

Housing Strategy and Performance: Accessible Home Policy and Strategy

Home in on Housing Programme – Phase 1 project

Summary Report

Version control:

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Purpose:

1. Review existing data, strategies and policies in place relating to the development of homes for older and disabled people.
2. To recommend as to whether the council should develop a stand-alone accessible homes strategy for approach and delivery to include all council services.

What we did:

- Researched accessible homes and development of homes for older people and people with disabilities.
- Researched other local authorities within the Southwest and nationally to identify if other authorities have a standalone accessible homes policy or strategy.
- Reviewed Dorset Council resources to identify strategies and policies already in place that focus or identify the development accessible home.

Government guidance

In the UK, government guidance on accessible homes is primarily governed by Building Regulations Part M (Access to and Use of Buildings), which sets out the minimum standards for access to and the use of buildings.

Part M is divided into categories that define different levels of accessibility:

- M4(1): Visitable Dwellings, this is the minimum standard for all new homes. It ensures basic accessibility features like:
 - Level access to the main entrance
 - A flush threshold
 - Sufficiently wide doorways and circulation space
 - A toilet at entrance level
- M4(2): Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings, this is a higher standard, similar to the Lifetime Homes Standard. It includes features that make homes more easily adaptable for a wide range of occupants, including:
 - Step-free access
 - Wider doorways and hallways
 - Accessible bathroom layouts
 - Potential for future adaptations (e.g., stairlifts)
- M4(3): Wheelchair User Dwellings, this is the highest standard, designed for full wheelchair accessibility. It includes:
 - Step-free access throughout
 - Larger circulation spaces
 - Fully accessible kitchens and bathrooms

M4(2) and M4(3) are optional standards that local authorities can enforce through local planning policies, based on identified local needs and development viability.

The government has consulted on raising minimum accessibility standards in new homes, including:

- Making M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable dwellings the default minimum standard for all new homes. Reflecting the growing need for accessible housing due to an ageing population.
- Requiring local authorities to justify when lower standards M4(1) are acceptable.

These proposals are part of the “Raising accessibility standards for new homes” consultation, which concluded in 2020, although implementation has been delayed with no definitive implementation date being announced¹.

¹ [Government finally set to act on housing accessibility standards – Disability News Service](#)

Building Regulations were most recently updated in May 2025, although the revision made several changes it did not include any changes to increase accessibility standards of new homes.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a national policy document that sets out overarching planning principles for England. It addresses accessible homes primarily under the section 'Delivering a sufficient supply of homes', this includes:

- Meeting the needs of all including, older people, people with disabilities and families with children.
- Accessible and adaptable standards, encouraging local plans to include policies that require a proportion of new homes to meet accessible and adaptable standards (as defined within Building Regulations M4(2) and M4(3), where there is evidence of need.
- Inclusive Design to support independent living, community integration as well as accessibility.
- Plan-making and evidence, local authorities must use evidence to justify requirements for accessible housing in local plans.
- Design quality, accessible homes are also included in the broader goal of achieving well designed places which includes ensuring that developments are functional, inclusive and sustainable.

As well as Building Regulations and the NPPF, the Government provides guidance for local authorities on planning policies for housing older people and disabled people. This includes identifying housing requirements, accessible and adaptable housing, and specialist housing for older people².

Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents

A Local Plan is prepared by local planning authorities in consultation with local communities and must align with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This document outlines the planning strategy and priorities for an area, including site allocations for housing, employment, infrastructure, and environmental protection.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are often used to support Local Plans, providing detailed guidance and advice on how specific policies in an adopted Local Plan should be implemented. They do not create new policy, their purpose is to provide detailed guidance and the information necessary to help implement strategy and policies objectives. They detail how planning policy will be implemented and delivered. SPDs can take the form of design guides, area development briefs and form

² [Housing for older and disabled people - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-for-older-and-disabled-people)

part of a series of documents aligned and linked within a master local plan. For example:

Purbeck District Council produced a Housing Strategy as well as a suite of new affordable housing policies, along with an 'Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document' to support the delivery of the strategy.

The Affordable Housing SPD:

- *Sets out how the Council supports different ways to bring forward affordable housing. For example, it details the Council's support for self-build rural exception sites;*
- *Provides information on enabling significant numbers of affordable homes by allowing a small number of market houses on rural exception sites;*
- *Makes developers aware of their obligations when they are required to provide affordable housing; and*
- *Details the Council's process for dealing with financial viability. This will enable a streamlined, faster planning process for developers and the Council.*

This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is one part of a series of documents that link into the Council's Housing Strategy. This is illustrated below.



SPDs are utilised by developers to help guide the design and delivery of development proposals in line with local planning policies. They help developers understand local expectations, pre-application preparation, design and in negotiation with planners.

Dorset Council Local Plan

Dorset Council is currently working on a Dorset wide Local Plan with the most recent consultation taking place between January and March 2021. The plan is to be adopted in May 2027. Up until this time the Local Plans and SPDs for former council areas are in place.

Dorset Council SPD

Dorset Council has a range of SDPs that provide additional guidance on specific planning issues. There is no dedicated SPD solely focused on accessible home, or homes for older and people with disabilities, supported or specialised housing. These topics are however addressed in broader terms within Affordable Housing SDPs for the former Purbeck and East and Christchurch areas.

These Affordable Housing SPD outline how a mix of housing, including affordable housing, will be sought on development sites to meet local needs. This includes provisions for accessible homes and homes suitable for older and disabled people.

Dorset Councils SPDs in relation to affordable housing and special needs housing below:

Dorset Area(s)	Adopted SPD Name & Link	Guidance
Purbeck	Affordable Housing SPD	Housing Strategy 2012- 2027
East	Housing and Affordable Housing SPD (Revised) 2018	

In addition, the council has numerous design SPDs and guidance³ to support adopted SPDs for different locations across Dorset.

Dorset Council published in March 2025 a 'Guide to the new planning system'⁴, which indicated proposed changes to the planning system suggest that SPDs will not form part of the new planning framework. Instead, the detail in SPDs will be incorporated within Local Plans. Highlighting that SPD will only now only be updated or produced where there is a pressing need to do so. They are however planning to utilise SPDs in relation to internationally important wildlife sites, Chesil and Fleet as a 'special area of conservation' and mineral safeguarding.

Dorset Council overarching existing strategies

There are several overarching Dorset Council strategies that relate to the development of homes for disabled and older people:

Housing Strategy 2024 -2029:

The Housing Strategy aims to ensure residents have access to affordable, suitable, and secure homes where they can live well and be part of sustainable and thriving communities.

The strategy aims to deliver a range of housing types and tenures, including meeting the needs of people with disabilities, older adults, and others requiring accessible living environments. It identifies four main objectives:

³ [Supplementary planning documents and guidance - Dorset Council](#)

⁴ [Guide to the new planning system](#)

- Housing Need - Enabling residents to live safe, healthy, independent lives in homes that meet their needs.
- Housing Supply - Driving the delivery of homes people need and can afford to live in.
- 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.

The strategy makes a commitment to increase the supply of accessible homes and wheelchair friendly properties, through continued work with developers.

Table below shows a summary of the relevant extracts from the Housing Strategy:

Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029				
Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities				
Strategy Name	Issue Date	Updated Date	Service Area(s)	Document Summary
Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029	Jan-24	05-Aug-24	Dorset Council	The strategy sits alongside the Council Plan, draft Local Plan and Our Future Council and links to wider strategies relating to accommodation with care and support for older people, and those with disabilities. The

				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. Key Objectives: • Housing Need: Enabling residents to live safe, healthy, independent lives in homes that meet their needs. • Housing Supply: Driving the delivery of homes people need and can afford to live in. • 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. The document references: • Right Property • Data Insight & Development • Building Healthy Communities • Accessible Homes These collectively addresses the development and support of housing for older and individuals with disabilities.
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Housing Strategy January 2024 to January 2029

Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities

Right Property: (Page 14) Emphasises the importance of providing homes that are the right size, cost, design, and have the necessary support services. The need for well-designed homes that are sensitive to their surroundings and meet both current and future needs.	Data Insight & Development: (Pages 14 - 15) Outlines the importance of using data to understand and meet local housing needs. To bring together data insights from various sources, including the Housing Register, to make informed decisions and prioritise resources of maturing housing need data insights related to specific groups, such as older residents, residents with disabilities, and those needing supported housing.
Key Outcomes • Provision of the Right Property: Ensuring homes are the right size, cost, and design to meet residents' needs. Delivering homes that support independent living and reduce health-related rehabilitation delays. • Collaboration with Partners: Working with partners to ensure developments are linked to local needs. Encouraging the use of resources wisely to deliver homes that meet both current and future needs. • Cost Savings: Potential from avoiding expensive care and residential placements by providing the right homes.	Key Outcomes • Data-Driven Decision Making: Using comprehensive data insights to understand and meet local housing needs. Prioritising resources based on data from the Housing Register and other sources. • Enhanced Data Utilisation: Bringing together data insights from various sources to make informed decisions. Maturing housing need data insights for specific groups, such as older and residents with disabilities, to better meet their needs. These collectively aim to ensure that housing developments are well-designed, data-driven, and meet the specific needs of the community, contributing to better living conditions and independent living for residents.

Building Healthy Communities: (Pages 16-17) Emphasises the significant impact of housing quality can negatively impact on both physical and mental health. The need to improve the availability of good quality housing to reduce health inequalities and the role of the Dorset Integrated Care System (ICS) in reducing health inequalities by improving housing conditions and identifies housing-related issues as a barrier to successful hospital discharge.	Accessible Homes: (Page 20) Emphasises the importance of providing appropriate housing for older and people with disabilities. The need to plan early to meet these needs and avoid retrofitting accessibility measures and commitment to increasing the supply of accessible homes and the importance of working with developers to enhance the accessibility of new developments.
Key Outcomes • Improved Housing Quality: Recognising the impact of housing quality on health and aiming to improve housing conditions to reduce health inequalities. • Partnership with the ICS: Collaborating with the Dorset Integrated Care System to act on opportunities to improve housing conditions. Engaging with local NHS Trusts to align housing objectives with health improvement goals. • Enhanced Collaboration with Health Partners: Strengthening partnerships with the NHS and other health agencies to address housing-related health issues. Improving patient housing pathways and promoting access to mental health support. • Support for Hospital Discharge: Addressing housing-related barriers to successful hospital discharge to ensure patients can return to suitable living conditions. These points collectively aim to improve housing quality, reduce health inequalities, and ensure that housing conditions support the health and well-being of residents.	Key Outcomes • Increased Supply of Accessible Homes: Commitment to building more homes that are accessible. Ensuring new homes meet the latest national building regulations for energy efficiency and accessibility. • Early Planning and Inclusion: Emphasising early planning to meet the needs of older and residents with disabilities. Avoiding the need for retrofitting accessibility measures by including specialist occupational therapists in the design and development stages. • Collaboration with Developers: To ensure new housing developments are accessible. Encouraging improvements in the quality of new homes to meet accessibility standards. • Integration with Wider Strategies: Linking the housing strategy to other strategies related to accommodation with care and support for older people and those with disabilities. Ensuring homes meet identified local needs at the earliest stage of development. These collectively aim to ensure housing for older and individuals with disabilities is well-planned, accessible, meets their specific needs, and contributes to their ability to live independently and comfortably.

Dorset Adult Social Care have developed the 'A Better Life' plan which aims to deliver a new future for Adult Social Care and Housing. Identifying 5 priority areas:

- Strong, Healthy communities
- Staying Safe and well
- Suitable Housing
- Economic Growth
- Unique Environment

To support this plan there are four strategies:

- Commission for A Better Life for Adults in Dorset 2023 to 2028
- Commissioning for A Better Life as People Age in Dorset 2023 to 2028
- Commissioning for A Better Life for Carers in Dorset 2023 to 2028
- Better Commissioning for Better Lives 2023 to 2028

With exception to 'Commissioning for A Better Life for Carers in Dorset', each of the other strategies refer to the design and accessibility of homes and advocate that homes are designed or adapted to meet the needs of older people, especially for adults with disabilities or long-term conditions. This includes barrier-free environments, assistive technology and flexible layouts that can evolve with changing needs. Emphasising co-production for those people needing accessible housing and flexible adaptive services that can accommodate changing needs over time.

Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement 2024 to 2039:

The Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement has been developed through collaboration with housing, adult care services, and planning to advance the priorities of the council's "Commissioning for A Better Life as People Age" strategy. The document outlines commissioning intentions, principles, and proposals to enhance Dorset's extra care housing offer for older people and those with long-term support, care, and health needs.

Extra care housing is tailored and designed to accommodate evolving care needs, serving individuals with disabilities, those facing social exclusion, and people with long-term health conditions. Unlike sheltered housing or care homes, extra care housing offers tenants their own fully accessible flats, allowing them to select their own personal care providers. Additionally, communal spaces and professional areas are integrated to enhance tenant well-being and foster social interactions.

Tables below show a summary of the relevant extracts from A Better Life as People Age strategy Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement:

Commissioning for a Better Life as People Age in Dorset 2023 to 2028

Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities

Strategy Name	Issue Date	Updated Date	Service Area(s)	Document Summary
Commissioning for a Better Life as People Age in Dorset 2023 to 2028	2023		Housing , Adult Social Care & Health Services	• More Extra Care Housing: Increase in extra care housing options for both rental and ownership. • Improved Accessibility: Enhancing accessibility in high streets and fostering supportive communities. • Home Adaptations and Care Technology: Expanding the offer for equipment, adaptations, and care technology to support independent living. • Strengthening Home Care Sector: Strengthening the home care sector and its workforce to support older people living independently. Key Outcomes: • Inclusive Communities: Ensuring vibrant community activities that keep older people well-connected. • Independence at Home: Providing excellent care and support at home, focusing on independence and the use of assistive technology. • High-Quality Residential Care: Offering a good range and choice of high-quality residential care to meet the complex needs of the older population. • Preventive Care: Emphasising preventive care to reduce or delay the development of care and support needs.

Commissioning for a Better Life as People Age in Dorset 2023 to 2028	
Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities	
Accommodation with care for older people: (Page 2) Increase Extra Care Housing.	Improving accessibility: (Page 2) Improving high streets' accessibility for older people and fostering connected and supportive communities.
Key Outcomes: • Development of Extra Care Housing: Collaborate with housing developers to increase the availability of extra care housing. Ensure a mix of rental and ownership options to cater to different needs. • Community Integration: Work with local organisations and councils to integrate extra care housing into supportive communities. Promote community activities and services that support independent living. • Enhanced Independence: Older people can live independently with the support they need. • Reduced Care Home Admissions: Fewer avoidable admissions to care homes through better housing options.	Key Outcomes: • Support for Independent Living: Emphasises the importance of helping people stay in their own homes for as long as possible. • Use of Technology: Highlights the role of care technology in supporting independent living. • Preventive Measures: Focuses on preventing the need for long-term care through early interventions. High Streets: • Improving Accessibility: Collaborating with local organizations, businesses, town, and parish councils to enhance high streets' accessibility for older people. • Fostering Connected Communities: Encouraging supportive communities through local initiatives. Flexible Day Opportunities: • Community-Based Offers: Transitioning from fixed location day services to networks of community-based day opportunities. • Specialist Day Services: Maintaining specialist day services where complex care and support needs can be met.

Commissioning for a Better Life as People Age in Dorset 2023 to 2028	
Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities	
Home adaptations and care technology: (Page 2) To improve the offer for equipment, adaptations, and care technology to help people live independently in their own homes	Strengthening home care sector: (Page 2) Focuses on strengthening the role of the home care sector and its workforce to support older people living independently.
Key Outcomes: • Home Adaptations and Care Technology: Expanding the offer for equipment, adaptations, and care technology to support independent living. • Reducing Care Home Admissions: Aiming to reduce avoidable care home admissions by self-funders through improved home adaptations.	Key Outcomes: • Inclusive Communities: Ensuring vibrant community activities that keep older people well-connected. • Independence at Home: Providing excellent care and support at home, focusing on independence and the use of assistive technology. • High-Quality Residential Care: Offering a good range and choice of high-quality residential care to meet the complex needs of the older population. • Preventive Care: Emphasising preventive care to reduce or delay the development of care and support needs.

Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement 2024 to 2039				
Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities				
Strategy Name	Issue Date	Updated Date	Service Area(s)	Document Summary Information sourced from: Our new Extra Care Housing Strategy - Dorset Council
Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement 2024 to 2039	13-Jun-24	13-Dec-24	Housing, Adult Social Care & Planning	Five key strategic priorities in the Extra Care Strategy: • Providing more well designed and fully accessible extra care homes. • Progressing current council led extra care housing developments at Bridport and Wareham. • Prioritising development of a further two council commissioned extra care sites in Weymouth and East Dorset. • Reviewing current sheltered housing schemes to consider suitability for refurbishment or redevelopment as Extra Care Housing. • Commissioning and funding a 24/7 onsite support and care model for new and existing schemes that provides both a safe and enabling background support offer but also supports residents to live life to the full, engage with their local community, and develop or maintain their social and leisure interests.

Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement 2024 to 2039	
Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities	
Ambition: (Page 2 & 3): The council aims to transform the lives of Dorset's older residents with health conditions, focusing on independence, attractive homes, community integration, high-quality care, and a skilled workforce.	Extra Care Housing: (Page 3): Extra care housing is designed to adapt to changing care needs, offering homes for older people and people with disabilities, long-term health needs, complex needs, and social exclusion. There is no single model of extra care housing.
Key Outcomes: • Independence: People remain in control of their lives, living independently in a home of their own. • Adaptable Homes: Designing and providing attractive homes that can easily adapt as lives change or needs grow. • Community Integration: Building homes in communities where residents can easily get around and access what they need to live well. • High-Quality Care: Offering high-quality, person-centred, and outcome-driven care and support in extra care housing. • Strengths-Based Support: Care and support that utilises each person's strengths and assets, as well as those of their communities. • Skilled Workforce: Delivering a sustainable, well-trained, and highly skilled workforce motivated to achieve the best outcomes for each person living in Extra Care Housing.	Extra Care Housing is different from others forms of specialist accommodation with support for older people with care needs. There are defining features which distinguish it from other forms of housing or accommodation for older people, such as sheltered housing or care homes and general needs housing. Key Outcomes: • Independence: Extra care housing promotes independence by being a person's individual home, not a care home. Extra care tenants have their own flats usually provided under a tenancy or lease and have their own fully accessible bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and living room. • Choice: Whereas a core care and support service is available on-site 24/7. Tenants can choose who provides their direct personal care. • Community: In addition to the tenant flats, there are communal spaces and professional areas on-site designed to promote tenant well-being, reduce isolation, and support community development. • Nutrition and Social Interaction: Many schemes provide shared kitchens, communal dining facilities, and onsite meal services to ensure access to nutritious meals and support positive social interactions. These outcomes aim to create a supportive, inclusive, and adaptable living environment for older and residents with disabilities.

Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement 2024 to 2039	
Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities	
Development and Commissioning Priorities: (Pages 4 & 5): The council plans to develop well-designed housing for people with care and support needs, including innovative support models, clear design briefs, and strategic locations for new extra care housing.	Supply Analysis: (Pages 11-13): There is a current deficit of extra care housing units, with significant variations across Dorset. The council aims to develop additional units to meet future demand.
Key Outcomes: • Vibrant Community Activity: Dorset aims to be a great place to grow older, with vibrant community activities that keep people well-connected and engaged. • Excellent Care and Support: People will have access to excellent care and support in their homes, both for short-term reablement and longer-term care, always prioritising independence, utilising equipment and assistive technology. Proposals: • Housing Plans: Development of well-designed and high-quality housing for people with care and support needs, including those with complex conditions. • Support and Care Model: An innovative and responsive model that maximises independence and choice through extra care design features, new technologies, and a skilled care workforce. • Development Plans: Clear design briefs, assessment of current provision, and identification of locations for new extra care housing. • Market Stimulation: Providing options for older homeowners and households, especially those not eligible for council-funded provision. • Partnerships: Establishing effective partnerships with social housing providers, health, and other key partners to secure investment and deliver high-quality extra care housing. To create a supportive environment where residents with extra care needs can live independently, with access to excellent care and vibrant community activities.	Key Outcomes: • Addressing Deficit: Dorset needs to develop 1,805 additional extra care housing flats or 33 new (55 unit) schemes by 2038 to meet the growing demand. • Benchmarking: At least four new extra care schemes (220 units) are needed to align with benchmark averages. • Affordable Housing: The development of new extra care housing is challenged by the need for more affordable homes and the availability of a skilled workforce. • Remodelling Sheltered Housing: The council will work with social housing providers to assess and potentially remodel or redevelop current sheltered housing to meet modern standards. These outcomes highlight the urgent need for strategic planning and development to address the growing demand for extra care housing in Dorset.

Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement 2024 to 2039		
Key points related to the development of homes for older and people with disabilities		
Support and Care Model: (Pages 14-15) Aims to avoid unnecessary hospital and care home admissions. The council proposes a flexible 24/7 onsite support and care services focusing on prevention, independence, and crisis response	Overall Conclusions: (Page s15-16) Forecasting models suggest a need for additional extra care housing units over the next 15 years. The council plans to develop new extra care housing in specific towns to maximise benefits.	Development & Commissioning: (Pages 16-17): The council's strategic document outlines priorities for housing development, focusing on accessibility, community integration, and sustainable development.
Key Outcomes: • Accessible and Affordable Housing: Development of accessible, attractive, and inclusively designed affordable housing for low-income tenants and localised extra care workforce. • Support and Care: Innovative and cost-effective support and care approaches for low-income tenants, ensuring they remain in their communities. • Financial Assistance: Robust support and financial advice for middle-income homeowners to maintain their housing assets and fund long-term care. • Mixed Development: Effective partnerships to develop mixed sites that offer both affordable and market housing options, generating cross-subsidies. These outcomes emphasise the need for tailored housing solutions and support services to meet the diverse needs of Dorset's residents.	Key Outcomes: • Housing Development: Focus on accessibility strategic town-based and mixed development sites, within neighbourhood's design accessibility to amenities, transport and can be supported in a broader community context and access a social care workforce. • Advise: Information on financial options and products, to assist homeowners meeting their needs. • Support and Care: A responsive and flexible support and care model is essential, with substantial annual investments and potential cost savings. • Strategic Partnerships: Collaboration with various stakeholders is crucial for successful housing and care service delivery. These outcomes highlight the importance of strategic planning, investment, and partnerships to meet the growing demand for extra care housing and support services in Dorset.	Key Outcomes: • Enhanced Housing Development: Prioritising the development of well-designed, accessible housing in strategic locations to meet residents changing needs. • Robust Partnerships: Building strong partnerships to secure investment and ensure the successful development of extra care housing. • Effective Support and Care: Implementing a comprehensive support and care model that leverages technology, skilled workforce, and strong leadership to improve outcomes for residents. • Strategic Alignment: Incorporation of extra care design principles, long term need and medium-term plan in the Planning Framework and Local Plan. These priorities and outcomes emphasise the importance of strategic planning, collaboration, and innovation in developing extra care housing and support services in Dorset.

The Inclusive Housing Design Guide 2024 Extra Care⁵ supports the Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategic Statement. The guide describes the design considerations that should be considered to ensure that new homes for people with care and support needs in Dorset achieve excellence in terms of quality and desirability. Ensuring the right homes to enable people to live independently for as long as possible.

Other Southwest Local Authorities⁶

To generalise, other local authorities do not maintain separate, standalone strategies for accessible homes. Instead, they incorporate accessible housing considerations within their broader housing strategies and documents to support the development of accessible homes, including specific Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), guidance notes and documents focused on housing and design.

Cornwall Council has a Housing strategy to 2030⁷ and Cornwall Supported and Specialist Housing Strategy 2023 to 2050⁸ which aims to ensure the provision of specialist, supported, and accessible homes for various groups, including people with physical disabilities, older people, and those with long-term conditions and sets out the requirements for specialist and supported housing in Cornwall. This strategy incorporates various portfolios including Housing, Planning Policy, Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Community Safety and Homelessness. This strategy forms part of a broader housing framework that focuses on delivering the right homes in the right places to meet the needs of all residents.

It is intended that these strategies will inform the next iteration of the Local Plan to ensure housing requirements are embedded in planning policy.

The strategy covers the requirements for specialist, supported and accessible homes for:

- People at risk of homelessness
- People with learning disabilities and/or autistic people
- People with serious mental health needs
- Older people (people aged 55+)
- People with physical disabilities/long term conditions

Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole integrate accessible homes as a broader topic within their Housing Strategy 2021 to 2026, which outlines their plans and priorities for housing development and management.

Devon County Council integrates the development of accessible homes into a broader housing and social care strategy rather than having a separate standalone strategy or

⁵ [Inclusive-housing-design-guide-2024-extra-care](#)

⁶ See for details [LA Links.docx](#)

⁷ [Housing Strategy for Cornwall 2030](#)

⁸ [Cornwall Supported & Specialist Housing Strategy 2023-2050](#)

policy. The council's approach is outlined in, People to Live Independently in Devon 2020 to 2025⁹. This strategy aims to increase the supply of accessible homes through new developments or adaptations to existing homes. Devon has district councils, which some have their own strategies for example North Devon Council have their own Housing strategy, with other district councils using Supplement Planning Documents (SPD) in relation to accessible homes.

Somerset Council incorporates accessible homes into the Somerset Housing Strategy¹⁰ 2019 – 2023 and the Local Development Scheme (LDS)¹¹ which outlines the timetable and framework for producing planning policy documents, including those relating to housing accessibility. The LDS emphasises the importance of creating well-designed places that cater to the needs of all residents, including older and disabled people.

The development plan, which is part of the LDS, includes policies aimed at ensuring new housing developments are accessible and adaptable.

Conclusions

There are multiple Dorset Council strategies and a plan (A Better Life) already in place which reference and make commitments around delivery and design of accessible homes. The Dorset Council Housing Strategy, A Better Life Plan and Dorset Extra Care Housing Strategy each emphasise integrated and collaborative working as key in delivery, along with promoting a shared vision where colleagues work to shared values.

These strategies have been developed and adopted as part of Dorset Council. The present Local Plans and SPDs in use are specific to district areas. Therefore, the Dorset Council newly adopted strategies from 2023 are not referenced or applied within any current adopted area specific Local Plan or SPD.

Typically, strategic priorities around accessible homes are incorporated into wider Housing Strategies or SPDs which focuses specifically on the delivery of affordable housing or accessible homes. However, proposed changes to the NPPF whilst maintaining the role SPDs place more emphasis on having a streamlined and plan-led system. It seems therefore unlikely that this will be the approach going forward. Dorset Councils indicate in their March 2025 report, 'Guide to the new planning system' that they do not intend to review or produce new SPDs with exception to those discussed above.

Recommendations

⁹ [People to Live Independently in Devon 2020 to 2025 - Adult Social Care](#)

¹⁰ [Somerset Housing Strategy \(2019 – 2023\)](#)

¹¹ [Appendix 1 Somerset Council LDS FINAL Feb 2025](#)

It is not recommended that the council develops a stand-alone accessible homes strategy because this is not necessary. There is already substantial strategic commitment to deliver accessible homes, improve design and work in collaboration to do so.

However, it will be important for the Housing Service in collaboration with Adult Services to participate in consultation for the Local Plan. To ensure housing and adult services requirements regarding general housing and subsets of affordable and accessible homes are encompassed within the Local Plan. To ensure their requirements are met within planning policy and sets expectations for developers to future proof housing developments. This is to ensure that the strategic commitments made in relation to the development of accessible homes and are reflected and given adequate weight within the new Local Plan.

As part of the consultation for the Local Plan the Housing Programme Board may consider recommending that an SPD specifically relating to accessible home be developed. This would incorporate details on how strategic objectives will be achieved from each of the strategies and include applicable design guides.

