



# Housing Strategy 2025



# FOREWORD

Having listened to our partners, stakeholders, groups and users we are pleased to introduce North Devon Council's Housing Strategy, heavily influenced by the **Devon Housing Commission Report July 2024** championed by Lord Best. The strategy sets out the Council's priorities for housing over the next five years but with an acceptance that this document needs to be agile so it can respond to change and opportunities that may present themselves over the lifetime of the document. It sets out how we will bring our vision to life, and we are delighted we have been part of its development.

We know that homes that are secure, warm, and decent can result in a better quality of life for its occupants. We want this for all our residents because well-designed, sustainable, good housing can improve our physical and mental health; as well as our financial well-being, which ultimately helps us feel safe and secure.

Healthy homes can help support thriving communities and reduce the negative impact on our environment. The delivery of new or upgrading of existing housing can give children the best start in their young lives and help residents access education, skills, and employment. In turn, this will hopefully keep a greater number of our young people within the area, developing their skills and building our economy.

National and local housing shortages have created enormous challenges for our residents. North Devon has become a popular place for people to move and retire to, some of our working-age residents are struggling to afford to live here as house prices rise, and homes are increasingly being used as second homes or holiday accommodation. Our most vulnerable residents find it exceptionally difficult to find and maintain suitable homes. We support them to work their way through their housing journey so they can access suitable and sustainable accommodation.

Our approach to housing benefits, council tax reduction and property purchasing supports our Housing Strategy. We work hard to help residents stay in suitable accommodation, or provide temporary accommodation where needed, with the ultimate aim of housing people in suitable sustainable homes. Furthermore, our empty homes strategy is designed to restore the housing supply and we also work in private sector housing to make the existing supply fit for purpose.

We know the importance of working with our partners, to continue to bring forward new supply or improve the condition and health of existing homes. Together with our partners in the social housing sector, private rented sector, and voluntary organisations, we strive to make a positive difference to the lives of people in our district.



**Cllr David Clayton**  
Leader of the Council



**Cllr Graham Bell**  
Lead Member for Housing



# STRATEGIC CONTEXT

There is a national and local focus on housing issues. Nationally, the Government elected in 2024 has stated that its focus will be on delivering more housing, an ambition that is going to be reflected in national planning policy. North Devon Council recognises that the local housing market is failing to deliver sufficient numbers of appropriate housing including insufficient levels of affordable housing and a reduced supply of homes to rent, due to increased pressures and regulations imposed on landlords and the short term holiday let market. This insufficiency of supply has caused house prices and rents to increase substantially, resulting in more people being unable to afford a home and more people being made homeless.

National planning policy is likely to impose substantially increased targets for housing delivery on the authority when we have traditionally struggled to maintain an adequate supply of new buildings.

All of the Devon authorities came together and commissioned the University of Exeter to hold a Devon Housing Commission led by Lord Best, to examine the local housing market and to make recommendations. That report, and the recommendations made within it, have influenced this strategy and many of the recommendations made by the Commission are contained within the document.

## HOUSING STRATEGY PURPOSE

The purpose of this strategy is to guide future actions in relation to housing matters and also to tie in with and influence other strategies such as the Council's Commercialisation Strategy and its Asset Management Plan. It will also influence the new North Devon and Torridge Local Plan that both councils will be working on shortly.

Part of the North Devon area is within the Exmoor National Park, so this strategy should also influence policies relating to housing delivery and housing standards which are adopted by the Exmoor National Park Authority.



# The Council's Vision

*"North Devon will be a sustainable, inclusive community; fostering prosperity and well-being for all."*

We have an overarching Corporate Plan and this strategy supports the delivery of the priorities in our Corporate Plan by setting out an overall housing objective.

## Our overall housing objective:

*"We will strategically plan and deliver housing provision to try to meet local needs. We will tackle the widening imbalance between supply and demand and increase the availability of decent, affordable and accessible accommodation for residents in need."*

**Our Housing Strategy aligns with a suite of key strategies and priorities to ensure it effectively addresses the housing needs of the community.** These are set out and linked in Appendix A. By aligning with these strategies, a housing strategy can effectively address the diverse needs of the community and contribute to the overall development and well-being of the district.

These elements provide a combined message that North Devon Council wishes to ensure we deliver excellent services. We will work with our partners who share our ambition and values and continue to put the best interests of North Devon residents at the heart of everything we do.

## Our CORPORATE PLAN HOUSING PRIORITY has the following actions:

- To ensure a diverse council property portfolio that assists in meeting the objective
- To support community driven housing initiatives
- To increase the availability of council owned or managed temporary accommodation
- Review existing assets in order to maximise opportunities to provide housing
- Provide support for community led housing schemes including Community Land Trusts to create housing options in rural and coastal areas
- Explore alternative delivery methods in order to deliver and/or manage properties
- Increase the supply of housing and the proportion of affordable housing
- Endeavour to cater for all housing needs
- Decrease the number of properties that provide unsatisfactory standards of accommodation with a particular focus on Ilfracombe
- Aim to reduce the number of customers on Devon Home Choice social housing register.





# AFFORDABLE HOUSING\*

FOR RENT:  
**Social Rent**

(lowest, most needed)

**Intermediate/Affordable Rent**

(in North Devon this is capped at Local Housing Allowance rates)

PART BUY/PART RENT:

**Shared Ownership**

TO BUY:

**Discounted Market Sale**

\*Many types of affordable housing are available and these are set out in Appendix E. Please note that in the past, the terms **social housing** or **council housing** were used. Nowadays, people tend to use the term “**affordable housing**” to cover everything. This is because most council housing stock was transferred nationally over to Housing Associations and the range of affordable housing products now available has increased. In legislation the term social housing specifically refers to Social Rent.

This housing strategy is built on the foundation of 3 themes:

## 1: PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

*Preventing homelessness by supporting our citizens to stay in their current home if they have one, but if this isn't possible/or they are already homeless seek to help them find alternative solutions.*

## 2: PROVIDE NEW HOUSING SUPPLY

*Supply new housing to meet social demand, delivering affordable and sustainable healthy homes wherever possible.*

## 3: MAKE HOMES HEALTHY

*Improving the quality of existing homes making them safe and healthy, in turn making their occupants healthy too.*

*These 3 themes are North Devon Council's direct response to the housing crisis, supported by recommendations from the **Devon Housing Commission Report (DHCR)**, and our proposed actions to those recommendations.*

### DHCR Recommendation

DHCR recommends that District Councils and Torbay Council take advantage of the new opportunity to double council tax on second homes and that the extra money for local authorities is ear-marked for addressing housing challenges across Devon (see 2.7 of the main report).

### Our Response

NDC has already gained approval and changed our policy to enable this collection to take place from April 2025. The additional receipts will be ring-fenced to be spent on housing issues. The DHCR also recommended that Devon County Council utilise a significant proportion of receipts from second homes council tax to help meet the county's housing and infrastructure needs (see 2.8 of the main report).

# 1: PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

We are in a recognised National, Regional and Local Housing Crisis. Homelessness is a social and political issue. It happens because there are not enough good quality, truly affordable homes available for people on the lowest incomes.

The reasons for homelessness include poverty, systemic inequality and discrimination, and incomes that are failing to keep up with rapidly rising rents and the cost of living. All those social issues put immense pressure on people, which can push them into homelessness. External pressures such as demand for holiday accommodation also contribute to the issue of homelessness.

Life events can also be a source of considerable strain. This could be job loss, domestic abuse in the home or a relationship breakdown. Physical and mental health conditions and substance misuse can also be both a cause and a result of housing insecurity and homelessness. Some of us face additional pressures because of who we are.

**SOURCE: Crisis 2024**

**Homelessness is a reality for 300,000 people nationally every night; this includes both those on the street with no physical roof, those in temporary accommodation (TA) and “sofa surfing”.** In the North Devon District we have, on average, between 75-85 households in TA each night. There are over 2,000\* active housing register applications that demonstrate a housing need (captured on Devon Home Choice). Only a small percentage of those applicants are successful each year in securing a home via the housing register due to the limited supply.

Alongside this, there are on average 40 people that we are aware of each night who have no fixed abode, which may result in rough sleeping. We believe this number will be much higher but for a multitude of reasons our residents don't wish to be identified, such as those sofa surfing, homeless at home, ie: living with family or living in vans and other types of unsuitable living accommodation (although it should be recognised for some this is a positive life choice).

*\*There are over 1,500 households on Devon Home Choice our Housing Register Band A to D. Band E equates to the additional 500 numbers.*

## What have we done so far:

- We have purchased a small number of properties for temporary accommodation to reduce the need to house residents in expensive and unsuitable B&B and hotels for that purpose
- We have 8 pods and a further 8 bed spaces of temporary accommodation across 2 houses in partnership with Freedom Community Alliance
- Worked with landlords and tenants to achieve and sustain long-term tenancies
- Made discretionary housing payments to help those with a short-term shortfall in housing
- Benefit/Universal Credit housing element; plus provided rent in advance and deposits
- Worked with landlords within the private sector of housing to bring their properties back into use or up to decent standards, using notices where necessary to ensure compliance
- A range of supporting interventions such as disabled facility grants, repair grants/loans and energy efficient grants, working to keep residents in their homes and make them healthy
- Supported government asylum programmes such as Homes for Ukraine and the Afghanistan Resettlement Schemes.

## What more can we do - future actions:

- 1. North Devon Council will buy additional good quality general needs temporary accommodation (TA).*
- 2. We will also increase the number and type of accommodation to house our rough sleepers (RS) if they have a local connection to our North Devon area.*
- 3. We will continue to support central government with their asylum programmes, such as the Homes for Ukraine and the Afghanistan Resettlement Schemes, as long as these are place based and come with sufficient financial support.*

In addition, the Devon Housing Commission Report (DHCR) sets out a number of recommendations which, if adopted by government, would give NDC greater opportunities to improve the landscape of both, (a) the prevention of homelessness and (b) the housing available for those who become homeless within North Devon.

### DHCR Recommendation

Government to consistently update the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) so they cover rents for the 30% cheapest private sector properties; and redefines the broad Rental Market Areas covered by LHA at a level that better reflects local rental markets (see 5.2 of the main report).

*\*Issue: Current LHA rates in North Devon need to be raised by an average of £120 per month to achieve this.*

### Our Response

By increasing the housing allowance, it would further strengthen our work with landlords and tenants to achieve long term, affordable tenancies. We need to lobby Government.

### DHCR Recommendation

Government to align the temporary accommodation subsidy paid to local authorities with the current LHA rate (currently 90% of 2011 rate) and tie it in perpetuity (see 5.3 of the report).

### Our Response

It will reduce NDC temporary accommodation annual costs which we could in turn invest in additional, more appropriate TA.



## DHCR Recommendation

Government replenishes and expands its Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) for the acquisition and modernisation of existing properties and applies it flexibly to benefit households of all kinds in need of TA (see 5.5 of the report).

## Our Response

It would continue to increase our TA own stock plus giving us an opportunity to modernise existing properties within the private sector.

In addition to the Devon Housing Commission Report, the District Councils Network (DCN) Prospectus July 2024 for transforming local places echoes the recommendations above – “Prevent homelessness through critical support, tenancy sustainment initiatives, and innovative temporary accommodation and affordable housing models”.

The **Renters Rights Bill** makes provision to change the law about rented homes, including abolishing fixed term assured tenancies and assured short-hold tenancies; imposing obligations on landlords and others in relation to rented homes and temporary and supported accommodation. Specific examples are:

- (1) Abolish Section 21 “no fault evictions” removing the threat of arbitrary evictions and increasing tenant security and stability. New clear and expanded possession grounds will be introduced so landlords can reclaim their properties when they need to.**
- (2) Strengthening tenants rights and protections for example we will empower tenants to challenge rent increases designed to force them out by the backdoor and introduce new laws to end the practice of rental bidding wars by landlords and letting agents.**
- (3) Making it illegal for landlords to discriminate against tenants in receipt of benefits or with children when choosing to let their property, so no family is discriminated against and denied a home when they need it.**
- (4) Supporting quicker, cheaper resolution when there are disputes – preventing them escalating to costly court proceedings with a new ombudsman service for the private rented sector that will provide fair, impartial and binding resolution, to both landlords and tenants and reducing the need to go to court.**

## Overarching Risk

This does in turn create the risk that more landlords may decide to sell their properties or flip to holiday accommodation or we don't see a refresh of new landlords.

## Our Response

These new rights will further support those in existing tenancies who require tenancy support, as well as work with Landlords to ensure tenants new rights are understood and complied with. This will give landlords and agents re-assurance that we remain in contact for issues that do arise.



## 2: PROVIDE NEW HOUSING SUPPLY

The affordability and availability of housing has worsened significantly over the last 20 years, making it harder for people to get the housing they need.

Data published in March 2023 shows that in 2002, the median salary in England was £20,739 and the median house price was £102,000. This equated to an affordability ratio of **4.92**. In 2022, the median salary was £33,208 and the median house price was £275,000. This means that the affordability ratio in 2022 was **8.28**. However, this ratio is significantly higher in many of our rural or coastal areas.

In the Q2 of 2024, the lowest number of permissions for residential units since 2014 were granted nationally (National Builders Federation Housing Pipeline Report).

The Planning Portal Market Index indicates that as at July 2024 over 1.2 million homes given permission since 2015 had not yet been built.

**SOURCE: GOV.UK, Planning Portal, National Housing Federation**

**As with homelessness, the lack of affordable housing is a national, regional and local issue.** The new Government in July 2024 announced their aim for 1.5 million new homes to be delivered within the next 5 years. The National Housing Federation has called for this to include a “significant increase in the supply of social and affordable housing”.

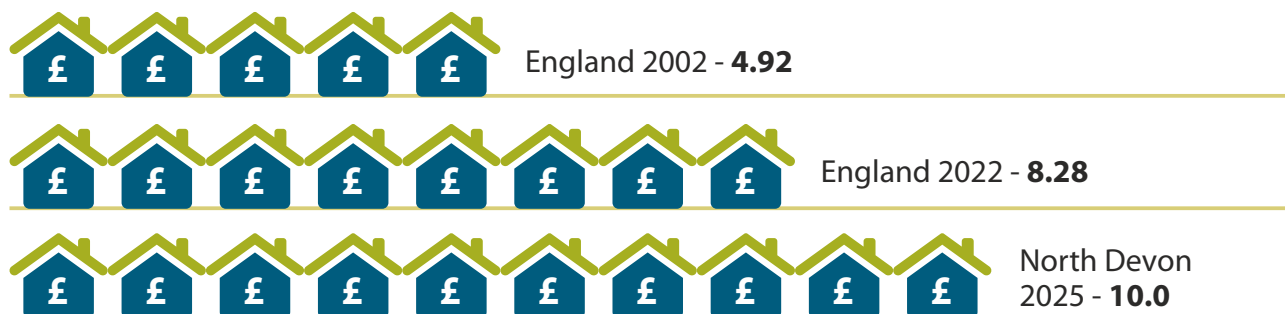
The National Planning Policy Framework Section 5: Supplying a Sufficient Number of Homes – sets out their alignment to government objectives to support this.

The District Councils Network “Closer to Communities” recommends the acceleration of the delivery of these new homes and to “boost the supply of social and affordable housing through stronger local planning policies, smart use of government grants and proactively identifying development opportunities”.

## We are acutely aware of the lack of affordable and social housing, and these are some of the reasons:

- Again, the LHA rate in North Devon needs to increase by £120 per month to cover the 30% cheapest rent available locally for the household bedroom requirement
- For a single income household, with an average salary of £30,680 and no pension contributions, take home salary is £2,134 per month. If renting a 2 bedroom property this requires 36% of their monthly take home salary purely for rent; and if renting a 3 bedroom property this will take the figure to 44%. The probability of someone facing housing stress (ie: being or having been behind in their rent or struggling to meet rent payments) increases if they pay over 25% of their gross income on housing. They then still have council tax, utility bills, food and other expenses. See Appendix A for a breakdown of rental prices
- There are 2215 households on the social housing register in North Devon in housing need
- 251 properties (including those moving to another property) were let through Devon Home Choice in 2023/24 equating to 11% of the whole housing register being housed each year
- Above we quoted the national ratio. The affordability ratio in North Devon between median salary and median house price is now 10, which is higher than the national average and makes purchasing a property for many totally unachievable
- We've seen an increase in single person approaches, where it is exceptionally difficult to find suitable accommodation due to the lack of supply and affordability of one bed properties
- Second homes continue to be a problem for North Devon with 4% of all properties in this category, however in some coastal locations this percentage is as high as 50% when holiday rental properties are also factored in.

### Affordability ratios - median salary and house prices



### What we have done so far:

- Have a dedicated Housing Enabling Officer to build and maintain regular contact with social housing providers and other partners. To be the main point of contact for affordable housing providers and for advice to planners and other parties on affordable housing issues
- Support so far as possible those towns and parishes who have expressed a wish to set up a Community Land Trust (CLT). Plus bid to the Combined County Authority to financially support the next tranche of pipeline projects
- Input over £2m into Community Led Housing plus officer time
- Clarified that affordable housing is an absolute priority for NDC, and this shouldn't be the first casualty when challenging those figures through viability assessments
- Have delivered over 100 affordable homes in past two financial years 2022 – 2024
- Developed our own land to deliver 180 homes including 30% affordable
- Incorporated housing elements into town centre regeneration projects
- Utilised Housing Infrastructure Fund monies to bring forward housing
- Supported neighbourhood plans in particular areas
- Worked to bring forward infrastructure to free up strategic housing sites.



## **What more can we do - future actions:**

- 1. In addition to the temporary accommodation and rough sleeper accommodation noted in theme 1, we will also consider becoming a registered provider of social housing that will be allocated through Devon Home Choice.*
- 2. We will use our own land assets if viable to increase supply and consider other partnership initiatives.*
- 3. The next iteration of the Local Plan will carry out a Housing Needs Assessment, which will be complemented by supporting local evidence; the plan could also strengthen the self-build opportunities and revision to policies to further increase housing. To note this will also be heavily driven by the significantly increased housing targets.*
- 4. We will amalgamate financial funds we hold (commuted sums and financial off-site contributions) from planning permissions to be consolidated and used for community led affordable housing schemes.*

The Devon Housing Commission Report gives a number of recommendations to local authorities relating to new housing supply.

### **DHCR Recommendation**

That local planning authorities are consistent and insistent on planning requirements being reflected in the price paid by developers for and rather than “viability” being used as grounds for negotiating reductions in developer contributions (specifically for affordable housing, which should be non-negotiable) after consent is granted (see section 1.4 of the report).

### **Our Response**

We provide robust and independent challenge where viability arguments are raised and we prioritise affordable housing and affordable housing contributions above other infrastructure requirements when the viability of a scheme shows that not all planning requirements will be delivered.

### **DHCR Recommendation**

As well as trying to increase the number of social rented homes being delivered, local authorities should also explore ways that the planning system can be used to shape the type of housing that is delivered – eg: in size and price range – so that local need is prioritised over open market demand (see section 1.6 of the report).

### **Our Response**

Our current local plan sets out the required housing mix which is based on local housing need. We endeavour to deliver that mix on schemes approved under the planning system. Where a rural exception site is being delivered, up to date evidence on the local housing need will be required.

### **DHCR Recommendation**

Local authorities access their land assets and consider making some assets available for social rented provision by social housing providers, including CLT's (see 2.4 of the report).

### **Our Response**

We have donated land to allow a CLT scheme to come forward and have worked with a local RP to pool land to deliver affordable housing. We will continue to explore options to extend our land ownership in order to deliver housing and will continue to explore options for its land, utilising expertise in the property, housing, planning and planning policy teams.

### **DHCR Recommendation**

Local Authorities should encourage the inclusion of CLT's in the provision of affordable housing on allocated housing sites and allow a local lettings policy to apply in such circumstances (see 2.5 of the report).

### **Our Response**

We do encourage this and will work with partners such as Homes England to explore options for removing the current blockages.

### **DHCR Recommendation**

Councils should make maximum use of the Rural Exception Sites model and demonstrate flexibility in enabling village schemes for local people, including by sometimes permitting a small minority of homes to be sold in return for a very modest land cost for the affordable housing (see 2.1 of the report).

### **Our Response**

North Devon Council does encourage rural exception site schemes where appropriate. A Robust rural exception site policy requires the maintenance of a 5 year housing land supply which is not easy to maintain.

### 3: MAKE HOMES HEALTHY

There are 3.5 million households in England living in a home that fails to meet the “Decent Homes Standard”. 2.3 million households are living in a home with at least one category 1 hazard and 935,000 households are living in a home with damp problems.

Households in the private rented sector are more likely to live in poor quality housing than social renting and owner occupied households.

There is a strong relationship between energy efficiency and housing quality, and over half of homes with poor energy efficiency do not meet the Decent Homes Standard.

**SOURCE: GOV.UK**

**The English Housing Survey (EHS) estimated that in 2021, 23% of the homes in the private rented sector (PRS) did not meet the “Decent Homes Standard” – around 1 million homes.** This compares with 13% of owner-occupied and 10% of social-rented homes. PRS homes are also more likely to have at least one category 1 hazard under the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). An inquiry by the Public Accounts Committee in 2022 concluded “the sector is failing far too often to provide safe and secure homes for renters”.

There is a close connection between poor housing and health resulting in respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, as well as mental health issues.

As nearly 20% of all households rely on the PRS for their housing, we work hard to tackle the issue but it must also be recognised that increasing the obligations on landlords makes the private rental sector less attractive to them which can result in a decrease in the market.

#### **What have we done so far:**

- Working up a project on the feasibility of selective licensing
- Supported a range of energy efficiency grants and loans to support the 15.6% of household in North Devon who are living in fuel poverty
- Have a disabled facilities grant programme, which over two years has enabled more than 450 households to stay in their homes
- Have an Empty Homes Strategy to encourage owners to bring those properties back into use for sale or rent
- Used our legislative powers to target individual properties
- Have a programme to inspect houses in multiple occupation on a risk-based approach
- React to reports of housing in poor condition and inspect
- Work with Government on a Healthy Homes Programme to monitor interventions.



## What more can we do - future actions:

- 1. We will strengthen our offer to owners of empty homes enabling them to bring these back into use to a decent standard and work with the owners to support local housing need.*
- 2. We will consider reducing the number of units in houses of multiple occupation or bed spaces in any properties we purchase or hold, to see an improvement in standards to create healthy homes.*
- 3. We will use all of our regulatory tools such as inspections, licensing, either mandatory or selective and use our enforcement powers to see positive improvements to place and properties.*

### DHCR Recommendation

That Devon's local authorities strengthen support for the "Devon Carbon Plan" alongside other public bodies in the county, to accelerate retrofit programmes (see 6.1 of the report).

### Our Response

As mentioned previously, the Renters Rights Bill is being launched into Parliament in Autumn 2024 and this contains further provisions intended to improve the quality of housing including:

- Applying a Decent Home Standard to the private rented sector to ensure homes are safe, secure and hazard free – tackling the blight of poor-quality homes
- Applying "Awaab's Law" to the sector setting clear legal expectations about the timeframes within which landlords in the private rented sector must make homes safe where they contain serious hazards
- Creating a digital private rented sector database to bring together key information for landlords, tenants and councils. Tenants will be able to access information to inform choices when entering new tenancies. Landlords will be able to quickly understand their obligations and demonstrate compliance, providing certainty for tenants and landlords alike. Councils will be able to use the database to target enforcement where it is needed most
- Strengthening local councils enforcement powers – new investigatory powers will make it easier for councils to identify and fine unscrupulous landlords and drive bad actors out of the sector
- We have approval to look into the feasibility of introducing "selective licensing".

# APPENDIX A

## Strategies and plans that support the Housing Strategy

Strategy	How the strategies support each other
<b>JOINT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN</b>	Aligning with the council's Local Development Plan ensures that housing development is coordinated with land use planning, infrastructure and environmental considerations and will assist in ensuring that the Local Development Plan helps to deliver the aims within the strategy, along with sustainable strategies.
<b>TEN YEAR CAPITAL STRATEGY</b>	Aligning all of our key strategies and plans to make sure they are affordable and sustainable over the long-term.
<b>ECONOMIC STRATEGY</b>	The delivery of new housing strategies should support local economic growth by providing affordable and suitable housing for the workforce, which can attract and retain businesses.
<b>HEALTH &amp; WELLBEING STRATEGY</b>	Integrating housing with health and social care strategies can improve residents quality of life, particularly for vulnerable populations.
<b>CLIMATE, ENVIRONMENT &amp; BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY (CEB)</b>	CEB sets out our environmental plan. It is crucial that new housing developments are environmentally sustainable and resilient to climate change. This includes energy-efficient buildings and sustainable construction practices.
<b>HOMELESSNESS &amp; ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY</b>	Addressing homelessness through targeted interventions and support services is essential for a comprehensive housing strategy.
<b>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY</b>	Engaging with local communities to understand their needs and preferences can help tailor housing strategies to better serve the residents of North Devon.
<b>PARTNERSHIPS &amp; COLLABORATION</b>	Working with housing associations, private developers, Community Land Trusts and other stakeholders can enhance the delivery and management of housing projects.
<b>NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS</b>	These, where adopted, will assist with delivery of objectives in this strategy. Georgeham and Braunton adopted at the time of this release.
<b>COMMERCIALISATION STRATEGY</b>	Ensuring the Council is maximising opportunities that are revenue positive and looking for social value proposals that bring collective benefit to a community.
<b>ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY</b>	Continually reviewing our assets to ensure we are obtaining best value from land and buildings that we own together with any potential new assets we may acquire.
<b>GYPSY &amp; TRAVELLER COMMUNITY</b>	Working with key stakeholders to deliver on the housing needs of this section of our local community.

# APPENDIX B

## UK Housing Market Summary & North Devon's Baseline Position

Issues	Context and what we're doing to resolve the issues
<b>HOUSEHOLDS</b>	The number of households nationally, is projected to increase by 16.2% to 27m by 2043.
<b>POPULATION</b>	The latest census has again proven we have an increasing ageing population currently standing at 99,435 as of mid-2021.
<b>COST OF LIVING CRISIS</b>	Significant market increase in house and rental prices, coupled with high inflation (with a slight decrease in August 2023). High interest rates to 5.25% the highest level in 15 years, resulting in increased mortgage costs and also high credit card and loan repayments. For developers and RPs borrowing costs have reached 7.5%. Savers will benefit. The energy price cap has also helped reduce inflation.
<b>DISABLED RESIDENTS</b>	With the ageing population noted above, more adaptations are required to enable our residents to remain in their homes. <b>Better Care Fund (BCF):</b> Year on year we have drawn down from the BCF. Last year we spent £1.3m of our fund to deliver 301 mandatory and discretionary grants.
<b>ENERGY EFFICIENCY</b>	Energy efficiency measures can reduce fuel bills and conserve heat, giving you a warmer home. You might be able to get help with your energy costs or to make your home more energy efficient. Grants and loans are available for homeowner-occupiers, landlords and tenants for insulation works and heating installations through a variety of schemes.
<b>EMPTY HOMES</b>	1.2% of our homes in the district are empty. <b>Empty Homes Strategy:</b> To support the repair, improvement, adaptation or conversion of empty properties to bring them back into use as homes by: reducing the number of long term empty homes; increase the housing supply and tackle empty property nuisance issues. <b>Lendology:</b> Has the objective of increasing the supply of housing (either for sale or rent) and improving housing standards through commercial conversion loan, empty home loan or home owner loan.
<b>HIGH HOUSE PRICES AFFORDABILITY</b>	House prices have grown by 45% across the UK since 2008. Since 1997, housing affordability has worsened overall, with the England and Wales average affordability ratio moving from around 3.5 to 9.1 (mean house prices are 9.1 times the national average wage). Average house price in 2019 £241k in 2023 £334k up 38.4%. ONS UK HPI measures show that North Devon was in the top 10 worst affected areas in the UK and 2nd in England. The average house price In North Devon was £312,000 in May 2024 (provisional), up 2.6% from May 2023. This was higher than the rise in the South West (2.3%) over the same period.



<b>FIRST TIME BUYERS</b>	<p>The average price paid by first-time buyers was £248,000 in May 2024 (provisional). This was 2.9% higher than the average of £241,000 in May 2023 (revised). It is cited that only 1 in 8 people will be able to afford to buy in the area in which they live as first time buyers.</p>
<b>NATIONAL PICTURE</b>	<p>The national private rented sector has grown to around 20% of the country's total stock, at just under five million privately rented dwellings in England 2021. For homes bought with a mortgage, the average house price was £303,000 in May 2024 (provisional). This was 3.1% higher than the average of £294,000 in May 2023 (revised).</p>
<b>NORTH DEVON RENTAL PRICES</b>	<p>Based on current "local housing allowances" you will see that these are just unaffordable for those people on housing benefits/universal credit. The LHA should cover the rent for the 30% cheapest private rented sector properties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared houses - £550 - £650 (LHA 425.01)</li> <li>• 1 Bed Barnstaple £545 - £615 (LHA £485.02)</li> <li>• 1 Bed Ilfracombe £425 - £650 (This is the only rent that meets the 30% criteria noted above)</li> <li>• 1 Bed South Molton no 1 beds</li> <li>• 2 Bed Barnstaple £750 - £895 (LHA £645.01)</li> <li>• 2 Bed Ilfracombe £675 - £850</li> <li>• 3 South Molton £725 - £850</li> <li>• 3 Bed Barnstaple £800 - £1100 (LHA £775.02)</li> <li>• 3 Bed Ilfracombe £900 - £1000</li> </ul> <p>On average the LHA would need to increase by £120pm in North Devon to reach achieve 30% of the cheapest private rented sector properties.</p>
<b>HOMELESSNESS</b>	<p>Nationally, almost 80,000 households faced homelessness between January and March 2023, the highest figure on record. On 31 March 2023, 104,510 households were found to be living in temporary accommodation, up 10% from 12 months previously and again the highest figure on record. Significant reduction in available rented housing plus cost of living crisis resulting in increased homeless presentations.</p> <p>In July 2023 we were offered an additional £169k of a Top Up and Prevention Grant to help encourage landlords to provide 12 month tenancies to prevent homelessness.</p> <p>The Council have purchased a small number of homes to break that cycle of paying for B&amp;B or hotel accommodation. By having our own accommodation allows us to manage that supply and also apply housing benefit to the time those properties are occupied. In 2023 the Council approved an additional £2m to purchase a further supply. The Local Authority Housing Fund Round 1 delivered 9 units of temporary accommodation; and in August 2024 Round 3 delivered another 4 new units of accommodation.</p>

<b>HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPANCY (HMOs)</b>	We have an estimated 1,100 HMOs. High rental yields for Landlords but precariously housed customers in poor quality and/or expensive accommodation. We have the ability to licence HMOs to improve the quality and safety of homes for people living in the private rented sector. We have made an exceptional “ask” to the Government’s Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (August 2023) for £12m to disrupt the housing market with an initial focus on Ilfracombe, where there is an acute issue.
<b>HOUSING, HEALTH &amp; SAFETY RATING SYSTEM</b>	Category 1 hazards are those where the most serious harm outcome is identified, for example, death, permanent paralysis, permanent loss of consciousness, loss of a limb or serious fractures.
<b>INSUFFICIENT AFFORDABLE HOMES</b>	Only 10% of North Devon dwellings are affordable vs 16.6% nationally. A total lack for those who live in the district and those coming here to work in our key areas. Constant planning viability challenges reduce the number of affordable housing. We have a small number of homes being built via “Community Led Housing Schemes” supported by Homes England with more in the pipeline.
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	Employment in North Devon has decreased compared with the previous year. North Devon’s employment rate was lower than across the South West as a whole in the year ending December 2023. This equates to 225 of people aged 16 to 64 economically inactive.
<b>NORTH DEVON AVERAGE EARNINGS</b>	<p>Average earnings per week for all full time workers = £590pw @ £15.82 per hour. Average annual salary for full time workers £30,680 (x10 times their salary to be able to purchase an average house). Average earnings per week for all employed £317 per week (Male = £434; Female = £251). Average annual salary for all employed £16,484 (x19 times their salary to be able to purchase an average house).</p> <p>“Gross disposable household income” per year £2,011 or £38.67 per week (2021): The amount of money that all individuals in the household sector have available for spending or saving after they have paid direct and indirect taxes and received any benefits. GDHI is a concept seen to reflect the “material welfare” of the household sector.</p>
<b>INWARD MIGRATION</b>	37% inward migration equating to 5,000 people occupying approx 2000 houses – taken from GP registers.
<b>WORKING HOMELESS</b>	Significant increase in working homeless who are unable to secure accommodation.

<b>KEY WORKER HOUSING</b>	Although we struggle to absolutely define this sector, we know that our hospitals, schools and county partners have identified the shortage of affordable housing for certain bandings of staff is an issue, impacting on recruitment and retention. Could part of the open market housing set out in the Joint Local Plan (similar to Agricultural Dwellings) be explored?
<b>LOW WAGES</b>	Mean annual earnings in 2020/21 was under £29,000. Ratio = 12.
<b>POOR CONDITIONS</b>	20% of dwellings in the private sector have a category 1 hazard. There are too many poor quality private rented sector properties housing people with chaotic lifestyles. Use existing enforcement tools, such a selective and additional licensing.
<b>REFUGEES</b>	Developed a Homes for Ukraine Scheme which suffered very few host/guest breakdowns. We have secured £2m of capital funding. Secured £1.6m from the Local Authority Housing Fund to secure housing for asylum seekers in the short-term with the ability to a morph these into temporary accommodation when not in use. Worked with the Ministry of Defence to deliver Afghanistan interpreter accommodation at Chivenor within units being occupied in September 2023.
<b>ROUGH SLEEPERS</b>	Successful in our Rough Sleeper Initiative Round 5 submission but as of August 2024, we do not know that the next round of funding will be forthcoming. We await advice from MHCLG.
<b>RURAL AREAS</b>	Demand for social homes in rural areas is growing at over 10 times the rate of that in towns and cities (National Housing Federation).
<b>COASTAL AREAS</b>	Where is the housing in these communities going to come from?
<b>SECOND HOMES</b>	Increasing number of second homes and self-catering units.



## APPENDIX C

**The Devon Housing Commission also make recommendations to Government, two of which are reproduced below but all of which will have positive impacts on the local housing market if adopted and implemented.**

### **DHCR Recommendation**

A commitment to funding an increased Affordable Housing Programme (AHP) through Homes England, with an emphasis on social rented housing, when the current AHP ends in 2026.

### **DHCR Recommendation**

Requirement for payment for additional external planning consultants for major applications, adequate resourcing and advice for LAs, and impose a stricter timetable for action when planning consent is granted but development has stalled.

## APPENDIX D

**THIS OVERARCHING STRATEGY IS UNDERPINNED BY THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS:**

**Private Sector Renewal Strategy**  
**Homelessness Prevention Policy**  
**Empty Homes Strategy**  
**Energy Efficiency Policy**  
**Affordable Housing Supply**  
**Private Sector Renewal Strategy**  
**Licencing and Compliance of Park Homes Sites**  
**Fees Policy of Licencing of Park Homes Sites**  
**Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

# APPENDIX E – DEFINITIONS

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

National planning policy (NPPF Annex 2) and the Affordable Housing Written Ministerial Statement dated 24th May 2021 (both detailed in Appendix 1 “National Planning Policy Framework” definition of affordable housing, including updates made through the Written Ministerial Statement 24.05.21), provide the scope of what Government determines to be affordable housing. The following expanded description of affordable housing is provided to ensure affordable housing or “products” are genuinely affordable for local communities in northern Devon and best focused to meet need.

### Social Rent

Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers, for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime

### Intermediate Rent or Affordable Rent

Nationally (NPPF), affordable housing for rent must:

- a.** be set in accordance with the government’s rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent; or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); and
- b.** be provided by a landlord that is a registered provider.

However, in North Devon (and Torridge) both the Intermediate Rent and Affordable Rent (grant funded units) are capped at Local Housing Allowance rates (applicable to the dwelling’s postcode and house size) unless it is shown that 80% of the Open Market Rent of the property is lower.

### Discounted Market Sale

Affordable Housing for sale where 100% of the equity is to be sold at the Initial Sale Price or Discounted Price (as applicable) in perpetuity

### Shared Ownership

Affordable Housing where an Eligible Purchaser can buy a share in a property up to a maximum of 100% (80% in Designated Protected Areas) and pays a rent to the freehold owner in proportion to the share of the equity retained by that owner pursuant to a lease based on the appropriate form of Shared Ownership Lease.

### Housing Need

To supplement the NPPF definition, in North Devon and Torridge the term “housing need” is taken to mean:

Homeless or threatened with homelessness or living in accommodation, which in the opinion of the relevant Council is insecure or unsuitable (this may be on the grounds of cost, overcrowding, unfitness or lack of basic amenities or because of a person’s infirmity, physical disability, mental disability, or specific social or care needs).

AND

Being unable to purchase or rent suitable accommodation at open market values in the respective area, taking into account the household’s income, capital and other financial circumstances.