

Home in on Housing: Dorset Council's role and response for the new and emerging Housing Strategy

Briefing deck
September 2023



Housing & its role for Dorset

Housing is a fundamental need for our residents. As a Housing Authority, Dorset Council has a range of statutory responsibilities including the prevention and relief of homelessness and implementing strategies to meet housing need, enable new homes to be built and improve housing standards.

Dorset is a non-stock holding council. We are a strategic housing authority with an enabling function.

Our role is to support our Registered Providers of Social Housing (Housing Associations) to deliver new homes. We do this by:

- securing and deploying government grants - **with many millions of pounds levered in to support new homes**
- identifying suitable development sites and working with Registered Providers and developers to bring them forward
- helping to provide new affordable homes and specialist accommodation on private and council owned land
- supporting landlords to let their homes and maintain good standards. Enforcing when poor conditions exist.

Our role in housing also includes to:

- coordinate and commission on crosscutting issues. For example, homelessness prevention, improving health and wellbeing, supported housing, decarbonisation, maintaining good housing standards across tenures
- lead and coordinate safe accommodation and support for survivors of domestic abuse.

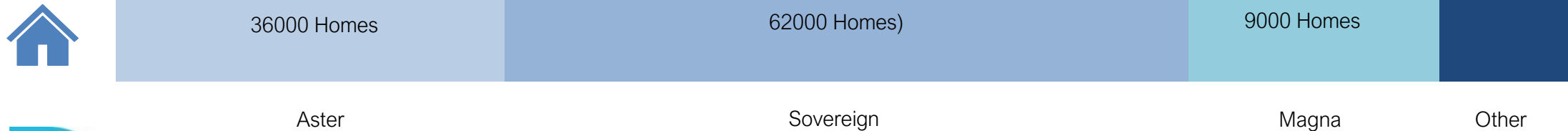


Housing is one of the five main strands of the Council's Plan.

Registered Providers in Dorset

At present there are 20,000 affordable homes provided in the Dorset Council area. This is bolstered by an active development programme, with 664 new homes added to this number last year. There is a range of Registered Providers of Social Housing (Housing Associations) with the three largest stockholders being Aster, Sovereign & Magna, and who took transfer of the former Council Housing stock of the former Districts and Boroughs. These three Registered Providers are also national, not just local to Dorset. There are other housing associations who also provide homes in Dorset including East Boro, Abri, Places for People, Sage Homes and Stonewater Homes.

The graphics below show the financial performance of the three large Registered Partners, including their Housing stock numbers.



Why is Housing important?

Housing is a fundamental aspect of individual and community well-being, and its quality and stability have a profound impact on physical and mental health outcomes. Addressing housing issues is essential for promoting health equity and improving overall population health. The impact of housing on the natural environment and the wider drive towards decarbonisation is significant – emphasising the importance of good design, energy efficiency and well managed housing.

Housing plays a vital role in:

- promoting physical and mental well-being
- preventing poor physical and mental health
- fostering community cohesion
- supporting economic stability
- reducing health disparities
- contributing to individual and societal development, leading to healthier and happier lives

Housing supports delivery on the ICP Strategy. Poor Housing conditions are associated with a number of health problems, including respiratory infections, asthma and poor mental health.



Housing is one of the [Social determinants of health](#)



Housing is key in delivering the ICP Strategy

Three strands of demand

Housing is seeing an **increase in demand, increases in costs and a lack of available suitable accommodation.**

The three main demand drivers for Housing are:

- Homelessness – with the need to provide temporary accommodation when prevention has not been possible
- Housing Register, for other areas of housing need
- Associated need for Housing from other statutory services – Social Care, Health, Probation, Refugee resettlement. Non-statutory demand is also rising – key workers, first steps into home ownership, etc.

£m

Year

Demand Drivers

Population

Population growth in Dorset has risen by 15,000 in the last 10 years to 380,000 and is expected to rise to 400,000 by 2030.

Housing is an important priority for all residents within Dorset.

Cost of Living

Economic pressures in recent years have seen more households come into financial hardship and require Housing support from the Council.

Homelessness

We have seen increasing demand in people presenting as homeless. In the 21/22, we had 3408 homelessness approaches and 3996 in 22/23

We are forecasting a 23/24 year end total of 4755 approaches (19% increase from last year)

Temp Accom.

Currently, we have 334 households in temporary accommodation, of which 88 are in bed and breakfast. The total cost of temporary accommodation for 22/23 was £4.512m, 40% higher than it was for 21/22.

Affordable Housing

There is a lack of affordable housing in Dorset. The average house price is 11x times higher than the national average salary, with many second homes and holiday lets.

We are receiving 400 new applicants per month for the Housing register.

Migrant/Refugee

We are delivering a programme to acquire temporary accommodation to use initially for Ukrainian and Afghan households.

Inflation

Inflationary pressures are a cost driver for the service. The average B&B placement now costs £560 – this has doubled from last year

The Local Housing Allowance rate is frozen, so any increase in temporary accommodation is an additional cost.

Debt

The expensive nature of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast means that there is the reality of debt occurring, with £500k of unrecoverable debt being forecast for this financial year.

Solving the problem



Housing Strategy

Introduction to the Housing Strategy

Dorset is a popular place to live, visit and to retire to, with many second homes, and holiday lets. This create pressures on the local housing market.

With national pressures on affordability, this has put owning a home out of reach for many working age residents. This is also challenging for our younger residents, wanting to return to the area after further education outside of Dorset.

Our emerging Housing strategy seeks to identify ways to balance these pressures. These are reflected in the 4 key objectives which set out our aims to:

- increase the supply of housing to meet the demand for homes
- increase access to housing which meets a diverse range of needs
- make the best use of council owned land and properties, for housing
- create a one-council approach to the provision of homes
- reduce the financial impact of emergency homelessness accommodation
- increase temporary accommodation to meet homelessness demand
- drive improvements to the quality of Dorset housing
- work with partners to improve access to housing
- support our partners to make the best use of existing stock
- reduce the impact of housing on our climate
- identify funding opportunities to achieve our aims
- support our rural communities



Our new Housing Strategy is [currently out to consultation](#), and we will be ready to bring back a compelling, bold and ambitious strategy to our December Cabinet.

Housing Strategy – key objectives

Housing Need

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

Provide a selection of housing and support services that promote healthy, safe, and independent lives.

Housing Supply

Driving the delivery of homes people need and can afford to live in.

We aim to increase the supply of high quality affordable and social housing, to buy or rent.

Housing Standards

Improving the quality, standard, and safety of homes.

Prevention of Homelessness

Support, at the right time, to people in crisis to prevent homelessness.

Tackling homelessness by providing support and assistance to help people find suitable long-term housing solutions.

Governance – establishment of a Housing Board

The scale of our ambition for Housing requires a cross-Council and multi-agency approach. As part of that, it is proposed to create a Housing Board composed of Portfolio Holders for Housing, Adults and Public Health, Property and Assets, Finance and Children's Services.

The Housing Board aims to:

- Collaboratively address the diverse residential needs encompassing these portfolios.
- Working together on decision-making, resource allocation, and strategic planning, ultimately enhancing the quality of housing and residential services provided to our community.

The Housing Board's primary objectives include:

- Collaboration: Facilitating communication and cooperation to address residential needs more effectively.
- Strategic Planning: Developing cross-Council strategies that consider the housing continuum from child to adult, encompassing diverse needs and life stages.
- Resource Optimisation: Enhancing resource allocation efficiency by working together on budgeting and planning to avoid duplication and make best use of resources.
- Innovation: Encouraging innovative approaches to housing challenges by leveraging insights and experiences from multiple portfolios.
- Community Impact: Improving the quality of housing and residential services to positively impact the lives of our residents.

There will also be an Officer Board to prepare and oversee the operational delivery of the Housing programme.

Cabinet Considerations

- i. Cabinet acknowledges and reinforces the important role of Housing as a key plank of our Council Plan. This understands the current landscape, challenges, and the importance of maintaining and developing a robust plan to mitigate these pressures.
- ii. The Cabinet is asked to approve the establishment of the Housing Board and endorse its objectives and composition. This initiative will contribute significantly to our efforts in meeting the residential needs across multiple portfolios. This will also involve a Housing Programme Board, with involvement from Senior and Corporate leadership roles to ensure delivery of objectives and effective implementation.

Following the current consultation period, and having taken on board the responses, we will return to Cabinet in December 2023 with a compelling, bold and ambitious Housing Strategy.