



# Improving Homes

**Thematic Progress Update**

**March 2023**

A Plan for West Devon



# Lead Member Introduction



Cllr Barry Ratcliffe  
Lead Member  
for improving  
homes

Ensuring that everyone within West Devon has access to a safe and warm home is a key priority within A Plan for West Devon This year has made this even more vital with the cost of living challenges and the ongoing housing crisis within the borough. We have also dealt with the consequences of the war in Ukraine, with residents of the borough opening up their homes to support Ukrainian people fleeing the conflict. The Council has played a key part in supporting both guests and hosts.

This update report sets out the progress the Council has made in achieving the key actions set out in the 2022/23 thematic delivery plan. It also reflects on new actions that were agreed as part of the Year 3 Action Plan in March 2023. Since adoption of A Plan for West Devon, in September 2021 some of the key achievements have been:

- ✓ Lobbied for changes to the Supported Housing sector and been awarded over £300k of Government funding as part of their Supported Housing Improvement Programme
- ✓ Supported 162 Ukrainians, resettle with host families in the Borough, helping with tenancy sustainment and ensuring there was alternative accommodation in cases of placement breakdown
- ✓ Completed Housing Needs Surveys in Brentor, North Tawton, Princetown,
- ✓ Taken on 5 more properties through Seamoor lettings
- ✓ Prevented homelessness for 82 households
- ✓ Adopted a new 5 year Homeless Strategy jointly with South Hams
- ✓ Through a successful Government funding bid recruited a dedicated temporary accommodation support worker.
- ✓ Driving forward pre-construction work to determine next steps at Council owned sites at Wonnacotts Road Okehampton and Springhill & 20 Plymouth Road, Tavistock

<b>2</b> Activities on Track and within budget	<b>4</b> Activities requiring additional intervention or have uncertainties that require managing	<b>0</b> Activities off track with no current clear plan to resolve	<b>0</b> Not yet due to start
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Over the coming pages, we set out more in-depth update for each action along with the wider benefits to our communities.

The third-year delivery plan carries on the building blocks of the work started in the first two years of this plan, there is much still to do and it is important that the Council continue to prioritise improving homes and the objectives of this strategy.

*Cllr Barry Ratcliffe*

**Cllr Barry Ratcliffe (Lead Member for Improving Homes)**



<b>Action IH1.1 – Deliver local homes that meet the needs of local people through a cumulative 300 new homes by the end of 2023/24 across the joint local plan area</b>	
<b>Key Highlights</b>	
In total during 2022/23, 210 new affordable properties were delivered in the West Devon and South Hams JLP area and Dartmoor National Park. Specifically for West Devon, 72 units of affordable housing were delivered and occupied. Nearly double the completions of the previous year in West Devon (36)	
<b>Key Risks / Issues</b>	
We continue to monitor the market and whilst there is a risk delivery could slow down due to issues sourcing labour, materials and difficulties with mortgages, there may be opportunities to act, that increase delivery of affordable housing by additionality and direct purchase from developers.	
<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>GREEN – On Track</b>

<b>Action IH1.2 – Work with Devon County Council to support people to live independently, identifying opportunities for specialist, purpose-built accommodation</b>	
<b>Key Highlights and benefits</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have been successful for over £300k of Government funding to improve the local supported housing market with specific objectives around quality of accommodation, value for money and joint working with County to ensure a safety net for vulnerable people.</li> <li>• We are improving our evidence base around future need, for people with learning disabilities, mental health.</li> <li>• Our early commitment is to provide some units of supported accommodation on our own site at Wonnacotts Road Okehampton and seek to provide exemplar accommodation for people with learning disabilities.</li> </ul>	
<b>Key Risks / Issues</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) bill is currently making its way through parliament. If this comes into law we may see a number of providers exiting the market because they cannot meet the higher standard. This may lead to a temporary shortage of placements available. We will continue to monitor this.</li> <li>• Work to bring forward an extra care scheme at Plymouth Road Tavistock, that received planning permission in December 2021 has been delayed due to a legal issue with probate</li> </ul>	
<b>Looking ahead to the next 6 months</b>	
A business case for a potential scheme for Wonnacotts Road is anticipated in Q3/4 of 23/24	
<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>Amber – slightly off track due to Plymouth Road</b>

<b>Action IH1.3 – Develop our understanding of housing need and implement plans for responding</b>	
<b>Key Highlights</b>	
Recruited Housing Needs Analyst in September 2022. Housing Needs surveys in Brentor, North Tawton, Princetown completed Expanded the work of the disabled adapted panel work to understand future needs as well as current needs.	
<b>Key Risks / Issues</b>	



<b>Looking ahead to the next 6 months</b>	
Housing Needs Surveys in scope; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lydford, Mary Tavy, Peter Tavy &amp; Brentor (cluster survey)</li> <li>• Horrabridge</li> <li>• Bere Ferrers,</li> <li>• Bridestowe and Sourton (cluster survey)</li> <li>• Sampford Courtney, Monkokehampton, Jacobstowe &amp; Exbourne (cluster survey)</li> <li>• South Tawton &amp; Sticklepath (cluster survey)</li> </ul>	
<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>GREEN – ON TRACK</b>

<b>Action IH1.4 – Promote and support energy efficiency in homes through ensuring the private rented sector meets the requirements of the Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards, Green Homes Grant Phase 2 and Energy efficiency improvements social housing decarbonisation fund</b>	
<b>Key Highlights</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported 38 homes with a green home grant totalling £519,027 of improvements.</li> <li>• Resource allocated to lead MEES project</li> </ul>	
<b>Key Risks / Issues</b>	
The national EPC (energy performance certificate) database has proven to be inaccurate which has created a challenge in contacting landlords of properties rated G or below to increase uptake of the MEES scheme. Seeking to mitigate this by sourcing alternative data to use to contact Landlords.	
<b>Looking ahead to the next 6 months</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up &amp; launch of new energy efficiency grant scheme, with installations due to start June 2023</li> </ul>	
<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>Amber – slightly off track due to data and resource</b>

<b>Action IH1.5 – Promote the best use and improve the quality of existing housing including through a new Seamoor Lettings website, a new tenancy strategy and seek redevelopment opportunities with partners to enhance the current housing stock to meet the needs of residents.</b>	
<b>Key Highlights</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seamoor Homes website launched</li> <li>• Tenancy Strategy adopted Sept 2021</li> <li>• We have increased our Tenants Incentive Scheme to £5,000 for people wishing to downsize and have supported 4 people to move</li> </ul>	
<b>Key Risks / Issues</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Damp &amp; mould is a key area of concern within Registered Provider (RP) Stock following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale</li> <li>• Property Disposals by RP’s of poor performing stock, particularly in areas of high demand and low availability.</li> <li>• Changes to Energy Performance Certificates etc for rental properties that are in the pipeline may see landlords become more reluctant to let properties. We will ensure that we build this in to our communications strategy and promote the Lendology finance options for landlords.</li> </ul>	



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action IH1.5 is slightly off track against the original plan as we have not rolled out our package of support for HMO management and promoted it to landlords. The Council intends to bring forward its own HMO at Plymouth Road and use as a pilot for management best practice</li> </ul>
<b>Looking ahead to the next 6 months</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revisit housing register data where an applicant has highlighted damp and mould on their housing application to ensure the RP is addressing</li> <li>Meet with RP's to understand fully disposal strategies and develop mitigation</li> <li>Project Team meeting to develop next phase of promoting Seamoor lettings website.</li> <li>Progress discussions with our registered provider partners on potential regeneration projects.</li> </ul>
<b>Overall Rating</b> <b>Amber – Slightly Off Track</b>

<b>Action IH1.6 – Deliver on our plans for 11 self-contained apartments in Tavistock to support people who are homeless</b>
<b>Key Highlights</b>
<p>We received planning consent for the self-contained apartments in Tavistock in December 2021</p> <p>In April 2022 a tender was issued to deliver the planning consent. This closed in June 2022. Unfortunately, no compliant tender submissions were received, which meant a different procurement route needed to be explored.</p> <p>The current position is we are directly working with a preferred contractor to review the design and develop a final construction cost.</p> <p>Officers are likely to have the results and the construction cost in March 2023.</p>
<b>Key Risks / Issues</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The business case - rising construction costs due to the effects of events including covid, rising inflation, energy prices, Brexit and the war in Ukraine and the stagnation of the local housing allowance all of which will have a detrimental effect on the financial business case.</li> <li>Availability of suppliers – The availability of suppliers is currently being affected by the unprecedented challenges facing the construction industry. The combination of all these issues is having a real impact on the industry and has forced several contractors into administration.</li> <li>Legal - The process required to release/vary the current covenant with the NHS</li> </ul>
<b>Looking ahead to the next 6 months</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction costs received March 2023</li> <li>Project review of delivery options</li> <li>Revised business case Summer 2023 for Council approval</li> </ul>
<b>Overall Rating</b> <b>Amber – slightly off track</b>

