



**Development of a Housing Strategy for the
period 2022 -2027**

Consultation on Challenges & Options

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Consultation on Housing Challenges and Options to Meet Them

North Somerset's Housing Strategy 2022 – 2027

Development of a new Housing Strategy

Our current Housing Strategy 2016 – 2021 is now due to be fully renewed and we are beginning the process of developing a new strategy to take us to 2027.

We have achieved a great deal over the last five years (see section further down), however, there is still work to be done as many of our challenges remain the same. We now need to consider the impact of the climate emergency and the delivery of services post Covid as well as the wider implications for the economy, health & social care on our communities.

This is the start of the process where we ask your help to identify the challenges and what we, along with our partners need to do to address them. Your feedback will inform the key elements of our final strategy and that document will include a section on 'you said, we did.'

Why we have a housing strategy

The Housing Strategy is the over-arching strategic document and action plan that pulls together all aspects of the council's strategic housing function. It sits below and aligns with the our Corporate Plan (the council's wider objectives). There are many plans and strategies that underpin our Housing Strategy, for example, Local Plan (future delivery and planning of housing), Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, Private Sector Delivery Plan to name a few.

The final document of the new strategy will include sections on:

- Local, regional and national context
- Vision & Strategic Aims
- Performance, Monitoring
- Consultation (You Said, We Did)
- Action Plan
- Glossary.

The final strategy will be published in the Spring of 2022 and be reviewed annually.

Our current strategy 2016 – 2021 can be found here: <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/housing%20strategy%202016-21.pdf>

Key facts and figures:

North Somerset is a unitary authority that borders the city and county of Bristol and the local government areas of Bath and North East Somerset, Mendip, and Sedgemoor. Weston-Super-Mare is the seat of the Council and by far the largest town. As a unitary Authority, North Somerset came into being from 1st April 1996 (having previously been known as the Woodspring district of Avon County).

Much of the authority is rural with small towns and villages, and large areas are designated as either Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), or flood zones.

- **It is estimated by the Office of National Statistics that there has been a 9.8% increase in the number of households in North Somerset between 2011 and 2021, from 88,227 to 96,844**

- The median house price in 2020 was £266,000. This represents 9.47 x the median earnings for a full-time worker in North Somerset, Property ownership is less affordable now than in 2011, when the ratio was 7.1 x median earnings.
- There are 2700 waiting on the HomeChoice register, with approximately 140 new applications every month. Around 600 HomeChoice properties become available each year
- North Somerset has a higher than average population aged over 65 (24% of the total population, compared to 18.4% nationally)
- Overall, in the 2019 English Indices of Deprivation, North Somerset ranked as the 221st most deprived district out of 317 districts measured.¹ In the index of barriers to housing and services, which forms part of the overall index, the district ranked 230th.

Achievements

- ✓ Implemented the new duties under the Homeless Reduction Act 2017
- ✓ Delivered 442 affordable homes since 2017²
- ✓ Successfully bid and won significant funding from the various Rough Sleeper Programme
- ✓ Our Homeless Prevention Team won a staff award for 'putting the Customer First'
- ✓ Developed and updated the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 - 2024
- ✓ Continued to strengthen our multi-agency work with other stakeholders, including helping people experiencing Domestic Abuse, Street Communities, reducing Anti-Social Behaviour and assisting people who have experienced mental health issues and helping offenders to settle back into the community through a multi agency partnership
- ✓ Launched the Street2Settled Partnership to strengthen our work to assist people who are rough sleeping and to focus on prevention of homelessness
- ✓ Amended our HomeChoice policy to facilitate greater access to the social housing register, particularly for vulnerable people
- ✓ The Housing Register service successfully migrated to a new IT system 'Jigsaw', that is integrated with our Homeless prevention Jigsaw module
- ✓ Have prevented homelessness for 2356 households between 2016 and 2021
- ✓ Shared Lives has become an option for providing homes and support for vulnerable people
- ✓ Introduced Dementia Care Assistance to fund safety improvements in the home
- ✓ Revised the Housing Renewals Assistance Policy to incorporate a Home Energy and Renewables Loan
- ✓ Implemented the expanded mandatory HMO licensing regime
- ✓ Renewed the Rent with Confidence scheme with enhanced relationship with National Landlords Code of Excellence
- ✓ Strengthened the Strategic [Housing Enforcement Policy](#) including new legislative provisions, financial penalties
- ✓ Developed the [Warm Homes, Advice and Money \(WHAM\) project](#) to support households in fuel poverty and other debt issues
- ✓ Revised the [ECOflex statement of intent](#) to target fuel poor households and provide access to funding
- ✓ Successfully bid for funding under government [Green Homes Grant scheme](#)

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

² [Live tables on affordable housing supply - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- ✓ Responded to the government [external wall system survey](#) and complied with ministerial direction under Housing Act to provide information as a result of the Grenfell Tower tragedy
- ✓ Implemented the fit & proper checks for residential caravan sites
- ✓ Brought long term empty homes back into use through low cost loans
- ✓ Area action approach to improve housing conditions in the private rented sector.
- ✓ Unauthorised camping policy reviewed and operational response enhanced

Our vision and aims for the new Strategy

Our vision

‘The delivery of a broad range of homes to meet our growing need, with an emphasis on quality and affordability’

Our current aims are:

- Increasing the supply of homes (this includes making best use of existing stock)
- Improving Homes (standards/adaptions in the private sector for both rented and owner-occupied homes)
- Providing Housing Solutions (homelessness & RS, options for vulnerable households, access to social housing)

For the new Strategy we propose:

- Increasing the supply of homes (increasing supply including sufficient affordable schemes to meet housing need) that are delivered in sustainable and connected communities
- Improving and making best use of existing homes (including standards/adaptions in rented and owner-occupied homes, under-occupation in the social sector)
- Providing housing options, prevention and support (homelessness & Rough Sleeping, support and accommodation options for vulnerable households, access to social housing)

All of the above will have climate change, post Covid recovery, health & well-being and economic opportunities at the heart of actions.

Challenges and Options/Actions Identified

Increasing the supply of homes

Challenges:

Housing growth and meeting need

- Lack of supply of affordable homes in all sectors

- Planning for the future so that the right housing is available as the needs of residents change
- Urgent need for one and two bed homes as there are more single occupancy households due to and increase in older residents and young people needing housing
- Particular lack of supply in social rented affordable homes of the right size, location and for specific clients eg complex needs
- Delays to completions of new builds due to pandemic and increase in construction costs
- Attracting sufficient funding and inward investment
- Identifying suitable sites. This includes brownfield sites which can be expensive to develop, due to decontamination costs etc
- Getting Local Agreement and buy in for new developments
- National planning policy – First Homes meaning less affordable rented
- Design and quality – climate emergency & future proofing considerations

Options/Actions:

- Continue to work with [local, regional and national partners](#) and maximise funding opportunities to deliver a broad range of new homes that meet the needs of individual locations, with an emphasis on sustainability, Public Health impacts and affordability.
- Submit a '[Levelling Up bid](#)' for Weston-super-Mare
- Support developers by ensuring that our planning processes are clear and giving guidance and advice where needed
- Continue to work with Registered Providers (Housing Associations) to increase the number of affordable homes available and ensure that 30% of new build properties are affordable
- Continue to work with [Private landlords](#) to increase the number of available affordable homes.
- Work with house builders to embed modern and innovative methods of construction into their development plans where this can assist in achieving increased supply of sustainable homes, whilst working with the industry to address skills gaps in our workforce.
- Ensure that provision of Supported and Extra Care housing is made available as an integral part of thriving neighbourhoods
- Progress a joint bid to enable a 'housing led' model (providing a tenancy that includes a tailored support package), to be adopted for entrenched/repeat rough sleepers, as part of the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme for 2021/22
- Invest to improve neighbourhoods, deliver a joined-up [transport and highways network](#), focusing on safety, [active travel](#) and creating thriving communities.

Improving & Making Best Use of Existing Stock

Challenges:

- To raise standards in the Private Rented Sector
- Address Energy efficiency in older properties to help tackle fuel poverty

- Government policies on moving to greener forms of energy and the costs of retrofitting to landlords and homeowners and maintenance of properties for low income households
- The under occupation of larger properties and empty properties
- Adapting properties to meet need so that people can remain independent in their homes for as long as possible
- Safety concerns of some external wall systems and their impact upon the housing market
- Flooding – risks of flooding in some areas and the financial and well-being costs to affected householders

Options/Actions:

- Support landlords and homeowners to invest in the maintenance and improvement of their properties and assisting with access to credit facilities where appropriate. This includes help to improve insulation and fuel efficiency for private rented properties
- Incentivise and support landlords to bring empty properties back into use
- Offer [competitive incentives and a good support service](#) to landlords who have property available at an affordable rent
- Target Rogue landlords by using statutory powers to end illegal practice
- Undertake targeted local housing surveys in the condition of our housing stock
- Address Climate Change by Identifying opportunities for partnership work with the [Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy](#), the [South West Energy Hub](#) and local community groups to access funds targeted at energy efficiency.
- Respond to the cladding challenge by supporting remedial work programmes and ensure the new [legislative requirements](#) are met
- Work with Public Health to improve housing standards for residents and tackle health issues associated with poor housing.
- Continue to [administer grants and loans](#) that will help people stay in their own home longer and support incentives and opportunities to promote alternative housing where this will best meet individuals needs.

Housing Options, Prevention & Support

Challenges:

- Increasing rents in the Private Sector and the insecure nature of Private rented tenancies
- Continued impacts from Welfare Reform, including Local Housing Allowance rates, the benefit cap and the removal of the spare room subsidy (bedroom tax)
- Lack of suitable accommodation to meet specific needs and support requirements, especially for people who are leaving hospital or residential care
- Emergency Accommodation does not always meet the needs of the people who require it
- Residential care homes have been negatively impacted by the pandemic, reducing the number of people wishing to move into residential care alongside an increase in costs to the sector
- Likely increase in evictions following the lifting of restrictions post- covid
- Economic and health impacts of the pandemic may see an increase in unemployment and people unable to work due to sickness

Options/Actions

- Continue to provide a good quality homeless prevention service and work in partnership to meet the objectives within our [Homeless & Rough Sleeping Strategy](#)
- Make effective use of funding streams to prevent homelessness and access accommodation
- Keep our [HomeChoice allocation policy](#) responsive to need and legislative changes
- Address pressure from repossessions on availability of temporary accommodation with providers
- Provide tenancy support to those in need to sustain tenancies and assist with access to welfare services
- Work in partnership to deliver the objectives set out in the [Housing with Support Strategy 2017-2027](#).
- Continue to work with Children's Services to deliver the right help to vulnerable families and young people at the right time in the right place, including dedicated housing support and advice for 16 and 17 year olds and a designated resource as part of our [offer for our Care Leavers](#).
- Keep an up-to-date assessment of our local need for and supply of specialist housing including gypsy and travel provision
- Integrate housing and healthcare solutions to improve pathways into housing for people leaving hospital or care, and introduce a housing support service within our mental health services
- Deliver on our statutory obligations as laid out in the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)
- Build on the success of our shared lives initiative