



Dorset  
Council

Dorset Council  
Housing Strategy  
January 2024 – January 2029

Our vision is to ensure our residents have access to affordable, suitable, secure homes where they can live well as part of sustainable and thriving communities.

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## Foreword

I am pleased to introduce Dorset Council's Housing Strategy. This sets out our priorities for housing over the next five years. It shows how we intend to bring our vision to life, and I am delighted to have been part of its development.

We know that homes that are safe, warm, and suitable can result in a better quality of life. We want this for all our residents because good housing can improve our health and financial well-being to help us feel safe and secure. It can help support thriving communities and reduce the impact on our environment. Housing can give children the best start in life and help us access education, skills, and employment.

National and local housing shortages have created challenges for our residents. Although Dorset 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.

Our most vulnerable residents also find it difficult to find suitable homes. We work hard to support them when they face barriers. Without this extra support, people in crisis or with extra needs, spend more time in unsuitable accommodation.

Working with partner agencies we can improve access to good housing in our area. This Housing Strategy aims to identify and enable solutions to tackle these challenges.

I would like to say thank you to all those across our Council teams who do so much for our residents. Together with our partners in the social housing sector, private rented sector, and voluntary organisations, they are making a positive difference to the lives of people in Dorset. This strategy aims to support them to continue to do so.

*Cllr Graham Carr-Jones, Lead Member for Housing*

# 1 Introduction

*Our vision is to ensure our residents have access to affordable, suitable, secure homes where they can live well as part of sustainable and thriving communities.*

The following strategy sets out our priorities and approach we will take as a Local Authority and working with partners to meet local housing needs and objectives. Dorset Council has statutory duties relating to housing, which will be referred to in this document. It also has a key role in encouraging, supporting, and enabling partners and other organisations to deliver good and effective housing solutions.

The Strategy is broad and recognises the fact that good housing is essential for a good life, and enables people, families, and communities to thrive. This Strategy is an important guide to what we will do as a bold and ambitious Housing Authority but also in laying down our objectives for others such as registered providers of social housing and developers to deliver and setting the tone for this to be done well for Dorset residents. The Housing Strategy is not the Local Plan, and it does not set out planning policies.

It provides:

- a framework to guide us and our partners in tackling housing issues facing our area.
- a clear strategy set in local, regional, and national context.

This strategy is for up to five years, but it is a living document, which supports effective delivery of housing outcomes over that period. This means that plans will be applied or adapted to meet national or local policies as needed and stay relevant and effective to local needs. We will set out delivery plans to make sure that objectives are achieved and kept under review where improvements or adaptations are introduced.

This strategy was developed with the community, organisations and residents who contributed to our public consultation and elected councillors who were involved in individual and group discussions and webinars. It was also developed with assistance from Dorset Council's housing services, adult social care, children's services, and planning services as well as housing association and health partners.

To support the consultation, we provided information from:

- the 2021 Census
- the Icen Housing Needs Assessment (a report outlining the number of homes needed in Dorset)
- NOMIS (Official Census and Labour Market Statistics)
- partner organisations (Registered Providers of Social Housing, Public Health Dorset, Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership, Dorset NHS, and the Homelessness Forum)
- Dorset Council knowledge and data
- internal and external engagement activities

The ten-week consultation took place from 3 July 2023 to 2 October 2023. Key findings from this supported the development of the strategy.

Following the consultation, our State of Dorset data set is now being updated to include housing information. In addition to this, we have provided some supplemental information setting out housing data in Dorset.

This strategy is not a stand-alone document. It supports our Council Plan and sits alongside other key strategies and plans. These include the following:

- A Better Life Strategy
- Birth to Settled Adulthood Programme
- Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy
- Economic Growth Strategy
- Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy
- Children's Services Sufficiency Strategy (pending)
- Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Dorset Council Planning for Climate Change - Interim Guidance and Position Statement
- Local Transport Plan

Dorset Council will be developing a new Local Plan setting out our planning policies and proposals for new developments. Findings from the consultation will be fed into the Local Plan team. During the development of this Housing Strategy close engagement with our Planning service has been carried out to ensure its objectives can be supported and that the approaches are aligned.

## **2 Summary**

The Housing Strategy has identified a range of actions for Dorset Council and other public bodies, housing associations, and community organisations to improve access to housing that meets identified need in the local area. It promotes working outside organisational boundaries and prioritising actions to meet the needs of our residents. The framework of actions will be further supported and monitored against a more detailed delivery plan. The delivery plan will be focused on achieving the most effective outcomes and updated to meet any new or changing regulatory or legislative requirements.

## **3 National Context**

Nationally, it is common that demand for affordable and accessible homes exceeds the supply. The government recognises this as a priority. Several policies and initiatives aimed at addressing these pressures have been implemented:

### **3.1 Affordable Homes Programme (AHP)**

In December 2020, the Government launched the Affordable Homes Programme. It aimed to provide 180,000 new affordable rent and shared ownership homes by March 2026.

This has now been revised with a focus on funding to support the development of new homes at a social rent, which are lower than the affordable rent model, which can be up to 80% of market rates.

### **3.2 First Homes Scheme**

The 'First Homes scheme', was launched in 2021. It provides a discount of at least 30% on the market value of a new-build home for first-time buyers. The scheme aims to make home ownership more accessible for first-time buyers.

### **3.3 Building Safety Act**

In July 2021, the government introduced the Building Safety Bill. It aims to improve the safety of high-rise buildings by:

a new regulatory regime for building safety.

a new Building Safety Regulator.

a new system for managing safety risks in high-rise buildings.

ensuring that new high-rise buildings are constructed to the highest safety standards.

### **3.4 Social Housing (Regulation) Act**

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act received Royal Assent in July 2023. It aims to enhance regulatory powers and improve housing conditions for tenants. It will do this by holding poor performing landlords to account.

The Act supports these aims by:

- giving more power to the Regulator of Social Housing including increased inspections and issuing fines.
- giving more power to the Housing Ombudsman including publishing best practice guidance to landlords following investigations into tenant complaints.
- setting strict time limits for social landlords to address hazards. For example, damp and mould.
- setting new qualification requirements for social housing managers.
- introducing stronger economic powers to follow inappropriate money transactions outside of the sector, such as money laundering.

### **3.5 Home Energy Performance Retrofit**

The Government has a goal for housing to be zero carbon by 2050. They recognise that this means significant investment to achieve this within existing homes.

Funding has been made available to local authorities and registered providers. These are the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and Sustainable Warmth initiatives.

Funding supports:

- energy efficient homes
- smart technologies

- moving to low-carbon heat
- homes that are thermally comfortable
- tackling fuel poverty by reducing energy bills
- economic resilience and green jobs

### **3.6 Unleashing Rural Opportunity**

The government aims to support improvements in the quality of life for rural residents. They have 4 main aims which are:

- growing rural economy: supporting rural areas to prosper by boosting opportunity through jobs and skills.
- connectivity: delivering gigabit broadband and mobile coverage in rural areas and increase access to public transport.
- homes and energy: facilitating the building of more homes for local people to buy where local communities want them, powered by secure and resilient energy supplies.
- communities: improving access to high quality health and social care and take further action to tackle rural crime.

## **4 Future policy change**

These are the housing policies which will come in to force during the lifetime of this strategy:

### **4.1 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill**

This Bill is expected to make significant changes to the planning system. It centres around:

- providing more power to local leaders.
- creating beautiful places and improving environmental outcomes.
- delivering infrastructure.
- regeneration.
- market reform.
- wider improvements to planning processes.

### **4.2 The Renters' Reform Bill**

This Bill proposes changes to the private rented sector and centres around:

- ending fixed term tenancies.
- increasing notice periods for rent increases.
- increasing tenants' right in relation to pets.
- a new ombudsman to cover all private landlords.
- considering the removal of Section 21 'no fault' evictions.



## 5 Our Local Context

Dorset has a unique landscape that has:

a coastline which is classified as a UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site

one of the largest areas of protected lowland heath in Europe

approx. 10,000 listed buildings

More than half of the area is classified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Dorset has a mix of coastal, rural, and urban areas.

Dorset is a popular place to live and visit. Buying or renting a home can be competitive and availability limited. Some working age residents and young people are affected. Over 80% of the households currently on our social housing register are of working age (16 – 64 years). Half of the applicants on the register are employed or self-employed in paid work.

Home Ownership is the largest tenure type in the Dorset Council area with 71.3% owning either outright or with a mortgage. The second largest proportion are households renting privately at 16.3%.

During 2022/23 the number of households losing their private rented accommodation increased by 50% in Dorset following national trends. This accounted for 17.8% of all homeless approaches, where households were unable to find other rental properties, and impacts the council's ability to discharge its homeless duties.

Median rents in Dorset are average for the southwest but are increasing in line with the national trend. There are geographical variations in rental costs in Dorset. The national capping of local housing allowance (LHA) and the gap between rent levels and local wages impacts on tenants' ability to pay their rent and meet the shortfall.

Other opportunities such as the Airbnb model have risen in popularity. At the peak of the 2022 summer season there were 6,498 holiday let properties available in the Dorset Council area. This represents 3.8% of the total residential accommodation but less than half were let all year round and many are peak season lets only.

On the 7th of September 2023 the Government published further guidance on understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in homes. The Renters Reform Bill is expected to be passed in 2024. It will set out how Decent Homes Standards will be applied to privately rented properties and provide enhanced protections for both landlords and tenants. Some landlords are anticipating additional costs managing their properties.

Social housing in our area makes up approximately 12% of the total homes. These are provided by locally active Housing Associations, also known as Registered Providers of Social Housing. There are approximately 23,000 social homes of which, 72.7% are general needs housing; 20.8% are either sheltered, older peoples or supported accommodation; and 6.4% is low-cost home ownership or shared ownership housing.

In Dorset the Affordable Homes Programme has helped increase the number of new affordable homes in the area. The new Homes England strategic partnership approach with registered providers was brought in at this time. Due to longer term funding commitments, this has given registered providers greater certainty over grants for projects which has increased their ambitions in terms of the numbers of new homes they can build. In Dorset there have been several sites delivering homes entirely at affordable rates, ranging from 20 – 80 homes that would not have been possible without the Homes England strategic partnership approach.

New homes provided through this route are affordable homes with a range of rental types. In Dorset most have been affordable rent or shared ownership with smaller numbers of social or intermediate rent. In February 2023 the guidance was changed to give social rented homes a higher priority. Since this time the number of social rented homes being built has increased.

There are a small number of First Homes currently under construction in the area, although none are yet ready to be marketed. More First Homes will be built as new developments progress through the planning process. The take up from developers for First Homes has been limited but may grow as this becomes a more established housing tenure.

Dorset Council is continuing to work with registered provider partners to encourage them to bid for funds to improve on energy efficiency of their stock. Several registered providers with stock in Dorset were successful in recent Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding bids. Both Stonewater and Sovereign were awarded over £9m each to support decarbonisation of their stock across their operating region and some of this will help to improve the housing stock in this Dorset Council area.

The State of Dorset document provides information about our population and will be an important ongoing reference point for data supporting the delivery of this Strategy.

We know that housing in Dorset must be suitable to meet the range of needs in our population. Our information tells us children and young people who need support, families, low-income households, essential service workers, older people with age and health related needs and single vulnerable people all have housing needs to be met.

Some employers in our area are stating that they experience recruitment challenges because employees are unable access housing to relocate or be close to their work. The evidence to support this position is being analysed, with strategies across major employers being developed to make sure that housing options are available to support the local economy, the service sectors, and all employers. This includes access to home ownership, as well as rental properties.

Some areas have higher levels of deprivation which leads to poor health, reduced economic prosperity, and educational achievement. Our State of Dorset information provides detail of where that highlights the need to adapt approaches to meet need. Many people live in areas that are remote, with access to services being more challenging than those living in towns. Wider strategies to support rural communities are linked to this fact, to support people being able to live independently and well in

the villages of Dorset. Around 23% of Dorset's households are not on mains gas and in 2021 11.5% were estimated to be fuel poor and expected to rise to 12.6% this year. This position is in line with the region.

The demand for 'general needs' social housing outstrips supply in Dorset in line with national trends. In response to this demand, and by working with a range of social housing providers, the number of new homes has risen each year since the formation of Dorset Council. This has been a successful partnership, and supports the enabling approach taken by Dorset Council to date – working with others to deliver housing. This Strategy looks to support that partnership and to achieve more from its enabling role.

## **6 Natural environment, climate, and ecology**

We understand that the environment plays an important role in our quality of life.

We have a Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy. This sets a clear ambition for a carbon neutral, nature positive, resilient Dorset. New housing will need to support our ambitions on:

- Climate: cutting greenhouse gas emissions for a carbon neutral Dorset by 2050.
- Biodiversity: Helping nature recover by protecting and enhancing our land, rivers, and seas for a nature positive Dorset by 2030.
- Resilience: Adapting for the impacts of unavoidable changes for a resilient Dorset.

## **7 Our role**

The Council has a range of statutory duties, powers or obligations relating to accommodation:

- prevent and relieve homelessness (Part 7 Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and Homeless Reduction Act 2017)
- manage and maintain a social housing register (Part 6 Housing Act 1996 (as amended)).
- provide accommodation to care leavers up to age 25 depending on circumstances (Children Act 1989) and Children Leaving Care Act 2000.
- a general duty to meet the needs of a person who needs care and support (Care Act 2014).
- to review, identify action and enforce housing conditions (Housing Act 2004).
- as the local planning authority (The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000) and (The National Planning Policy Framework).

To meet broader housing objectives in support of the Council Plan, Dorset does much more than this as a non-stock holding council with a strategic role to deliver through partnerships. Our housing enabling function supports our Registered Providers (Housing Associations) to deliver new homes. We do this by:

- allocating government grants.
- identifying suitable development sites.
- providing guidance and support.
- Supporting community led housing.
- supporting landlords to rent their homes.

We agree nomination agreements with local registered providers to make sure that new social rented housing goes to those with the greatest need.

This Strategy recognises the key role of the council and partners supporting and ensuring housing is available for all our residents and reflects their needs.

We have developed four key objectives that will help drive improvements in focused areas. These objectives are best delivered jointly with other key partners. Bringing our work on housing together will enable us to achieve this.

## **8 Key objectives**

### **8.1 Objective 1**

**Housing Need - Enabling residents to live safe, healthy, independent lives in homes that meet their needs.**

### **8.2 Objective 2**

**Housing Supply - Driving the delivery of homes people need and can afford to live in.**

### **8.3 Objective 3**

**Housing Standards - Improving the quality, standard, and safety of homes.**

### **8.4 Objective 4**

**Prevention of Homelessness - Support, at the right time, to people in crisis to prevent homelessness.**

Responses to our public consultation told us these key themes are important (not ranked in order of importance):

- affordability
- meeting the needs of local people
- environmental sustainability
- energy efficiency
- accessible services
- infrastructure
- green spaces
- good quality homes
- safety
- good standards that are enforced
- early intervention to prevent homelessness.
- right support

- settled housing for homeless households.

A full report of responses to the public consultation is at appendix B.

## **9 Meeting these objectives.**

### **9.1 Increasing Housing Supply**

The central challenge for Dorset is delivering homes which are affordable for our residents to acquire and to live in.

To address affordability issues, we need to increase the supply of new housing whilst also ensuring that existing homes are put to good use.

Whilst growth in housing supply is a priority, it is essential that delivery is not just about numbers. Providing homes which are the right type, the right tenure and in the right place are also key.

Whilst we do want to increase the supply of homes, we need to consider and address the challenges facing our partners. Development costs, labour and materials shortages, land costs, and nutrient neutrality mitigation issues create barriers for developers.

Whilst we have less control or influence over labour shortages, we encourage developers to take on apprentices and employees from the Dorset area and promote education in trade skills and qualifications. We encourage and support innovation in building and development, providing homes at a good value and by utilising initiatives such as modern methods of construction or modular building.

It is important that we maximise opportunities to increase availability of the right homes in addition to newly built homes. This includes exploring how we bring properties back into use, to seek partnerships with organisations and landlords who will provide new settled accommodation and to consider how we make the best use of existing buildings, homes, and land.

### **9.2 Right place**

Our residents have told us that they want us to make sure that any new development is sensitive to their needs and that we prioritise local homes for local people. Community engagement on proposed developments, the delivery of new homes by community land trusts, co-housing, and neighbourhood plans are ways that we already do this.

The protection of our green spaces is also a priority for our residents.

Our area includes, urban, coastal, and rural settings, and is diverse geographically. It is important to ensure that there is sufficient infrastructure and services tailored for each diverse location to meet identified local needs, and to sustain effective development of housing.

### **9.3 Right property**

A property can be considered 'right' in terms of size, cost, design and attached support. Providing the right property ensures residents can access homes that meet their needs. Having a well-designed home, sensitive to its surroundings, is also a key component of a successful, sustainable home.

Delivering homes and support services that meet current needs but also future needs, means we, and our partners, use resources wisely. We acknowledge and encourage the positive support of our partners in ensuring developments are closely linked to local need.

Some residents need support they can access easily either in their home or community. The reasons for support vary but include age or health related care, support linked to homeless or young people who we have looked after and continue to support.

The right homes can help with recovery and independent living and can reduce non-essential delays in health-related rehabilitation at home. Residents are better able to live independently and maximise their own choices. Expensive care and residential placements could sometimes be avoided if the right home was available, and this would also help reduce these costs.

### **9.4 Data Insight & Development**

Dorset aims to meet local housing needs and objectives with our partners in a data informed way. We will make best of all relevant data including independent sources.

The council and our partners provide a wide range of services to residents. Housing needs are routinely captured by departments within the council, and by our external partners. Our Housing Register plays an important part in capturing the detail of housing need and the number of people who require affordable housing to rent.

It is important that we:

- i. bring our data insights together – including the Housing Register - and use it to make decisions, prioritise and make best use of our resources.
- ii. mature our housing need data insights related to residents who are:
  - older residents who need property adaptations and/or support to help them to live independently for longer.
  - disabled residents (adults and young people) who require property adaptations to meet their specific needs.
  - residents who need supported housing, for example people with mental ill-health needs, special educational needs, autism, learning difficulties, people leaving care, people leaving hospital, young people (16–17-year-old) and people who are homeless.
  - victims of domestic violence and abuse.
  - women and children.
  - people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

- specific housing for identified groups of people such as essential local workers (key workers), refugees, unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, current and former armed forces personnel and their families, gypsies and travellers, students, young single adults and low-income families, prospective foster families, and adopters.
- living in a rural location and in housing need.

## **9.5 Homes for Dorset Residents**

The impact of second homes, and inward migration, on the availability of housing for local residents is identified as an area of concern in the public consultation – due to this being perceived as reducing the availability of homes for local people. Making sure that enough is available for local people is a theme of this strategy, whilst balancing the accommodation needs for visitors and tourists.

Through partnership working with our registered providers, and the housing allocations policy, we already ensure that affordable housing is only allocated to those people who meet the local connection criteria or are exempted. We cannot control those who move into the area through the social housing mutual exchange process, but this is a system which also benefits residents by supporting moves when necessary.

Dorset has a strong record supporting housing development through Community Land Trusts (CLT). These arrangements are led by our communities and bring forward new affordable homes needed by local communities. The groups are supported by us and our registered providers. We are committed to continuing and strengthening the support we offer CLTs and rural enabling work. We aim to work with external enabling partners by maximising opportunities for joint arrangements, government initiatives and funding opportunities.

## **9.6 Dorset Landlords**

As of September 2023, just over 360 landlords have joined our Landlord Forum and we are encouraging new members from across the whole Dorset Council area. Whilst this is a sizeable number, membership is mostly landlords with properties in the west of our area, who have been established as a group since before Dorset Council became a Unitary Authority in 2019.

The Landlord Forum provides an opportunity for landlords to engage with Dorset Council, and each other, through regular meetings, updates, training, and quarterly newsletters. Members also have access to a dedicated contact and receive a discount on licencing fees for houses in multiple occupation.

In a survey of Dorset landlords, 25% of respondents said that they were planning to leave the market or reduce their number of rental properties, within the next 5 years.

Our landlords' biggest concerns are:

- The impact of the capped local housing allowance on tenants' ability to meet their rent costs.

- The increased costs needed to meet any new property, energy efficiency or Decent Homes standards.
- Their ability to meet these standards based on the age and construction of their properties.
- That confusion over standards might lead to landlords being asked to complete unnecessary and costly works.

We are already working with our private landlords to provide useful support and guidance to help them meet new standards, understand their obligations and to encourage and support those who provide homes for our residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

People's housing needs change and sometimes existing homes no longer meet their needs but could with some adaptations. This strategy has identified that households who privately rent their home can face barriers to having adaptations installed and this can result in a need to move. Due to the demand for housing, finding suitable accommodation can be a lengthy and challenging process. Supporting tenants to remain where they are often provides a better solution.

Our landlords told us that they welcome opportunities to work more closely with Dorset Council and are keen to find solutions which will support both residents and landlords.

Working together with our private landlords, we aim to ensure our range of options is effective and positive.

It is important that we value and promote our private landlords by continuing to offer support, guidance, and advice and by seeking to expand the number who work with us to meet the needs of our residents.

### **9.7 Empty Properties**

Dorset has a strong record of positive work in relation to empty properties. We already offer support to property owners to bring empty homes back into use and will acquire homes, when necessary, affordable, or available.

We will refresh our empty homes policies and identify opportunities to enhance our role. The Local Government Association's Empty Homes Report identifies areas of best practice which should be applied to Dorset, to increase the numbers of empty properties being brought back in to use.

This Strategy recognises and supports our work to bring empty homes back into use. The complex nature of the work means this is a long-term activity but is beneficial to many and continues to be supported.

### **9.8 Building healthy communities**

Housing quality has a significant impact on both physical and mental health with people who live in poor quality homes. Inadequate housing contributes to inequalities in health, including families as well as single adults.



As well as the condition of housing, the health impact of housing includes whether homes are overcrowded and whether they meet the physical needs of the occupants. Concerns about security of tenure, not being able to pay bills, and the threat of homelessness have all been shown to have a negative impact on the health of adults and children.

Problems caused by substandard housing are more likely to affect low-income households and are compounded when there may be difficulty in paying household bills.

The need to improve availability of good quality housing is recognised by partners across the Dorset Integrated Care System (ICS). Reducing health inequalities is a core purpose of the ICS. Doing so requires the ICS to act on opportunities beyond improving healthcare access, experience, and outcomes. It requires action to improve the environment in which people live, including housing, to enable more people to enjoy good health for longer.

Our consultation identified shared support from the local NHS Trusts regarding the impact housing has on health, our objectives and how we can deliver them.

Working in partnership with the NHS we aim to strengthen housing expertise in health settings, improving patient housing pathways, promoting access to mental health support that prevents and relieves homelessness and improves outcomes for residents within our communities.

Our NHS Trust in Dorset tell us our community hospitals have a small percentage (5%) out of 208 beds of people who cannot be discharged due to housing related issues. The reasons include:

- Housing is not fit to return to.
- People don't have a home base but were staying with friends or relatives previously and are not fit enough to return there.
- Life changing physical conditions that require a change in housing provision.
- Properties not on national grid and therefore equipment cannot be used that requires power.

We are already working closely with our health partners to support successful discharge and will continue to use our expertise and explore opportunities. We are also working with health and other public service employers to explore options to support employees to find and sustain tenancies or buy homes in the area.

## **9.9 Best use of Council Assets**

Dorset's Council Plan includes a commitment to make the best use of our land and assets. The transformation vision states that we will be "reviewing the council buildings and properties to ensure best use and value of assets and help drive prosperity whilst adopting a focus on places and spaces".

Our Property Strategy & Asset Management Plan (2020 – 2024) supports this commitment through its aim to “work in collaboration with other public sector partners to utilise assets to: -

- Create economic growth (new homes and jobs)”

If a Council asset or piece of land is suitable for new homes, then it will be considered as part of a robust appraisal of what provides the best outcome for Dorset Council and its residents.

## **9.10 Social Housing**

There are 52 providers of social housing in Dorset and together they own 12% of the homes in our area.

We do not have our own social housing stock and rely on our registered providers, and other organisations, to build new homes. Dorset Council is a Registered Provider in our own right, but this is limited to acquiring temporary accommodation to alleviate homelessness and our approach does not seek to compete with other registered providers. Our role is to support and enable our partners to develop affordable housing on land they acquire, using funding from Homes England.

We welcome Homes England’s move towards providing funding for properties developed under the social rent model which supports this and aim to work with our partners to maximise their opportunities to deliver homes at a social rent.

It is important that we support our partners to deliver higher numbers of new affordable housing meeting local need.

Whilst most Dorset social housing tenants have the right number of bedrooms to meet their households needs, 38% said that they have at least one bedroom more than they need. 6% said that they don’t have enough rooms and are living in overcrowded conditions which can have a negative impact on the development of children which can lead to health and educational challenges.

Our registered providers tell us that, whilst they support and promote downsizing, they have limited resources to financially incentivise this. Instead, those wishing to move are often signposted to our housing register, or to mutual exchange sites like Homeswapper.

In mutual exchanges all tenants ‘swap’ their properties with other tenants of social housing providers and offer an opportunity to look outside of their own landlord’s stock.

Using the data available to us, we have the potential to match existing social tenants on our housing register with each other. We plan to match downsizers with those who are overcrowded, and those living in adapted homes they no longer need, with those who need homes with adaptations. This is expected to reduce the waiting time for some households and assist social landlords to make best use of their stock.

### **9.11 Supporting Sustainable Tenancies**

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping strategy identified a need to develop pre-tenancy training and a qualification to equip homeless households to become tenancy ready. This includes advice on saving for rent in advance, resolving former tenancy debts, or demonstrating sustained improvement in behaviour which would normally be a barrier to being offered a tenancy.

Once finalised, we plan to extend this service to our residents who have applied for housing through our housing register, in particular those who have never had a tenancy before or who have previously lost one.

Having tenancy ready accreditation will provide a show of good faith to landlords and our registered providers indicated this would be a welcome initiative.

Our work with children, young people, care leavers and adults with a higher level of support needs already helps them to access support to sustain and manage tenancies and we have been developing these initiatives.

It is important that we support all households to support a tenancy ready status that will help them access both social and private rented homes to solve their housing need.

### **9.12 Enhancing our temporary accommodation offer**

Despite the innovative approaches our homelessness services have taken to prevent and resolve homelessness, the increasing levels of approaches mean this is not always possible. When homelessness cannot be prevented, some households find themselves in need of emergency accommodation.

This can often take the form of expensive bed and breakfast accommodation, before a move to either a new home or more settled temporary accommodation.

Reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation is vital, to reduce the financial burden on the council and to find settled homes for people and families.

Temporary accommodation plays an important role in providing short-term access to housing until a more permanent solution can be found. To reduce the cost of bed and breakfast accommodation we are working to increase the levels of more financially sustainable temporary accommodation and continue to build on the existing programme of work which is already happening.

### **9.13 Sustainable Homes & Developments**

We are committed to working with our partners to ensure that all new housing is designed and built to the highest standards and that they are sympathetic to their surroundings, to enhance the quality, character and integrity of Dorset's unique environment and heritage.

Good design and construction will prevent environmental damage, make homes healthier and cheaper to run, and protect owners from future retrofit costs. All new

builds should therefore aim to be net zero, nature positive and resilient in their location, orientation, design, and construction. It can:

- Enable sustainable construction methods that are resource and energy efficient.
- Enable homes to better reduce, reuse and recycle.
- Support homes to enjoy opportunities for community growing.
- Enable homes that better protect and enhance nature and provides opportunity for residents to enjoy nature – through nature-positive development, wildlife-friendly gardens & green infrastructure, and well-maintained rights of way & public greenspace.
- Ensure our homes are resilient and well-adapted for climate risks from extreme weather and other climate pressures.

As a local authority we have an important role, working with landlords, enabling the retrofitting of existing housing stock, including further supporting home retrofitting through our Healthy Homes Dorset programme, continuing to work through our Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) project to drive progress in the private rented sector, and further supporting retrofit grant funding for our social housing providers.

Sustainable development is a lever to nurture more prosperous, stronger, healthier communities. It is an opportunity to ensure that future homes are healthier and cheaper to run, better connected, and creates new skilled jobs.

#### **9.14 Accessible Homes**

With a higher number of people aged 65 or above, when compared nationally, the provision of appropriate housing for older and disabled people is an important factor in the supply of housing. Our ageing population will see the numbers of disabled people continuing to increase and it is important we plan early to meet their needs and to avoid the need to retrofit accessibility measures. This Strategy links to wider strategies relating to accommodation with care and support for older people, and those with disabilities, when these are needed.

Including specialist occupational therapists further into design and development can help to ensure homes meet any identified local need at the earliest stage.

New homes are built to the latest national building regulations, meaning that they are more energy efficient and tend to be more accessible than older homes. However, we wish to seek further improvements in the quality of new homes. We are committed to increasing the supply of accessible homes and wheelchair friendly properties. We will continue to work with developers to increase accessibility of new developments.

#### **9.15 New Models for Housing Delivery**

Currently most delivery of new affordable housing is done in partnership with registered providers, with them leveraging in their own private finance and Homes England grant.

In addition to the existing and valued ways we supply new homes, exploring other ways to increase supply is key for Dorset and will make a significant contribution to meeting resident's housing needs. Key homes are:

- low cost settled accommodation.
- temporary accommodation.
- supported accommodation.

The delivery plan to this Strategy will explore new models of delivery when this is necessary. This is to recognise the need to stay alert to economic and social trends and to provide cost-effective and sustainable solutions, in delivering our Strategy and responsibilities.

### **9.16 Funding**

Acting on opportunities and tackling housing challenges in our area requires effective financial planning to be at the core of our work. We can bolster support and extend this to partners and residents by ensuring we promote existing grant funding, exploring joint funding opportunities and promoting uptake of new initiatives.

## **10 Delivering the housing strategy.**

Successful delivery of the strategy will rely on strong partnership working with many of our partners, including our registered providers, private landlords, developers, health agencies, third sector agencies and our residents. There are already many existing groups, boards, and forums, which can help to support the delivery of the strategy we aim to actively engage with these throughout its lifetime.

The strategy will be supported by a themed high-level plan (with detailed plans sitting underneath. This thematic plan will require the support and contribution of a range of council services and compliments existing delivery of the Council Plan and key strategies. It will continue to be scrutinised and monitored by Members and Senior Officers within the Council, but also be the centre of ongoing dialogue with partners, residents and other stakeholders with an interest or role in housing.

It is important to note that the strategy is not a standalone document, sitting alongside many of other strategies. It is also influenced by both national and local policies and, as such, is a living document with regular reviews and updated delivery plans.

The council has set up a new housing board and will help to drive the governance route for the delivery of this strategy and to support the Cabinet and operational teams in this process. Our detailed delivery plan will identify appropriate council services and partner representation to deliver the intentions of the housing strategy and keep this Strategy dynamic, effective and live.

## **11 Monitoring & Review**

The strategy delivery will be monitored regularly at our Housing Board(s) and will feed into existing corporate plan delivery monitoring mechanisms. An annual report

will be considered by the Council’s People and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

## 12 Themes for the Delivery Plan

How we frame our Housing Strategy objectives. This shows a set of headlines for the plan, and set of subsidiary plans, which will drive the delivery of the Housing Strategy.

For the 2024/25 financial year, from March 2024, we will publish a new set of performance expectations to sit with the delivery plan for the Housing Strategy. This will be overseen by the Housing Board and delivered by the associated responsible people and organisations – both inside and outside of the Council.

<b>Preventing homelessness</b>
<b>Providing options and guidance for those in housing need</b>
<b>Increasing Housing Supply – enough homes for local needs</b>
<b>Right Place – homes in the right location</b>
<b>Right Property – homes of the right type</b>
<b>Data – informed by data and intelligence</b>
<b>Homes for Dorset Residents – policies to support local need</b>
<b>Dorset Landlords – supporting landlords and promoting good standards</b>
<b>Empty Properties – bringing empty homes back into use</b>
<b>Building Healthy &amp; Thriving Communities</b>
<b>Best Use of Council Assets and Resources</b>
<b>Social Housing &amp; Making the Best Use of Social Housing – achieving the best from partnership with Registered Providers</b>
<b>Supporting sustainable tenancies</b>
<b>Temporary Accommodation – cost effective and decent accommodation</b>
<b>Greener Homes &amp; Developments</b>
<b>Accessible Homes</b>
<b>New Models for Housing Delivery – Projects to support transformation</b>
<b>Funding – maximising funding and income</b>

## 13 References and Sources

Section	Link
<b>3.1 Affordable Homes Programme</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/shared-ownership-and-affordable-homes-programme-2016-to-2021">Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme 2016 to 2021: guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>
<b>3.2 First Homes Scheme</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/first-homes-scheme-discounts-for-first-time-buyers">First Homes scheme: discounts for first-time buyers - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>
<b>3.3 Building Safety Act</b>	<a href="https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/26/contents">Building Safety Act 2022 (legislation.gov.uk)</a>
<b>3.4 Social Regulation Act</b>	<a href="https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/12/contents">Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (legislation.gov.uk)</a>
<b>3.5 Home Energy Performance Retrofit</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/home-energy-performance-retrofit-funding-for-local-authorities-and-housing-associations-to-help-improve-the-energy-performance-of-homes">Home Energy Performance Retrofit: funding for local authorities and housing associations to help improve the energy performance of homes - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>
<b>3.6 Unleashing Rural Opportunity</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/unleashing-rural-opportunity">Unleashing rural opportunity - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>
<b>4.1. Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/bills/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill">Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>
<b>4.2 Renters Reform Bill</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/bills/guide-to-the-renters-reform-bill">Guide to the Renters (Reform) Bill - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>
<b>7. Council plans and strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Better Life Strategy <a href="#">Commissioning for A Better Life as People Age in Dorset 2023 to 2028 - Dorset Council</a></li> <li>• Homelessness &amp; Rough Sleeping Strategy <a href="#">Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021 to 2026 - Dorset Council</a></li> <li>• Economic Growth Strategy <a href="#">Dorset's Economic Growth Strategy 2020 to 2024 - Dorset Council</a></li> <li>• Domestic Abuse Strategy <a href="#">Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy - Dorset Council</a></li> <li>• Natural Environment, Climate &amp; Ecology Strategy <a href="#">Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023 to 25 Refresh - Dorset Council</a></li> <li>• Children's Services Sufficiency Strategy (pending)</li> <li>• Corporate Parenting Strategy <a href="#">Dorset's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020 to 2023 - Dorset Council</a></li> <li>• Dorset Council Planning for Climate Change - Interim Guidance and Position Statement <a href="#">Dorset Council Planning for climate change - Interim Guidance and Position Statement - Consultation</a></li> <li>• Local Transport Plan <a href="#">Local Transport Plan 2011 to 2026 - Dorset Council</a></li> </ul>
<b>9.2 Icen Housing Needs Assessment</b>	<a href="https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/records/caac9843-8acc-66bd-91f3-554b75c70091">caac9843-8acc-66bd-91f3-554b75c70091 (dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)</a>
<b>9.2 Draft Local Plan</b>	<a href="#">Dorset Council Local Plan - Dorset Council</a>
<b>9.5 Housing Allocations Policy</b>	<a href="#">Housing Allocations Policy 2021 to 2026 - Dorset Council</a>
<b>9.5 Community Land Trusts</b>	<a href="#">Affordable housing - Dorset Council</a>
<b>9.6 Landlord Forum</b>	<a href="#">Landlord Forum - Dorset Council</a>
<b>9.6 Landlord Incentives</b>	<a href="#">Landlord Incentive Scheme - Dorset Council</a>
<b>9.8 Public Health Dorset Housing data</b>	<a href="#">Housing quality - Public Health Dorset - Dorset Council</a>
<b>9.8 Integrated Care Board</b>	<a href="#">NHS Dorset – Integrated Care Board</a>
<b>9.8 BRE Report on Housing</b>	<a href="#">The cost of poor housing to the NHS - BRE Group</a>
<b>9.9 Property Strategy &amp; Asset Management Plan</b>	<a href="#">Property Strategy Asset Management Plan.pdf (dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)</a>

## 14 Glossary of Terms

<b>Affordable Housing</b>	Affordable housing is housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers)
<b>Affordable Housing: Social Rent</b>	Social Rent should be managed by a Registered Provider (e.g., a Housing Association) or alternative organisation approved by the Council. Social rented housing is homes let on assured or secure tenancies (as defined in Section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency.
<b>Affordable Housing: Affordable Rented</b>	Affordable rented housing is let by Local Authorities or private registered providers of social housing or alternative organisation approved by the Council to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).
<b>Affordable Housing: Intermediate and low-cost home ownership</b>	Intermediate is an umbrella term for homes for sale or rent at a discount below market rates but above social and affordable rented products. It includes (but is not limited to) shared ownership, discounted market sale, starter homes, discounted market sale, intermediate rent (but not affordable rented housing), starter homes, and self-build housing were provided as affordable housing.
<b>Community Land Trust</b>	Are democratic, non-profit organisations that own and develop land for the benefit of the community.
<b>Community-led Housing</b>	People and communities playing a leading role in addressing their own housing needs
<b>Decent Homes standard</b>	Policy which aims to provide a minimum standard of housing conditions.
<b>Disabled Facility Grant</b>	A Disabled Facility Grant can be applied for through the Council if you're disabled and need to make changes to your home to suit your needs i.e., a ramp installed, access to bathroom facilities.
<b>Extra Care Housing</b>	Extra care housing describes a purpose-built housing environment where varying levels of care and support services are provided to meet the individual resident's needs.
<b>Homes England</b>	Homes England is the non-departmental public body that funds new affordable housing in England. It was founded on 1 January 2018 to replace the Homes and Communities Agency.
<b>Housing Allocations Policy</b>	A policy that describes how social housing is allocated through Dorset Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme, how the scheme operates, its processes and how to use the service.



<b>Iceni Housing Needs Assessment</b>	Produced by Iceni, this is a document which sets out the housing needs assessment based on the Government standard methodology and needs projections.
<b>Local Housing Allowance</b>	Local housing allowance (LHA) are rates set by the Department for Works and Pensions and are used to work out how much housing benefit can be received by a private tenant.
<b>Local Plan</b>	The Local Plan is a planning document that guides decisions on future development proposals and addresses the needs and opportunities of the area.
<b>Median Rent</b>	Median rent is the figure which sits at the midpoint between the lowest and highest rent levels.
<b>National Planning Policy Framework</b>	The National Planning Policy Framework sets out government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
<b>Neighbourhood Plan</b>	Neighbourhood Plans help local communities play a direct role in planning the areas in which they live and work. Policies included in Neighbourhood plans are related to the use of land in the area, or to spatial matters (i.e., aspects that affect how a place works). They will be used to consider all planning applications in the respective areas, alongside the Local Plan.
<b>NOMIS</b>	NOMIS is a service provided by the Office for National Statistics and looks and data relating to employment, education levels and earnings.
<b>Owner Occupation</b>	Owner-occupancy or homeownership is a form of housing tenure where a person, called the owner-occupier, owner-occupant, or homeowner, owns the home in which they live.
<b>Registered Providers</b>	Providers of housing who are registered with and regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing
<b>Shared Ownership</b>	Shared ownership homes are provided through a housing association. They work by offering first-time buyers a share of the property ownership. A share of between 25% and 75% can be bought, with rent paid on the remaining share.
<b>Social Housing</b>	Housing provided for people on low incomes or with particular needs, by government agencies or non-profit organisations.
<b>Temporary Accommodation</b>	Temporary accommodation is provided to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

## 15 Appendices

- A. Supplementary Data
- B. Consultation Report
- C. Equality Impact Assessment

December 2023