable.



As of 2021, 32% of North Somerset care leavers aged 17-18 were not in employment, education, or training (NEET). This compares to 30% nationally.⁴¹

Action Plan

We have put together a series of actions based on the challenges we face, the evidence base, and consultation feedback that we feel will help us to meet our aims. These will be monitored and reported on regularly and updated annually as necessary.



Aim – Deliver affordable homes in sustainable neighbourhoods

Priority: Work with local, regional, and national partners to maximise funding and increase the supply of affordable housing

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|--|---|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| Provision of a wide range of affordable housing types and tenures, including homes being built on the council's own land | Increase delivery of affordable homes in partnership with Homes England and Housing Associations, maximising the number of homes delivered both through S106 negotiations and grant-input opportunities | Delivery of at least 1,000 affordable homes | March 2027 (average of 200 homes annually) | Head of Development & Placemaking |
| | | Approval of the reviewed Affordable Housing SPD | December 2024 | Planning Policy Manager |
| | Invest in and deliver phases 1 and 2 of the Council's Development Strategy, representing over £120m investment in high-quality, mixed-tenure homes on land owned by the council | At least 600 homes and £120m investment to be delivered on council-owned land, including at least 300 affordable homes | March 2027 | Head of Development & Placemaking |
| | Establish a capital investment programme to deliver additional affordable homes with partners or as part of council-led developments | Develop a business plan with specific targets and implement the new capital programme | March 2023 | Head of Development & Placemaking |
| | Actively promote and support bids from Housing Associations to the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme | Two successful bids chosen and funding secured for delivery | March 2024 | Head of Development & Placemaking |

North Somerset Housing Strategy 2022-2027

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|--|---|---|-----------------------------|--|
| Provision of a wide range of affordable housing types and tenures, including homes being built on the council's own land | Encourage the provision of specialist housing which addresses the future care requirements of our community | Detailed assessment of requirements completed and required number of units delivered | March 2024 | Head of Development & Placemaking Principal Head of Commissioning, Partnerships & Housing Solutions |
| | Support the delivery of a diversity of housing types, including self-build and community land trust initiatives | Delivery of two Community-Led Housing schemes Adoption of the Local Plan containing policies to support delivery | March 2027 December 2023 | Head of Development & Placemaking Planning Policy Manager |

Priority: Ensure planning and infrastructure policies deliver a broad range of housing, align with the council's climate goals, and reflect local needs

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|---|--|---|---------------|-------------------------|
| An up-to-date planning framework for housing delivery, identifying the location, type, and scale of development required to meet future housing need in sustainable locations | Develop a new North Somerset Local Plan which will set the framework for investment and growth in homes, jobs, and associated infrastructure | Adoption of the Local Plan | December 2023 | Planning Policy Manager |
| | Boost the supply of housing through identification of a range of deliverable sites in the Local Plan | Adoption of the Local Plan | December 2023 | Planning Policy Manager |
| | | A supply of housing in excess of five-years is maintained | N/A | |

North Somerset Housing Strategy 2022-2027

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|---|--|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| An up-to-date planning framework for housing delivery, identifying the location, type, and scale of development required to meet future housing need in sustainable locations | Support delivery of Neighbourhood Plans | Adoption of the Local Plan to set out the planning context for local communities to develop Neighbourhood Plans | December 2023 | Planning Policy Manager |
| | Develop a policy framework to promote sustainable development and a zero-carbon built environment, and to promote energy efficient measures, sustainable construction, and the use of renewable energy | Adoption of the Local Plan Update the Creating Sustainable Buildings and Places SPD | December 2023 December 2024 | Planning Policy Manager |
| Infrastructure that supports new developments, giving communities access to the services they need e.g. schools, health services, roads, shops, jobs, green spaces | Identify development and supporting infrastructure requirements in the Local Plan and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan | Adoption of the Local Plan | December 2023 | Planning Policy Manager |
| | | Approval of the revised Infrastructure Delivery Plan | March 2024 | |

Aim – Improve and make the best use of existing homes

Priority: Achieve higher standards in the private rented sector

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|---|---|--|--|------------------------------------|
| Good quality, affordable private rented homes with a high standard of management to meet a broad range of needs and incomes | Review private rented sector (PRS) housing conditions through commissioned stock survey and explore further formal intervention including discretionary licensing of the sector | At least 100 homes per year improved through local authority intervention, with an annual review of this target to be undertaken | March 2027 (100 homes annually) | Private Rented Sector Team Manager |
| | Use stock condition data to target PRS homes for improvements or intervention to achieve Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Level C | PRS fully compliant with revised minimum standards for the sector, with plans established after the publication of MEES guidance by central government | March 2024 | Private Rented Sector Team Manager |
| | Develop schemes and review incentives to encourage more landlords to work with our Private Lettings Team | Review incentives available to landlords/lettings agencies | September 2022 | Projects and Lettings Team Manager |
| | | Hold twice-yearly landlord events to raise the profile of our service | Ongoing to March 2027 | |
| Build and strengthen relationships with private landlords and lettings agents to encourage good practice | Continue to advertise in different media and annually review our Communications Plan | Ongoing to March 2027 | Private Rented Sector Team Manager Projects and Lettings Team Manager | |
| | 4 events held annually to ensure our Private Landlord's Forum/ Rent with Confidence partners are informed, trained, and/or accredited | Ongoing to March 2027 | | |

North Somerset Housing Strategy 2022-2027

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|---|--|---|---------------|------------------------------------|
| Good quality, affordable private rented homes with a high standard of management to meet a broad range of needs and incomes | Consider options for setting up an in-house social lettings agency (SLA) | Complete research into existing SLAs | December 2022 | Projects and Lettings Team Manager |
| | | Consult with internal and external stakeholders | June 2023 | |
| | | Progress scheme if viability is established | N/A | |

Priority: Work with partners to address health, safety, and energy efficiency within existing homes

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| Homes that are safe, energy efficient and free from serious hazards | Support homeowners and landlords to invest in the maintenance and improvement of their properties by continuing to provide access to low-cost loans to owners unable to secure funding finance and sources of information and advice | Access to low-cost loans and advice maintained | Ongoing to March 2027 | Improvement and Adaptation Team Manager |
| | | Work with energy advice/ grant providers to deliver energy efficiency measures to support those affected by fuel poverty and assist in achieving climate change aims | Ongoing to March 2027 | |
| | | Private Sector Stock Condition Survey informs delivery plans/ policies and actions | Report with recommendations received and considered, including reviewing intervention policies e.g. area action | |

North Somerset Housing Strategy 2022-2027

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Homes that are safe, energy efficient and free from serious hazards | Proactively work with government on improving fire safety of residential buildings | Fire safety of residential buildings reviewed AFRS protocol updated Programmed inspection of prioritised HMOs planned by the annual review | December 2023 December 2022 March 2023 | Head of Private Sector Housing |
| | Prepare for expansion of domestic retrofit through development of a Retrofit Strategy | Domestic Retrofit Strategy approved (working sub-regionally) | January 2023 | Head of Private Sector Housing |
| | Develop an Affordable Warmth Delivery Plan to help alleviate fuel poverty | Affordable Warmth Delivery Plan approved | August 2022 | Improvement and Adaptation Team Manager |
| | Encourage and support Housing Associations to improve the energy efficiency of their stock in North Somerset | Increased number of affordable homes meeting at least EPC Level C | March 2027 | Head of Private Sector Housing |



North Somerset Housing Strategy 2022-2027

Priority: Enable our residents and partner agencies to make best use of current homes where appropriate, including bringing empty homes into use

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) | |
|---|--|--|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| Homes that are well-used and that effectively meet the requirements of those in housing need | Proactively work to bring long-term empty properties back into use, by the provision of advice, enforcement, and information | Number of empty properties reduced by at least 10 per year, with this target reviewed annually | March 2027 (10 homes annually) | Improvement and Adaptation Team Manager | |
| | | Empty property work reviewed, and opportunities investigated | March 2024 | | |
| | | Community impact of long-term empty properties minimised | March 2027 | | |
| | Continue to fund incentives to encourage social housing tenants under-occupying to move to a more suitable sized home and enable larger properties to be available | 12 downsizing placements created per year, with target reviewed annually | 12 downsizing placements created per year, with target reviewed annually | March 2023 (pending future funding to 2027) | Housing Solutions Service Manager |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Evaluate our new housing register application system – Jigsaw – to ensure quality and consistency of application approvals and bandings | | Sample of case reviews completed on a six-weekly basis to coincide with staff 1:1s | Ongoing to March 2027 | Housing Assessment Team Manager | |
| | | Relevant reports reviewed on a quarterly basis to assess quality | Ongoing to March 2027 | | |



Aim – Provide solutions and support to those in housing need

Priority: Ensure housing options are clear and that housing pathways for those in need are accessible

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| Ease of access to information and choice about housing and support available | Continue to provide housing options advice and relevant referrals for a variety of housing and support needs | Website and printed communications are updated to provide relevant and accessible information to both tenants and landlords | March 2023 | Senior Project Officer – Projects and Lettings Team |
| | | Annual reviews conducted to assess accessibility and quality of information via all available media and develop as required | Ongoing to March 2027 | Housing Assessment Team Manager |
| | Review our housing register allocation policy regularly to ensure it meets all legislative changes and applicants understand eligibility and banding criteria. | Ongoing legislation and guidance reviews conducted, with annual policy reports provided to the Service Lead | Ongoing to March 2027 | Housing Assessment Team Manager |
| | | Allocation Policy up to date with all relevant legislation after each review. Clear communication of changes to applicants and partner providers after each review | March 2023, then ongoing to March 2027 | |
| | Train Homeless Prevention Officers and Assistants to refer residents to West of England Works courses | Officers trained and referring where suitable to pilot courses | March 2023 | Homeless Prevention Service Team Manager |
| | | Outcomes recorded by West of England Works and monitored annually. Specific targets devised based on first year attendance | Ongoing to March 2027 | |

North Somerset Housing Strategy 2022-2027

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|--------------|---|
| Ease of access to information and choice about housing and support available | Achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation | North Somerset Council accredited | March 2025 | Domestic Abuse Coordinator DAHA Lead Projects and Lettings Team Manager |

Priority: Address the causes of, and continue to prevent, homelessness and rough sleeping

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|---|--|--|-----------------------|--|
| A reduction in homelessness and rough sleeping where households in need are supported by a range of initiatives to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies | Effective use of Homeless Prevention Funding | Reduction in homelessness by increase in prevention work | Ongoing to March 2027 | Homeless Prevention Service Team Manager |
| | | Tenancy courses aimed at people who are at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness piloted | March 2023 | Projects and Lettings Team Manager |
| | | Homeless prevention requirements for DAHA accreditation, ensuring that best practice is adopted in the help and support we provide to victims/survivors of Domestic Abuse, implemented | March 2025 | |
| | | Partnership work with our Job Centre Plus partners strengthened by providing some information and advice about the homeless service and a basic overview of housing and homelessness law | December 2022 | |

North Somerset Housing Strategy 2022-2027

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) | |
|---|---|---|-----------------------|--|--|
| A reduction in homelessness and rough sleeping where households in need are supported by a range of initiatives to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies | Implement initiatives of new DLUHC Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) Funding (2022-2025) | All initiatives in place, and targets reviewed annually | Ongoing to March 2025 | Rough Sleeper Coordinator | |
| | Work in partnership to meet objectives in our Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy | Reduction in rough sleeping to below 3 at each annual count | Ongoing to March 2025 | Rough Sleeper Coordinator YMCA Street2Settled partners | |
| | Strengthen multi-agency approach to engage and support those rough sleeping with complex needs into accommodation | Refresh charter and vision principles of Street2Settled partnership | | July 2022 | Rough Sleeper Coordinator |
| | | Maintain the Street Communities Partnership until the end of RSI project | | Ongoing to March 2025 | |
| | | Maintain ad-hoc multi-agency meetings for complex needs clients until at least the end of RSI project | | Ongoing to March 2025 | |
| | Target funding incentives to those at risk of losing their home due to financial difficulties | 5% increase in those financially assisted and/or given support to remain in their own home | | March 2027 | Homeless Prevention Service Team Manager Projects and Lettings Team Manager |
| | Target tenancy support to prevent homelessness and assist with access to welfare services | 5% increase in tenancy sustainment as a direct result of intervention via tenancy support, with a review of this target undertaken for the following year | | March 2024 | Projects and Lettings Team Manager |

North Somerset Housing Strategy 2022-2027

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---------------------------|
| A reduction in homelessness and rough sleeping where households in need are supported by a range of initiatives to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies | Progress Housing First and Housing Led models of accommodation for those rough sleeping | Increase in accommodation options, with targets established Maintain joint working groups with Alliance and Curo until at least the end of RSI project | March 2023 Ongoing to March 2025 | Rough Sleeper Coordinator |

Priority: Identify and meet the individual housing needs of our more vulnerable residents

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| A better understanding of needs to enable access to accommodation, and provision of support to meet particular housing needs | Complete Older People's Housing Needs Assessment | Assessment completed and used to inform planning of new accommodation, (e.g. extra care) and housing options | August 2022 | Principle Planning Policy Officer |
| | Update Joint Strategic Needs Assessment | Live document is kept up-to-date and used to inform better planning for services and support across a variety of client groups | Ongoing to March 2027 as data is regularly refreshed | Head of Insights, Policy & Partnership |
| | Evaluate the new Supported Housing Register module on our Jigsaw IT system | System is efficient and cases demonstrate quality and consistency in decisions made Review of system reports undertaken on a quarterly basis | Ongoing to March 2027 Ongoing to March 2027 | Housing Assessment Team Manager |
| | Keep Gypsy & Traveller needs information up to date | Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment periodically updated Adoption of Local Plan, identifying an approach to address needs | Ongoing to March 2027 December 2023 | Principle Planning Policy Officer Planning Policy Manager |

North Somerset Housing Strategy 2022-2027

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| More people able to access and sustain independent living | Deliver a long-term placements recruitment campaign for the Shared Lives scheme | 5% increase in placements from the previous year, with this target reviewed annually | Ongoing to March 2027 | Connecting Lives Manager (responsible officer to be reviewed every 6 months) |
| | Promote the Homeshare scheme | 2 Homeshare placements per year, with this target reviewed annually | Ongoing to March 2027 | Connecting Lives Manager (responsible officer to be reviewed every 6 months) |
| | Review how alternative housing options can provide additional placement opportunities e.g.: | 3 alternative housing options placements per year, with this target reviewed annually | Ongoing to March 2027 | Connecting Lives Manager (responsible officer to be reviewed every 6 months) |
| | Rent accommodation, with Connecting Lives carers providing support in that accommodation | | | |
| | Pay Short Breaks carers a retainer to be available for placements | | | |
| | Work with Housing Associations and landlords to develop an enhanced offer for those who accept tenants with complex needs or a history of tenancy failure | 20% increase on current annual positive housing outcomes following a period in supported accommodation | March 2027 | Housing Assessment Team Manager |
| Review current supported housing accommodation for vulnerable adults | Scoping and research exercise for a feasibility study delivered. Feasibility study to then inform and support future planning | March 2023 | Head of Strategic Commissioning (Adults) | |

North Somerset Housing Strategy 2022-2027

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|--|---|---|--------------------------|--|
| Those fleeing violence, abuse or needing resettlement are assisted and supported | Meet housing objectives within the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2020-23 | Objectives met and delivered using elements of the Whole Housing Approach, including: Sanctuary Scheme 2 specialist Housing IDVAs Flexible Funding pot | March 2023 | DA Coordinator DAHA Lead Project Officers Overseen by the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP) Board |
| | Continue to implement the Start to Finish project | Increase in accommodation offers to ex-offenders by 15%, with this target reviewed after 12 months Increase in identified support made available to ex-offenders by 30%, with this target reviewed after 12 months | March 2023 March 2023 | Start to Finish Project Operational Lead Overseen by the Resole Reducing Reoffending Board |
| Support available for older and disabled people to live independently | Provide support to maintain independent living by facilitating the delivery of adaptations/ move-on options in partnership with social care | Older and disabled people offer improved in line with long-term social care reform "People at the Heart of Care" (Dec 2021), with targets set by the annual review | March 2023 | Improvement and Adaptation Team Manager |
| | | Housing needs for families of disabled children are responsive and bespoke where possible | Ongoing to March 2027 | |
| | | Adoption of Local Plan with policies supporting older people's housing and residential annexes | December 2023 | Planning Policy Manager |

North Somerset Housing Strategy 2022-2027

| By 2027 We Want: | Actions and Projects | Success Measures | Delivered By | Responsible Officer(s) |
|--|--|---|--------------|------------------------------------|
| Young people and care leavers to be more easily able to transition to independent living | Investigate the feasibility of a rent guarantor for care leavers scheme | A suitable rent guarantor scheme introduced or, if indicated, an alternative way of financially supporting young people to access private rented accommodation identified | March 2024 | Contracts Commissioning Officer |
| | Explore options for purchase of a property by NSC Children's Services to house young people leaving care | Options explored and progressed if feasible | March 2024 | Contracts Commissioning Officer |
| | Improve transitions and supported housing move-on opportunities for young people | Increased numbers of young people placed in supported housing and move-on opportunities, with a target agreed | March 2023 | Contracts Commissioning Officer |
| | Develop an education programme aimed at young people to inform them about housing/homelessness and budgeting | Programme developed | March 2024 | Projects and Lettings Team Manager |





Green spaces and a walking path in Congresbury.
Photo by Alliance Homes



Appendices



| | |
|--|----|
| Appendix 1 – Local Statistical Context | 32 |
| Appendix 2 – Glossary | 39 |
| Appendix 3 – Key Achievements 2016-2021 | 45 |
| Appendix 4 – You Said, We Did | 46 |
| Appendix 5 – Related Documents | 52 |
| Appendix 6 – References | 53 |

Appendix 1 – Local Statistical Context

This appendix lays out the wider context for the **headline figures**. It is organised around our ambitions for 2027. Specific actions, projects, and targets can be found in the **Action Plan**.

Provision of a wide range of affordable housing types and tenures, including homes being built on the council's own land

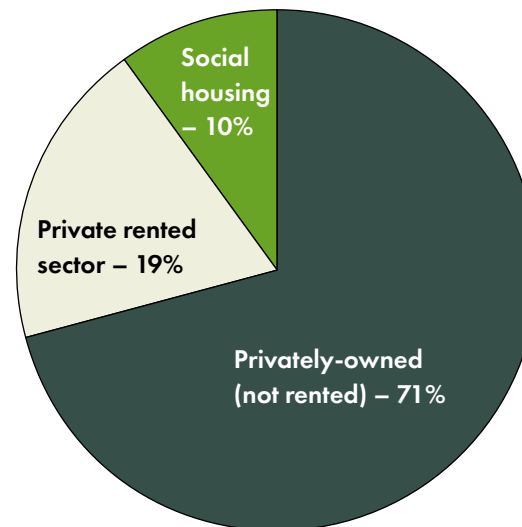
House prices in North Somerset rose by 10% between March 2020 and March 2021, leaving the average house price (£291,790) at roughly 10x average annual earnings for local full-time workers (£29,477). This gap between house prices and income is higher than the national average, where house prices are 8.6x earnings.

Those on lower earnings are disproportionately affected by these price rises. In the index of barriers to housing and services (which includes measuring the affordability of housing), North Somerset ranks 230 out of 317 (with 1 being most deprived). However, like with the general deprivation rankings, this can be misleading, as the district features several areas in the top 10% most deprived.⁴²

Social housing is one means by which residents can enjoy affordable, and long term, tenancies. Yet demand in this sector continues to outstrip supply, with social housing making up only 10% of total supply in North Somerset. This means that only those

in the highest priority bands are likely to be awarded social housing, and even they can suffer long waits of sometimes years. As of February 2022, there were 2,561 applicants on the council's HomeChoice social housing register (with 83% of these applying for 1 and 2-bed properties). Yet only around 500-600 social houses are let out on average each year. This means that for every 4 people applying for social housing, only 1 property is available.

North Somerset UA Housing Stock in 2018:



This pie chart demonstrates the division of housing stock in North Somerset in 2018. Most stock is privately owned or privately rented, with only 10% being social housing.

The limited availability of social housing and high house prices means that many residents turn to the private rented sector for a home. Yet costs in this sector are also increasing. In the 12 months leading up to October 2021, rents in the BS23 postcode area (Weston-super-Mare) rose by 8.5%, and by 13.2% in the BS20 (north of the district) area. In comparison, the South West saw an average increase in rents of 9% – which itself was the highest regional increase in the country.

For those in receipt of Housing Benefit, these increases mean they cannot make up the difference between their benefit and the rent. For example, the shortfall for a 3-bed house in BS23 is £173.72 per month and a staggering £309.52 for a 3-bed in BS20.

To address these issues, a key part of this strategy focuses on increasing the delivery of affordable housing. To achieve this, we will continue to work closely with landlords, developers, and housing associations, and make use of the council's own land, to achieve better affordable housing options for our residents.

An up-to-date planning framework for housing delivery, identifying the location, type, and scale of development required to meet future housing need in sustainable locations.

As of mid-2020, North Somerset's population was estimated to be 215,574 – an increase of just under

4,000 since the last Housing Strategy in 2016. The population is projected to rise to 232,543 by 2031.

This inevitably places a greater burden on housing supply in the district. A Local Housing Needs Assessment has been jointly prepared for the West of England which assesses the size, type and tenure of housing need in the area.⁴³ It has identified a local need of around 12,000 dwellings across the 15-year period 2023-2038.

Meeting this housing and infrastructure need in the context of tackling the climate emergency, reducing inequality, and preserving our natural landscape, will remain a constant challenge that this and other strategies and plans will address. The new North Somerset Local Plan, which is due to be published in 2023, will be the primary vehicle for delivery.

Infrastructure that supports new developments, giving communities access to the services they need e.g. schools, health services, roads, shops, jobs, green spaces

Whilst the delivery of enough housing in the district is very important, the communities living in them will not be sustainable without the right infrastructure in place. Access to services such as schools, shops, health services, and green spaces, with good transport links, are what make a community.

The emerging Local Plan and an updated Infrastructure Delivery Plan will ensure that new

developments have suitable supporting infrastructure for the communities inhabiting them.

Good quality, affordable private rented homes with a high standard of management to meet a broad range of needs and incomes

Although the majority of households are still owner-occupied, between 2001 and 2011 the percentage of North Somerset households in the private rented sector almost doubled, from 8.2% to 16.2%. By 2018, this figure had risen to 19%. The 2021 census results have not been released, but this trend is expected to continue, not least due to the effect of increased house prices detailed above.

Private rented housing is often less secure than social rented housing. 64% of residents the council prevented from becoming homeless in 2020-21 ended up being housed in the private rented sector. Furthermore, in 2018, private rented housing made up 31% of all private sector housing in Weston-super-Mare, reaching 65% in Weston town centre.⁴⁴ This means it is vital to ensure good quality management of this sector to reduce the level of inequality between different areas of the district and between different groups of people, which this strategy seeks to do.

As the sector grows, continuing to improve standards will be essential. We value the role which private landlords play in meeting housing need, and we will continue to work closely with current and new landlords to ensure the best housing standards,

conditions, and management for homes across the district. The Action Plan sets out our aims in greater detail.

Homes that are safe, energy efficient and free from serious hazards

The last housing stock survey in North Somerset was published in 2018. The council has commissioned a new survey, scheduled to report in Spring 2022. The former survey noted that 14% of private sector and 16% of private rented sector dwellings in North Somerset had category 1 health and safety hazards (the most serious rating). Furthermore, 8% of residents in North Somerset were experiencing fuel poverty.⁴⁵

Despite initiatives to improve housing conditions since the last Housing Strategy (see Appendix 3), poor housing conditions still remain, particularly in the private rented sector where tenants are disadvantaged in controlling and influencing improvements. The new stock condition survey will inform and provide a robust evidence base for targeted interventions to tackle poor conditions, as appropriate.

In increasing the quality of existing stock, we need to consider its safety, the health of its occupants, and its environmental impacts. In particular, improving the energy efficiency of existing homes to help residents keep warm and reduce fuel bills, as well as helping meet our commitment to achieve the council's 2030 net-zero target, is vital. There are inevitable costs



associated with making the necessary improvements, meaning if we want them to be made by 2030, the costs can't all be borne by landlords and homeowners. The Action Plan lays out ways in which the council seeks to help property owners meet these costs.

Homes that are well-used and effectively meet the requirements of those in housing need

In 2020, there were 599 long-term empty properties within North Somerset. With the shortage of housing stock, it is very important that existing properties are not left empty and derelict where possible. As 90% of properties in the district are privately owned, the council's role is to encourage owners to bring empty properties back into use through a mixture of advice, information, and where necessary enforcement. Some of these properties can then be provided to those in housing need.

Likewise, the under-occupation of properties can also deprive those in housing need of the right type of home. 10% of housing in the district is owned by housing associations and as mentioned above, waiting lists for social housing are long. This means it is vital to try and free up under-occupied social housing for those families in need of a larger property. The council will aim to fund incentives to encourage those under-occupying social housing to move to a more appropriately sized property.

Case Study – Marina Gardens affordable housing

The council's housing association partner, Alliance Homes, is working to deliver 127 new affordable homes in Portishead.

The Marina Gardens site was previously designed to be a 100% luxury development for retired people, but due to low demand the building has remained vacant since 2019.

Alliance intends for 100% of the properties to be affordable, with a mixture of owned, shared ownership, and rented accommodation. In consultation with the council's planning authorities, it is intended that more than half of these will be social rented (meaning the rent the tenant pays is significantly lower than normal).

The development contains a range of facilities including a café/restaurant, spa and hydro pool, gym and office/meeting space. The long-term use of these spaces is being considered to maximise local community benefit.

The benefits for North Somerset's low-income residents are huge, with local councillor, Huw James, saying:

"Portishead is an area where housing affordability is an issue for many. Alliance Homes has shown real ambition in providing a large development with 100% affordable housing right at the centre of the town – especially bringing 65 homes for social rent. This is a real win for Portishead and North Somerset."



Marina Gardens mixed tenure complex, Portishead.
Photo by Alliance Homes

Ease of access to information and choice about housing and support available

A recurring theme from our consultation was that residents often struggle to understand and access the housing options and pathways available to them. Terms such as 'social rent', 'relief duty', and even 'affordable' can seem alien and confusing. A lack of understanding around housing has knock on effects, including increasing the risk of homelessness and stopping domestic abuse victims from having the confidence to flee an abusive partner.

This means that providing clear information about housing options in council media is very important. Likewise, educating residents from an early age will be valuable to ensure that residents understand the realities and myths about housing.

A reduction in homelessness and rough sleeping where households in need are supported by a range of initiatives to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies

Homelessness and rough sleeping remain an issue the council is active in addressing. Our responsibilities were widened under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, and we have changed the way we deliver services to ensure we meet these responsibilities and provide person-centred assessments and outcomes. The reasons for homelessness and rough sleeping are varied and sometimes complex and are compounded by a lack of supply of affordable housing, low

household incomes, and issues affecting sustaining a tenancy, such as domestic abuse, mental health and substance misuse.

In the financial year 2020-21:

- 897 households were at risk of homelessness, or currently homeless.
- 665 (74%) of these were owed a prevention duty
- 323 (36%) were owed a relief duty.
- Just under 6 North Somerset households in every 1000 were threatened with homelessness.
- 3.3 in every 1000 were made homeless.

Despite our efforts, unfortunately some people end up sleeping rough on the streets. The government's Everyone In initiative and funding from the Rough Sleeping Initiative led to a steady decline in overall numbers sleeping rough from 2019.⁴⁶ However, the recent annual count held in November 2021 saw a significant increase (18), including more complex cases.

It is anticipated that with the removal of the furlough scheme, the Universal Credit £20 uplift, and the eviction ban, alongside recent increases in energy costs, the council will be faced with more households at risk of homelessness. Our services will need to respond effectively and make strong use of funding streams to aid this.

Case Study – Providing support to rough sleepers

Last winter, Peter* was sleeping in his car. He engaged with council workers and would sometimes access services. However, he was scared of the responsibilities that come with having a home, like managing bills. This meant that he repeatedly refused offers of assistance from the council.

Over many months, members of the council's Rough Sleeper Team worked hard to gain Peter's trust. Thanks to this, he allowed Citizens Advice to help him claim the benefit payments he was owed.

Later, during a period of severe weather, Peter finally felt able to accept emergency accommodation and allowed the council's Rough Sleeper Coordinator to make a housing bid for him. He was soon able to move into his own place and is now happily settled. He later thanked the Rough Sleeper Team for their hard work:

"Hope you are well. I am happy too! Attached are some pics of my new home...I want personally to thank you for your compassion, care and the way you reach your hands out. You give everybody a fair act of kindness. Unfortunately, not everybody takes that reaching hand, but if somebody does, it can change his life."

* names have been changed

The council wants to increase focus on assertive prevention work to reduce the numbers rough sleeping by stopping people ending up on the streets in the first place. This includes identifying how we can better support vulnerable households to manage their budgets, including training opportunities. We are determined to take a multi-agency approach to finding solutions to assist people into accommodation, support, and recovery. All of this is laid out in the Action Plan, and more specifically within our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (see Appendix 5 for a link).

A better understanding of needs to enable access to accommodation, and provision of support to meet particular housing needs

As North Somerset contains areas representing both the top 10% most (8 wards) and least (21 wards) deprived in the country, its residents inevitably have diverse needs. This throws up a number of housing challenges, including providing the right type of housing and services to residents. An informed approach is required, which will be driven by the completion of various needs assessments for different groups. We will also regularly review our supported housing module on HomeChoice to ensure quality and consistency in banding decisions made.

More people able to access and sustain independent living

Demand for supported housing and tenancy support is particularly high among single adult households, especially those with complex issues who find it difficult to sustain independent tenancies. 46% of applicants on HomeChoice considered themselves or a member of their household to have a mental or physical disability as of February 2022, and complex issues relating to mental health (if not actively addressed and supported) can lead to tenancy failure. Ensuring these groups can access housing, including in the private rented sector, and are suitably supported is important to avoid long waits for social housing.

The council will work to encourage landlords to rent to tenants with more complex needs and will develop existing offers (such as Shared Lives, which pairs older and younger people in accommodation) to increase the number of alternative housing placements.

Those fleeing violence, abuse or needing resettlement are assisted and supported

We continue to find and provide support as part of our refugee resettlement programme. Finding suitable accommodation can prove a challenge and we often rely on the community to come forward with homes.

Those with a history of offending, and those fleeing violence and abuse historically face difficulties in securing suitable accommodation. Pathways for ex-offenders into housing are complicated by their criminal history, and survivors of domestic abuse can face multiple hurdles when trying to access safe, secure accommodation and escape their perpetrator. The effects of these groups not accessing suitable support and housing can be fatal, meaning it is vital we do all we can to support them and their housing needs.

There has been some increased funding from central government to allow us to help these groups receive an excellent and empathetic service, find accommodation, and have support to sustain tenancies as needed. We intend to put this funding to good use, as detailed in the Action Plan and wider plans/strategies.



Case Study – Housing victims of domestic abuse

Next Link (North Somerset's main domestic abuse support service) recently worked with a woman in her 40s who was being abused by both her partner and her stepdaughter. Next Link made a safeguarding referral for the woman.

The woman had multiple physical disabilities, so she was reliant on her partner to care for her, and she could not flee the abuse without support being put in place first. The safeguarding referral was taken on by the council and a multi-agency plan was put in place to help her, involving Next Link and Alliance Housing.

Together, the teams searched for new accommodation for her whilst at the same time completing an assessment of her care requirements. This meant that when a new property was found for her, all the support around her care needs could be quickly put in place, allowing her to flee to a ready-made and suitable new home. This level of coordination to help the woman was only possible through an effective partnership between different organisations.

Support available for older and disabled people to live independently

North Somerset's population is not just growing, but also ageing (and at a faster rate than the country as a whole). The district already has an above-average proportion of residents aged 65-and-over (24.2% compared to 18.7% nationally). This is projected to rise to 26.6% by 2031 and to 27.8% by 2041.

This presents significant challenges in terms of ensuring access to appropriate housing choices, both now and in future, especially as there is currently an under-supply of extra care housing and other housing suitable for older people. Our social care teams work hard to relieve the pressures on residential care with a number of care homes closing or having difficulty recruiting staff. There is a clear need for more housing options for older households, particularly extra care, to help with such pressures. It is recognised in the recent Adult Social Care White Paper how appropriate housing options and adaptations can help people lead independent lives. Investing in housing, particularly for vulnerable people, can also affect and **avoid costs to other public services**, including health services and residential care.

Increasing the supply of new housing for older people who may have care needs or find it difficult to live in their current home will be key to meeting demand for supported living and extra care accommodation. A recently commissioned Older

People's Housing Needs Survey will inform planning for this, which will be ready by April 2022.

Another route to address the shortage is to continue to help older people live independently if it is the most suitable option. Maintaining independence in the home is vitally important for families and communities, and through the Disabled Facilities Grant programme we aid residents by providing disabled adaptations, such as stairlifts and bathing facilities. However, some homes present challenges which make adaptation a difficult means to provide an effective or sustainable solution. This means that other interventions can be a better alternative, such as the Handyvan scheme which carries out small repairs in homes at an affordable cost.

Young people and care leavers to be more easily able to transition to independent living

Young people can be disadvantaged by a lack of experience living independently and a hesitancy from landlords to let properties to them due to their age, especially if they are care leavers.

This age group can also be negatively affected by a lack of knowledge and insight into the housing sector. This means it is important to ensure there is targeted education around housing from an early age. The council recently consulted young people on the Housing Strategy and its intended aims, and the need for housing knowledge early on in someone's life was emphasised as a very important issue for respondents. Without it, young people often do not know which organisations to turn to for support, how to manage a household budget, and the different responsibilities that come with independent living.

Opportunities to specifically help care leavers gain access to housing and maintain independent living will also be sought by the council, including the possibility of a rent guarantor scheme and the opening of a new transitional home for care leavers to learn about living independently in a supported environment.



A kitchen in Marina Gardens, Portishead.
Photo by Alliance Homes

Case Study – Warmer Homes, Advice & Money

Linda* from Clevedon contacted the council through Citizens Advice. Her boiler kept breaking down and she was faced with high gas bills. She suffers from severe osteoporosis and was struggling without regular heating and hot water.

The council referred her to WHAM (Warmer Homes, Advice & Money). They sent a caseworker to visit Linda, who realised that she needed a new boiler. The cost of this (over £3500) was covered by WHAM and a grant from the energy company E.ON. The new boiler was installed and a WHAM caseworker visited to explain how to use it. A repairman from a council-funded service (AMS Electrical) also visited and repaired Linda's radiators.

Due to being on a low income, Linda was worried about the cost of her bills. so WHAM

examined her energy costs and discussed payment options with her. As a result, a direct debit was set up and a smart meter was installed, saving Linda £230 per year. She also benefited from a year of free heating repair and a Warm Home Discount, saving her a further £140.

Linda later said: **"After being put in touch with WHAM by the council regarding my heating problems, I was very impressed with the professional way it was handled. Without this financial support I don't know what I would have done. Being diagnosed with a life changing illness was awful, but the support I received was amazing. Thank you all very much."**

* names have been changed

Appendix 2 – Glossary

Affordability

How easy it is for a household to buy or rent the right housing for their needs when compared to the household's income.

Affordable Housing

A term that describes various housing types that are designed to be easier to afford than housing in the open market. This includes properties to rent and to buy (or a mix of both). See 'Social Rented' for an example.

Affordable Housing Delivery Plan

A plan which sets out the council's priorities and actions for the development of new affordable housing in the area.

Affordable Rent

Rent that is no more than 80% of the local open market rent.

Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME)

The term normally used in the UK to describe people of non-white descent.

Buy to Let

The purchase of a property specifically to rent ('let') it out. A buy to let mortgage is a mortgage specifically designed for this purpose.

Care Act 2014

An Act of Parliament which reformed the law relating to care and support for adults and to support for carers.

Climate Crisis/Climate Emergency

Terms describing the consequences of global warming and climate change and the threat this poses to the future of life on Earth.

Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

A legal power that allows the council to take land or property without the permission of the owner. It may only be used if a proposed development will benefit the public or if a home has been empty for a long period of time and the owner has no plans to bring it back into use. A legal process must be followed, which includes paying compensation to the owner.

Core Strategy

A compulsory planning document, which guides development choices and decisions in North Somerset. It forms part of the Local Plan.

Corporate Plan

Sets out the council's aims and priorities for a four-year period (the current plan is for 2020-2024).

DAHA

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance.

DAHA Accreditation

An official recognition from DAHA that an organisation which provides housing services (such as the council) delivers safe and effective interventions in domestic abuse, addresses the needs of victim/survivors, and holds abusers to account.

<https://www.dahalliance.org.uk/what-we-do/accreditation-for-housing-providers/what-is-accreditation/>

Decent Homes Standard

A technical standard introduced by the government which aimed to provide a minimum standard of housing conditions for all those in social housing. It can also be used to assess conditions in the private rented sector.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

A means-tested grant to assist people with a disability to make adaptations and improvements to their home.

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)

A discretionary and short-term amount of money that can be claimed by people already in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Element. It is designed to assist people who are affected by welfare reform with their housing costs for a limited period.

District Heating Network

A system of insulated pipes which take heat from a central source (such as a power plant, or heat recovered from industry, rivers etc.) and deliver it to buildings in the area. It is seen as one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing carbon emissions from heating.

See: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/heat-networks-overview>

Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities (DLUHC)

Formerly the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The central Government office that has overall responsibility for housing and local authorities in the UK.

Domestic Abuse

This is a broad term for various forms of abuse of intimate partners or family members. It includes violence and intimidation as well as coercive control, economic abuse, online abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

An Act of Parliament which created a statutory definition of domestic abuse and put in place rules to aid those suffering from it. These rules include an obligation for local authorities to provide survivors with suitable housing.

eConsult

Web pages on the council website on which major consultations are posted for comment.

Emergency Accommodation

Short-term accommodation for people in urgent need. This might include hostel and Bed & Breakfast type accommodation.

Equality Impact Assessment

A process designed to ensure that a policy, project, or scheme does not discriminate against people with certain characteristics, as specified in the Equality Act 2010.

Everyone In initiative

A central government initiative to ensure that people who were rough sleeping were offered accommodation during the Covid 19 pandemic.

Executive Members

Elected Councillors that are members of the Executive, which is the main decision-making body of the council, responsible for implementing its budgetary and policy framework. Each of the members also has individual responsibility for a particular grouping of council services and policies.

Extra Care Housing

A form of sheltered housing that provides additional support. An alternative to residential care for people who wish to be more independent but still need some day-to-day care.

Flexible Funding

A designated pot of money that domestic abuse support workers can access quickly and easily to enable victims/survivors to achieve safe and stable housing (for example, to pay a deposit).

Fuel Poverty

A household is said to be in fuel poverty when its members cannot keep adequately warm at a reasonable cost, based on their income.

General Needs Housing

Housing for people who do not have any additional care or support needs.

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

An assessment of the housing needs of people from the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities.

Hinckley Point C

A project to construct a new nuclear power station with two reactors in Somerset at the site of an existing nuclear power station.

HomeChoice Register

The North Somerset Council system for the assessment of housing need and the allocation of social housing. Social rented housing is openly advertised, allowing customers to 'bid' or 'register an interest' in those homes.

Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA)

An Act of Parliament which obliges Local Authorities to produce a report every two years detailing practical and cost-effective measures to save energy in homes.

Homelessness

The 1996 Housing Act states that a person is homeless if there is no accommodation that they can live in, or if they have accommodation but it is not reasonable for them to continue to live in it.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

An Act of Parliament which requires local authorities to give assistance and advice to people who approach them because they are threatened with homelessness within 56 days or because they are already homeless (a 'duty'). Local authorities have to provide a written Personal Housing Plan (PHP) to applicants who are eligible for help.

Homes England

A public body which funds new affordable housing in England. It replaced the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) in 2018.

House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)

A property occupied by more than one household who share some amenities (e.g. a kitchen and/or bathroom). HMOs must be licensed by the Local Authority to make sure that they are safe.

Housing and Planning Act 2016

An Act of Parliament designed to increase home ownership and levels of house building.

Housing Association

Not-for-profit organisations that provide housing. There are many different Housing Associations that are aimed at different housing needs. Most Housing Associations in North Somerset are part of our choice-based lettings scheme (HomeChoice).

Housing Benefit

A means-tested benefit to assist people with their rent payments. For most people, it has been replaced by Universal Credit Housing Element.

Housing Need

Refers to the housing-related requirements that households have. If a household lacks their own housing or their accommodation is unsuitable, then they have housing need.

Housing Jigsaw

An online platform which allows people to manage both homeless and social housing applications through a single customer portal.

Housing Provider

See 'Housing Association'.

Housing Register

A list of households who are waiting to be allocated social housing. See 'HomeChoice Register'.

Housing Stock Survey

A survey of existing housing, involving a visual inspection of both the inside and outside, looking at the age and condition of things like the kitchen, bathroom, windows, and doors. This is used to help the council plan future repairs and direct future investment.

Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA)

The main purpose of an IDVA is to address the safety of domestic abuse victims at high risk of harm and to secure their safety and the safety of their children in both the short, medium, and long-term. They receive specialist training and hold a nationally recognised qualification.

Index of Multiple Deprivation

An index ranking small areas of the country from 1 (most deprived) to 32,844 (least deprived). These areas are known as Lower-layer Super Output Areas and there are around 1500 residents in each.

Index of Private Housing Rental Prices (IPHRP)

The IPHRP measures the change in the costs tenants face when renting residential property from private landlords.

Integrated care systems

Partnerships between the organisations that meet health and care needs across the area. They coordinate services and plan in a way that improves population health and reduces inequalities between different groups.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

A report that Clinical Commissioning Groups and local authorities are required to produce which assesses the health and wellbeing needs of their local community. They then respond by commissioning services to meet those needs.

Learning Disability

A learning disability affects the way a person understands information and how they communicate. Around 1.5 million people in the UK have one. They can have problems understanding new or complex information, learning new skills, and coping independently.

Local Enterprise Partnership

Covering the four West of England councils. The aim is to deliver economic growth and address some challenges such as productivity, skills, housing, and transport.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA)

The amount of Housing Benefit/Universal Credit payable towards rent for privately rented properties. It depends upon the size of the household and the area where the rented property is situated.

Local Plan

The Local Plan is prepared by the council, in its role as the Local Planning Authority. It sets out a vision for future development in the area. The plan is used to help guide planning related decisions.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

See 'Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)'

Modern methods of construction

A wide term referring to both offsite manufacturing and onsite techniques that provide alternatives to traditional house building methods.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

A non-departmental body within the Department of Health. It serves both the English and Welsh NHS and publishes guidelines in four areas: the use of health technologies (such as new and existing medicines); clinical practice (appropriate treatment and care of people with specific diseases and conditions); guidance for public sector workers on health promotion; and guidance for social care services and users.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

A document which sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It was revised on 20th July 2021.

Outreach walk

A regular walk around Weston-super-Mare to count the number of people rough sleeping and offer support.

Placemaking

The design, planning and management of public spaces with the aim of promoting health, wellbeing, and a good quality of life.

Private Rented Sector

Rented property that is owned and managed by private individuals or businesses.

Private Sector

Property or finance controlled by private individuals and businesses.

Regeneration

Projects that seek to improve neighbourhoods through major enhancements to the physical environment, community development, renovation, or construction of housing and public works.

Registered Provider

See 'Housing Association'

Right to Buy

The right given to some social housing tenants to purchase their home at a discount after a minimum period of time.

Rough Sleeping Initiative

A funding programme from the government, given to local councils, charities, and organisations, to provide local support to those who are homeless and reduce numbers rough sleeping.

Sanctuary Scheme

A victim-centred initiative which aims to enable people at risk of violence to remain safely in their own homes by installing a 'Sanctuary' in the home. Examples include installing extra locks, reinforced doors, and a panic button.

Shared Ownership

Where a person buys part of the value of a house from a Housing Association and pays rent on the other part. Ownership is then shared between that person and the Housing Association.

Sheltered Housing/Accommodation

Accommodation designed for older people and people with additional needs that enables them to live independently.

Social Rented Housing

Housing in which the tenant pays a very low-cost rent (a maximum of 80% of the Local Housing Allowance). It is significantly lower than the rent paid on the normal market.

Stakeholder

Individuals or groups that are affected by the activity of an organisation. For example, local residents, domestic abuse organisations, Housing Associations etc. were all considered as stakeholders for this Housing Strategy.

Statutory Duty

See 'Homelessness Reduction Act 2017'

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

A document which sets out the planning policy for a district on a particular issue (e.g. the distribution of high-rise buildings or the proportion of affordable housing).

Supported Housing/Accommodation

The term describing housing where support and/or care is provided to tenants (such as older people with a disability, those with mental health issues etc.)

Supported Housing/Accommodation (Exempt)

When a supported housing provider meets certain criteria (e.g. they are a registered charity), they can claim money from Housing Benefit to cover the extra costs of providing supported accommodation.

Sustainable Community

A sustainable community takes into account, and addresses, multiple human needs. It includes elements of equal opportunity, civic engagement and responsibility, care for the environment, economic security and prosperity, health, and social well-being.

Sustainable Development

Where the impacts of any developments are taken into account, including transport, landscape, wildlife, energy efficiency, waste disposal, and social issues.

Temporary Accommodation

Accommodation given to people who do not have a permanent home and who are owed a 'statutory duty' by a Local Authority to stop them becoming or remaining homeless.

Universal Credit

A benefit system that is administered by the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions). It combines payments for living costs and housing costs. The benefit is claimed online and is for working-age people.

Welfare Reform

An umbrella term for a series of reforms brought in by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. There was a series of measures introduced, including Universal Credit. The measures were largely aimed at reducing the cost of welfare spending.

West of England

The region covered by four councils – Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire.

West of England Combined Authority (WECA)

Made up of three councils in the region – Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, and South Gloucestershire.

West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

A partnership of businesses, local authorities, and the voluntary sector designed to support business growth and create new jobs and infrastructure in Bristol, Bath, Weston-super-Mare, and the surrounding countryside.

Appendix 3 – Key Achievements 2016-2021

There have been a number of achievements as a result of the previous Housing Strategy. These are listed below.



Increasing the supply of homes

- Delivered 442 affordable homes since 2017.
- Brought 6 long-term empty homes back into use through low-cost loans.
- Increased the supply of new build housing in North Somerset since 2017 by 3426.
- Enabled access to 500 private rented tenancies for those in housing need since 2017.
- Developed 60 extra care accommodation units in Yatton.
- Delivered 14 new homes for veterans in Worle.

Improving homes

- Introduced Dementia Care Assistance to fund safety improvements in homes.
- Revised the Housing Renewals Assistance Policy to incorporate a Home Energy and Renewables Loan.
- Strengthened the Strategic Housing Enforcement Policy, including new legislative provisions and financial penalties.
- Developed the Warmer Homes, Advice and Money (WHAM) project to support households in fuel poverty and other debt issues.
- Implemented an area action approach to improving housing in the private rented sector, including the licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

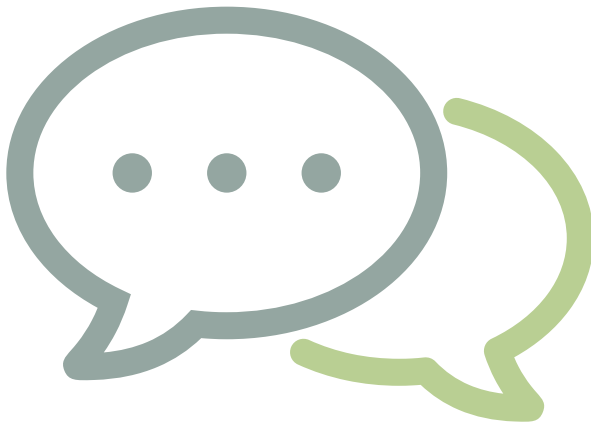
Providing housing solutions

- Implemented the new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 including developing and updating the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2024.
- Prevented homelessness for 2356 households between 2016 and 2021.
- Successfully bid for funding from the Government's Rough Sleeper Programme which enabled us to reduce rough sleeping.
- Continued to strengthen our multi-agency and partnership work with other stakeholders, including support for people experiencing domestic abuse and other vulnerable households.
- Amended our HomeChoice policy to facilitate greater access to the social housing register, particularly for vulnerable people.
- Successfully migrated the Housing Register service to a new I.T. system ('Jigsaw'), which is integrated with our Homeless Prevention module.

Appendix 4 – You Said, We Did

A nine-week consultation on our Draft Strategy began in September 2021, including a public consultation and workshops for internal and external stakeholders.

We really valued all the feedback received, which brought in new perspectives and ideas based on people's day-to-day experiences and work in housing-related matters. All suggestions were considered, and a number we have been able to include in our Action Plan. For those points we could not include, our responses are detailed below:



You said...

Delivering homes

North Somerset Council should only consider local need for delivering new housing, and not be bound by arbitrary central government requirements.

There has been a high amount of housing development in Portishead in recent years, much of it haphazard and incoherent. Yet a new development around Weston Big Wood is planned. It threatens local wildlife and increases flood risk for existing houses.

More council funding and land should be used to deliver affordable housing.

Housing in North Somerset should meet the needs of an ageing population, with health and wellbeing incorporated into design, including enough space for families to eat together.

...we did

We cannot ignore the government's calculation of minimum housing need for North Somerset, but we can test how deliverable it is and how well it addresses local requirements as we make planning and building decisions.

The Local Plan will be considering potential development locations in the Preferred Options document, which will be consulted on in the Spring of 2022. Members of the public are welcome to contribute to this consultation.

We will be exploring the possibility of setting a target % of council land to be earmarked for affordable housing and looking at revenue options to deliver this, including using a greater proportion of council capital funds.

Space and accessibility are important parts of healthy home design. All new-build homes must meet national space standards, and within North Somerset affordable homes must meet minimum space standards as detailed in the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document, which meet and often exceed the national standards. Furthermore, at least 27% of our affordable houses must be either adaptable or wheelchair accessible.

You said...

Are 'affordable' homes truly affordable for those on low incomes? Could we define affordable within North Somerset based on local earnings?

The council should insist on the provision of social rented homes in new developments and should use commuted sums to facilitate their delivery.

The council should mandate the construction of bungalows, in particular to encourage those under-occupying large homes to downsize when it is appropriate.

...we did

We are bound by national guidance on what is meant by 'affordable housing.' There is some room for local interpretation, but we do not believe this is necessary. The majority of our affordable housing provision is made up of social rented accommodation, which is well below market rent and affordable for those on low income.

For proposed sites which reach certain thresholds, we normally negotiate for the provision of 30% affordable housing. We request that 77% of these affordable homes are social rented.

When we waive the requirement for developers to provide affordable housing, commuted sums are often used to fund extra new affordable housing developments, within which we push for suitable numbers of social rented houses.

We cannot mandate the construction of bungalows by developers. We aim to construct some, but as they are very land-intensive and land is in short supply, we need to focus on higher density accommodation which is more sustainable and can be built to be accessible.



New build homes on Kestrel Road, Sandford.
Photo by Alliance Homes

You said...

Careful consideration ought to be given to where new affordable homes are located. They should not be put in one large cluster separate from other housing tenures.

North Somerset Council currently doesn't define 'vacant', meaning developers can take advantage of vacant building credits to avoid building affordable properties.

Housing Associations do not always feel they can repurpose existing stock (such as residential care homes), even if underused, due to a potential backlash and a worry that they will not have council support.

Improving Existing Stock

The large numbers of HMOs/bed-sits in Weston town centre do not make the area look aesthetically pleasing and lead to pockets of deprivation.

District heating networks should be built to improve neighbourhood energy efficiency.

...we did

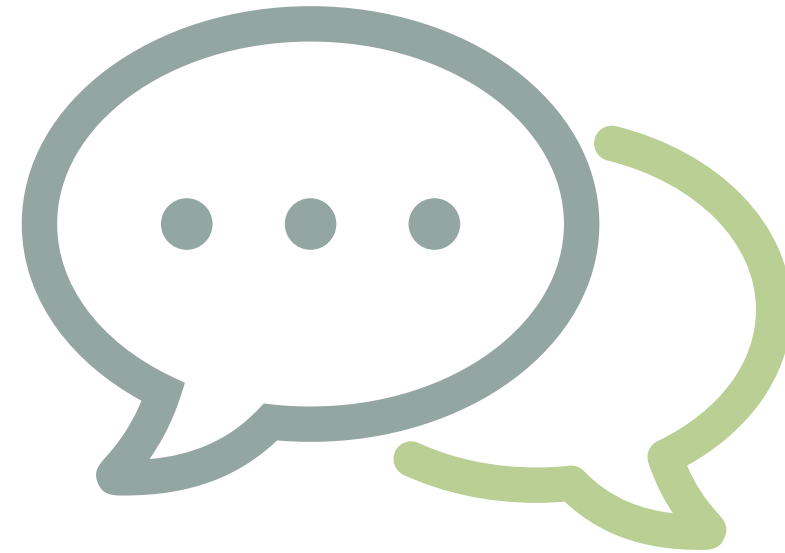
We try to limit the number of affordable housing units that are grouped together in new developments when possible. However, we do take into consideration the opinion of Housing Associations, who prefer clusters of the same tenure for management purposes. To seamlessly integrate affordable housing into new developments, we also require that all affordable housing looks indistinguishable from market housing.

The revised Vacant Building Credits policy will be included in a new Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This SPD will be issued once the emerging Local Plan has been adopted in 2023.

The council is happy to have open discussions with Housing Associations if they feel some stock would suit being repurposed. We are also happy to support this repurposing if it is deemed acceptable and a suitable alternative accommodation type has been agreed.

The existing Local Plan has a policy restricting residential subdivision in parts of Weston town centre, which will be reviewed in the new Local Plan. However, it is difficult to completely control the development of HMOs in planning terms.

We will review the potential for district heating networks.



You said...

...we did

Solutions and Support

The council should make a concerted effort to target and reduce the inequality gap.

As a local authority, we are not in the best position to stop social inequality. However, the council's corporate vision prioritises fairness and equality of opportunity, and we actively try to mitigate the negative effects of social inequality. Measures include but are not limited to: incentivising landlords to let at an affordable rent, giving financial assistance to those in need, and helping people to find affordable accommodation whenever possible.

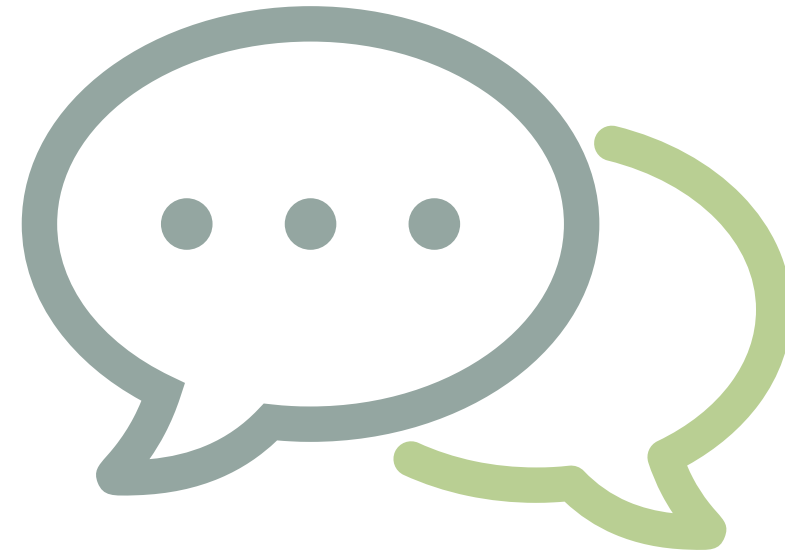
Work practices should focus on a restorative approach to anti-social behaviour, instead of focussing on evictions.

A multi-agency approach is taken to deal with anti-social behaviour. Alliance Homes work with the council's Community Safety Team and Resole West (a conflict resolution and mediation service) to try and resolve issues without resorting to litigation.

There can be lengthy waits for re-housing and/or home adaptations due to Occupational Therapy Service delays. This can impact on both the disabled person and their carers.

The council's Single Point of Access service aims to prioritise all requests from those receiving healthcare services in their homes. To tackle the home assessment waiting list, Adult Social Care has recently increased Occupational Therapy's staff capacity.

We aim to improve the experiencing of rehousing and adaptations for older people by providing a quality advice service in collaboration with local partners.



You said...

Regulations around the provision of supported exempt accommodation are not effectively enforced. Certain individuals claim the extra funding from Housing Benefit for providing supported housing, but then do not provide the support they should and take advantage of vulnerable people as a result. Little is done to stop this abuse.

Residents with housing needs should be offered support that is based around their strengths and offering opportunities for employment and training

...we did

There have been incidents of abuse of the funding system for providers of supported exempt accommodation. Locally, most cases like this are stopped before they receive funding following checks from our Housing Benefit service.

The council legally cannot intervene as we are not technically contracted with the accommodation providers.

The Government has now published a statement of expectations for supported exempt accommodation, but the council is not resourced to regulate or enforce standards in a non-commissioned provision. The Government has however started to test approaches to improve quality and oversight in supported housing.

We have recently expanded our support assessment forms for clients seeking a homelessness duty to include a wider range of information, helping us to find out more about them and use information to help clients sustain their tenancies and move into training or employment.

Alliance Homes works to empower all their clients who seek support. The aim is to help them manage their circumstances independently by taking a holistic approach and exploring personal strengths and assets. They also refer clients to employment specialists when needed.



A mix of social rented and shared ownership properties on Scarf Drive, Weston-super-Mare. Photo by Alliance Homes

You said...

There should be longer timescales for accessing homelessness assistance when you have special needs, and schedules should be less strict.

What is the provision of housing by the authority for refugees?

Will the council consider a transit site for gypsies and travellers in North Somerset? There are currently none and they would help to facilitate the moving on of illegal encampments.

The focus on active travel means that wheelchair users may be discriminated against, if they need to use their own car.

...we did

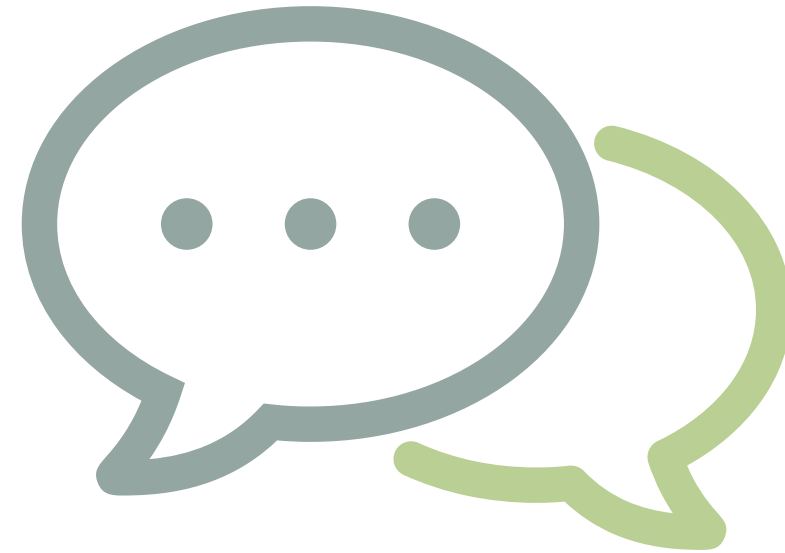
The council is obliged to seek suitable housing for those who are banded as 'priority need' in homelessness applications. Any timescales for homelessness duties are set by central government, and the local authority abides by them. With a high demand for housing and limited supply, if an applicant rejects an offer of suitable housing, the local authority cannot afford to continue helping them at the expense of others.

Local housing for refugees is provided by a mixture of landlords willing to let their properties at the Local Housing Allowance rate, and Housing Associations. There is currently enough provision to satisfy demand.

We are currently awaiting the results of a needs assessment for the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) communities. The results of this will identify whether any additional provision is required for them.

The council always aims to consider disadvantaged groups in its policies. All strategies and plans must complete an Equalities Impact Assessment, which considers the impact of policies on different groups, and how any negative effects can be mitigated. This will apply to any plans regarding active travel encouragement and infrastructure.

Planning for new developments, including housing and accompanying infrastructure, should consider the needs of all the community, including disabled residents.



Appendix 5 – Related Documents

Listed to the right are a number of strategies, plans, and policies which are related to or have informed the contents of the Housing Strategy and Action Plan. Some of the documents are not available publicly, and so links have not been provided. To access a copy, please contact the telephone number listed on the back page of this strategy.

Accessible Housing Needs Assessment Supplementary Planning Document (adopted 2018)

Adult Social Care Transformation Plan

Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (adopted 2013)

Affordable Housing Threshold and Vacant Building Credit Policy (2016)

Climate Emergency Strategy 2019

Core Strategy (adopted 2017)

Corporate Plan 2020-2024

Development Management Policies (adopted July 2016)

Development Strategy (adopted Feb 2021)

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Domestic Abuse Strategy 2020-2023

Economic Development & Regeneration Strategy

Employment and Skills Strategy

Green Infrastructure Strategy

HomeChoice Lettings & Assessments Policy

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Housing Enforcement Policy

Housing Renewal Assistance Policy

Housing Stock Survey (conducted 2017)

Housing with Support Strategy 2017-2027

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2024

Joint Housing Protocol, Guidance and Support Offer for Young People (October 2021)

Local Plan 2038: Challenges for the future (2020)

Local Plan 2038: Choices for the future (2020)

North Somerset's Offer for our Care Leavers

Preventing Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024

Site Allocations Plan 2006-2026 (updated 2018)

West of England Local Housing Needs Assessment (September 2021)

Appendix 6 – References

- 1 **Tackling the under-supply of housing in England** – House of Commons Library (parliament.uk)
- 2 **Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 3 **Heat and Buildings Strategy** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 4 **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** – GOV.UK (legislation.gov.uk)
- 5 **The rough sleeping strategy** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 6 **Apply for affordable housing funding** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 7 **Autumn Statement (Executive Summary)**
- 8 **Tenant Fees Act** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 9 **Decent Homes Standard: review** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 10 **Electrical safety standards in the private rented sector: guidance for landlords, tenants and local authorities** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 11 **Planning for the Future** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 12 **House in multiple occupation licence** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 13 **COVID-19 and renting: guidance for landlords, tenants and local authorities** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 14 **Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance and support** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 15 **Extra covid protections for rough sleepers and renters** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 16 **Domestic Abuse Act 2021: overarching factsheet** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 17 **Regulation of Private Renting** – DLUHC (NAO)
- 18 **People at the Heart of Care** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 19 **2011 Census** – (ons.gov.uk)
- 20 **ONS Household Projections** – (ons.gov.uk)
- 21 **ONS mid-year population estimates** – (ons.gov.uk)
- 22 **ONS population projections** – (ons.gov.uk)
- 23 **ONS population projections** – (ons.gov.uk)
- 24 **ONS projected ageing 2018-2042** – (ons.gov.uk)
- 25 **English Indices of Deprivation 2019** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 26 **HomeTrack Q3 rental market report** (hometrack.com)
- 27 Internally commissioned HomeTrack Rental Market Report for BS23 and BS20 (October 2021)
- 28 **ONS gross annual pay (provisional) by LA, 2021** – (ons.gov.uk)
- 29 **25 ONS gross annual pay (provisional) by LA, 2021** – (ons.gov.uk)
- 30 **House of Commons Library: Local Authority Housing Supply** (commonslibrary.parliament.uk)
- 31 **BRE Housing Stock Model Report (2018)**
- 32 HomeChoice North Somerset internal data
- 33 HomeTruths internal report (October 2021)
- 34 **BRE Housing Stock Model Report (2018)**
- 35 **Sub-regional fuel poverty data 2019** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 36 **Statutory homelessness in England tables** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 37 **Live tables on homelessness: local authority level tables 2020-21** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 38 **Live tables on homelessness: local authority level tables 2020-21** – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 39 HomeChoice North Somerset internal data
- 40 HomeChoice North Somerset internal data

North Somerset Housing Strategy 2022-2027

- 41 **North Somerset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment data dashboard**
- 42 **English Indices of Deprivation 2019 – GOV.UK** (www.gov.uk)
- 43 **West of England Combined Authority Housing Needs Assessment (Sept 2021) –** (westofengland-ca.gov.uk)
- 44 **BRE Housing Stock Model Report (2018)**
- 45 **BRE Housing Stock Model Report (2018)**
- 46 North Somerset Council: Internal Rough Sleeper Report 2021 Q2

This publication is available in large print, Braille or audio formats on request.
Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English.
For all enquiries please contact 01934 426 456

