

South Hams & West Devon  
***Better Homes,  
Better Lives***  
Housing Strategy 2021-2026

Review 2022 – 2023



South Hams  
District Council



West Devon  
Borough Council





## Background

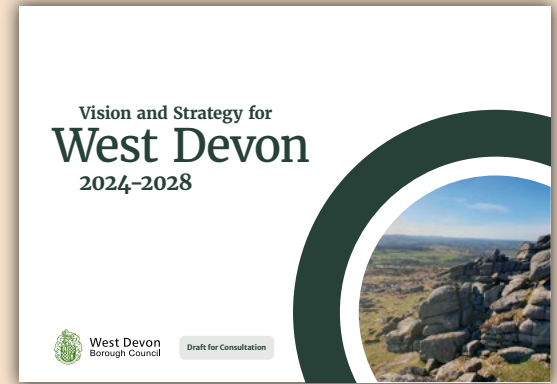
South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council adopted their new Housing Strategy “Better Homes, Better Lives” in April 2021 which set out the Councils housing ambitions for the next 5 years.

One year later, our 2022 – 27 Homelessness Strategy was also adopted. The year since their adoption have not been without their challenges; with a housing crisis being declared in the South Hams in October 21 and in West Devon shortly after; in February 22. These two events were quickly followed by the humanitarian crisis in the Ukraine in February 22 and the cost of living crisis which has been developing over the past 6-12 months. Each of these events have had a profound effect on the lives of our residents and the direction that our work is taking.

Whilst it is impossible to anticipate some of these major events, experience has taught us that one can never become complacent about the maintenance of the status quo, particularly when designing and establishing a 5 year strategy. For this reason our Housing Strategy and our Homelessness Strategy are reviewed annually and have been designed to respond flexibly to changing need and demand whilst remaining in line with the councils overarching corporate strategies.



### Corporate Strategy and Strategic Themes



### Corporate Strategy and Strategic Themes



### Underpinning Documents





# Housing and Homelessness – the way forward

The Housing Strategy “Better Homes, Better Lives” and the Homelessness Strategy are both now well established documents, both leading and shaping the direction of our service.

The elections in May 2023 introduced a new political direction in South Hams and many new members across both South Hams and West Devon. Considering this, we have taken the opportunity to collaborate with members to re-evaluate our priorities and ensure that the direction of our Housing and Homelessness services remains an accurate reflection of the area’s current needs and challenges.

The resulting action plan is intended to build on our achievements and address the new and existing challenges the current financial, political, and housing landscape hold.

As a response to the Housing Crisis declarations in South Hams and West Devon, the decision was taken to review our current housing resource and to consider how it may be tailored to best meet the needs of our residents. The outcome of this review was the combining of existing housing related work streams to create a single housing focussed team; designed to find solutions to the immediate housing crisis as well as work together to effectively prevent future crises occurring.

In reflection of this enhanced, joined up approach, our 2021–26 Housing Strategy “Better Homes, Better Lives” and our Homelessness Strategy 2022–27 have been brought into alignment for review within this document. The outcome of this Joint review strategy will be the enablement of a full and thorough review of all elements relating to and impacting on housing provision and homelessness, alongside how we are working together to ensure best outcomes.

## The Housing Strategy

The objectives identified in the Housing Strategy “Better Homes, Better Lives” are framed around two key themes of what makes a home, a community, a society; the Place and the People.

### Housing for Place



Driving the delivery of new homes that people can afford and meeting the diverse needs of our communities.

Under this theme our focus is around provision of housing, identifying future needs and ensuring that developments in rural locations support the needs of those communities. Encouraging provision of a diverse range of housing options to include; social housing, shared & low-cost ownership, extra care housing, housing to promote independent living for those with additional needs, options for gypsy and traveller communities, and those wishing to pursue a self-build option.

### Housing for People



Ensure the best use and improved quality of existing housing.

Under this theme our focus is around the improvement of the lives of people in our communities; ensuring their homes are warm, energy efficient and meet their health and wellbeing needs.

## 2022 – 27 Joint Homelessness Strategy

The 2022–27 Homelessness strategy is designed around the needs of four distinct groups of people who make up our community:

- singles & couples;
- families;
- those with additional needs; and
- rough sleepers.

The strength in this approach is in being able to identify where needs overlap and can be met simply for all groups, and recognising where differentiation in need and delivery of solutions is required. This approach has enabled us to identify and monitor changing needs within each group, and to find creative and targeted solutions; designed to meet specific need.

The objectives in the 2022–27 Homelessness Strategy outline the four major activities undertaken within our area of work. Our aims are to:

- **Prevent** – identifying and addressing issues early to ensure households can remain in their homes or make a planned move without becoming homeless;
- **Relieve** – where homelessness cannot be avoided, support people to find accommodation;
- **Sustain** – where complex needs are identified, we will work with partner agencies to ensure people are supported to sustain their homes;
- **Provide** – to work to improve access to a range of accommodation options suitable for household needs.



## Objective alignment and complementary practice

When read in parallel with our Homelessness Strategy 22-27 the alignment of our objectives can be clearly identified.

The key aims of provision of suitable housing, and the focus on identifying and meeting the needs of the people within our community, form a well-defined thread throughout our work. To accurately review the progress, we have made we have pulled the various complementary threads of work together so that they can be reviewed as a whole.

Working in partnership, these shared housing-related disciplines have enabled us to work together more effectively to address the challenges currently faced across our two local authority areas. This has enabled a collaborative approach toward meeting immediate housing need and homelessness, whilst planning for future housing supply and demand and whilst ensuring existing and future homes meet quality homes standards.

## Overview of our aligned objectives

### People Priority 1: Homes that support the Health and Wellbeing of our residents.

The Councils are compelled to addressing hardship, deprivation, ill health and inequalities that exist within our areas.

#### Sustain

We will work with our residents and partner agencies to ensure people are supported to sustain their homes.

Focus areas:

- Energy efficiency;
- Promoting independent living through adaptations and improvements;
- Ensure adapted housing is matched to those with a need for adaptations to ensure best use of stock;
- Develop a Fuel Poverty Action Plan;
- Ensure access to good quality financial and independent living advice and support to ensure people are empowered to sustain their tenancies;
- Work proactively with landlords in both the private and social rented sector to ensure early identification of tenancy sustainment issues including financial, affordability and property quality issues.

### People Priority 2: Make the best use and improve the quality of existing housing.

The Council are committed to making better use of already existing housing to meet the needs of residents.

#### Prevent

identifying and addressing issues early to ensure households can remain in their homes or make a planned moved without becoming homeless.

Focus areas:

- Improve and enhance housing standards across the private and social housing sector through landlord engagement;
- Expand SeaMoor Lettings to improve access to the private rented sector;
- Promote the Tenants Incentive Scheme to encourage and incentivise tenants under occupying tenants in social housing to downsize;
- Work with registered providers and private landlords to enable early identification of families at risk of homelessness to enable provision of appropriate support and access to housing options;
- Work closely with partner agencies to ensure those in housing need are identified and referred to us quickly to enable early intervention measures can be put in place; including support to downsize or move to more suitable accommodation.

## Place Priority 1: Promote Balanced and Sustainable communities.

The long-term resilience of rural communities depends upon having a diverse housing stock that can meet the needs of a wide range of households. By ensuring that new development adds diversity to the housing stock we can help ensure our communities are inclusive and equitable places to live, and that can create communities that are well prepared to respond to change.

### Provide

To work to improve access to a range of accommodation options suitable for household needs.

Focus areas:

- Work with DCC to provide specialist accommodation for those requiring support;
- Work with developers to encourage provision of social, managed shared, intermediate private rental, part ownership and market sale housing;
- Promote effectively partnership working to meet the needs of Gypsy and Travellers;
- Encourage opportunities for people interested in Self Build;
- Using the Council's resources, increase the number of affordable private rented and council owned properties available to families, to include quality temporary housing;
- Maximise the number of properties made available as a result of successful downsizing in the social rented sector;
- work with Devon County Council to support the delivery of housing for those with support needs through a property management service offer with intensive housing support.

## Place Priority 2: Ensuring that homes support the Health and Wellbeing of the area.

The Council wants to meet the housing needs of all communities and the challenges of an ageing population. This Strategy aims to promote the best use of current housing stock, whatever the tenure, and enable new housing that is built to a standard that will enhance the health and wellbeing of future occupants.

### Relieve

Where homelessness cannot be avoided, support people to find accommodation.

Focus areas:

- Plan for current and future housing needs to include consideration of:
  - Health needs;
  - Energy efficiency;
  - Wheelchair standard housing;
  - Extra care housing provision;
  - Quality temporary housing provision for those facing homelessness.
- Ensure provision of quality temporary housing and access to support services to holistically address the needs of those facing homelessness;
- Work with partner agencies to deliver accommodation and services which support young people facing homelessness;
- Develop a range of accommodation and support options for people rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping to make long term accommodation sustainment realistic and meet unmet needs.



# Key achievements



St Anne's Chapel

# People Priority 1: Homes that support the Health and Wellbeing of our residents

The Councils are compelled to address hardship, deprivation, ill health, and inequalities that exist within our areas.

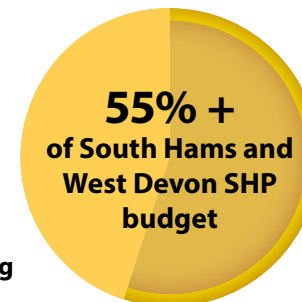
## Sustain

We will work with our residents and partner agencies to ensure people are supported to sustain their homes:

- Over 55% of the South Hams and West Devon DHP budgets were used to support tenants struggling with their rent.
- 85 Green homes grants paid in South Hams and 38 in West Devon to improve homes.
- We have referred 290 customers to our joint contracted financial advice services to maximise their incomes, get support with debt and help with accessing grants for essential everyday items.

- 683 Household support fund payments made to residents requiring essential household items in South Hams and 396 in West Devon.
- 4 Notices issued in South Hams and 3 in West Devon to landlords to support tenants in poor housing conditions.
- Introduced a specialist Support Worker to provide holistic support for people in temporary accommodation.

Used to support tenants struggling with their rent



Specialist Support Worker introduced

# People Priority 2: Make the best use and improve the quality of existing housing

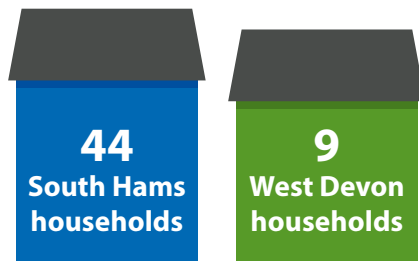
The Councils are committed to making better use of already existing housing to meet the needs of residents.

## Prevent

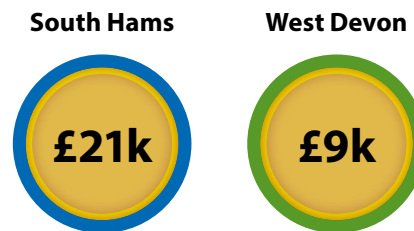
Identifying and addressing issues early to ensure households are able to remain in their homes or make a planned move without becoming homeless:

- Supported 44 households in South Hams and 9 households in West Devon to either secure alternate adapted housing, or access adaptations to existing housing through the Disabled Adapted Panel.

- Working closely with the Devon Wide homeless prevention panel for young people and care leavers to ensure a coordinated response to those at risk of homelessness in Devon.
- Paid over £21k in South Hams and 9k in West Devon toward rent arrears to ensure tenants did not lose their homes.
- Developed and promoted tenancy guides to ensure tenants and landlords are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- Improved landlord engagement through promotion of advice services through the SeaMoor webpages to include support for landlords with tenants who are struggling.
- Improved disrepair reporting mechanisms, in particular around Damp and Mould issues, to ensure a fast and effective response to help people remain safely in their homes.



Supported to either secure alternate adapted housing, or access adaptations to existing housing through the Disabled Adapted Panel



Paid towards rent arrears to ensure tenants did not lose their homes

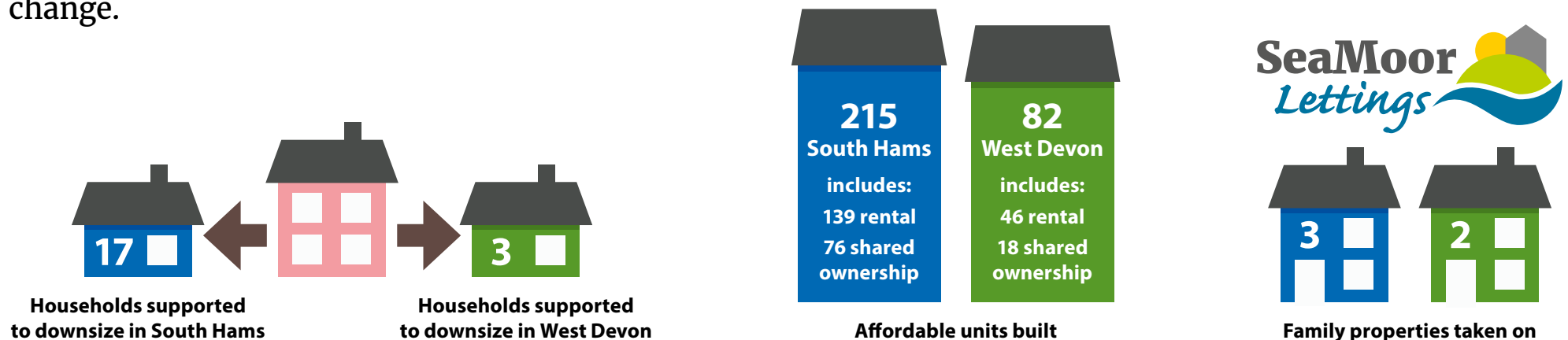
# Place Priority 1: Promote Balanced and Sustainable communities

The long-term resilience of rural communities depends upon having a diverse housing stock that can meet the needs of a wide range of households. By ensuring that new development adds diversity to the housing stock we can help ensure our communities are inclusive and equitable places to live, and that can create communities that are well prepared to respond to change.

## Provide

To work to improve access to a range of accommodation options suitable for household needs:

- 17 South Hams households supported financially to downsize to appropriate accommodation through the Tenants Incentive Scheme releasing family properties for re let.
- A further 3 West Devon Households supported to downsize releasing family homes.
- 215 affordable units built in South Hams to include 139 rent and 76 shared ownership.
- 82 affordable units built in West Devon to include 46 rental and 18 shared ownership.
- Consistently achieving 30% social housing contributions from developers across both districts.
- 3 new family properties taken on as part of SeaMoor lettings in South Hams and 2 in West Devon.



- Work towards the development of Council owned land at Wonnacots Rd, Okehampton, Plymouth Rd Tavistock and Ropewalk in Kingsbridge has commenced with a view to increasing the affordable housing delivery across the two districts.
- Developed the framework to launch and manage St Ann's Chapel to meet the existing and forthcoming Regulatory Guidance, the first council housing developed in a generation.



St Ann's Chapel

- Through the Local Authority Housing Fund, we delivered 11 properties in South Hams and 5 in West Devon for refugees and future temporary accommodation for homeless households.
- Secured planning permission for 125 homes, including 46% Affordable Homes of different tenures at Collaton Cross through the Different Approach Model. 18 of these homes are secured for the CLT.
- Secured a further 17 Affordable Social Rented homes at Butts Park in Newton and Noss in partnership with the CLT.
- Received £77,825 for offsite Affordable Housing Contributions in West Devon and £49,003 in South Hams
- Introduced new Software to assist with the assessment of the viability of affordable housing schemes.
- Developed new procedures to better define our approach to engaging with the Gypsy, Traveler and Caravan Dweller communities.

Properties for refugees

11

5



# Place Priority 2: Ensuring that homes support the Health and Wellbeing of the area

The Council wants to meet the housing needs of all communities and the challenges of an ageing population. This Strategy aims to promote the best use of current housing stock, whatever the tenure, and enable new housing that is built to a standard that will enhance the health and wellbeing of future occupants.

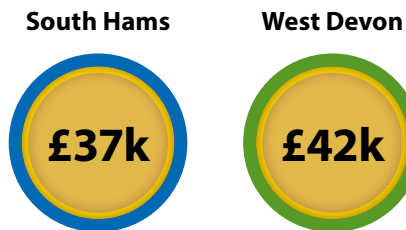
## Relieve

Where homelessness cannot be avoided, support people to find accommodation:

- Enabled provision of disabled adapted accommodation within South Hams temporary accommodation stock.
- Provided over £22k in South Hams and £8.5k to households requiring financial support with Rent in advance and deposits to access the housing from our Homelessness Prevention Fund.

- Provided a further £37k in South Hams and £42k in West Devon to meet the costs of rent in advance, deposit, and other moving costs.
- Purchase of two one bedroom properties for use as intensive support housing for rough sleepers.
- Established regular gypsy and traveller forums to engage with those requiring a site.
- Secured planning permission for 20 Plymouth Rd, Tavistock to be redeveloped into three flats to be used as supported accommodation for homeless households.

Financial support with Rent in advance and deposits to access the housing from our Homelessness Prevention Fund



Further support to meet the costs of rent in advance, deposit, and other moving costs



One bedroom properties as intensive support housing for rough sleepers

# Headlines



**We are investing in more housing**

We are boosting our stock of homes to address the district's immediate and future housing needs, a top priority for our new administration.

Help us to understand the housing situation in

## Bridestowe & Sourton



**South Hams District Council**  
Published by Sprout Social · November 30, 2023 ·

As part of our drive to deliver more affordable homes, we are investing an initial £100,000 to help local communities and landowners deliver more houses in the areas which need it most.

Our new Housing Offer will launch early next year and will offer communities advice and support with forming housing groups, finding suitable sites for development and help with planning.

Find out more <https://www.southhams.gov.uk/.../supporting-communities...>

#shdc #southhams

Help us to understand the housing situation in

## Stoke Gabriel



**West Devon Borough Council**  
Published by Sprout Social · November 21, 2023 ·

Tenants are now able to report housing disrepair issues online with our new and simplified online service.

You can now report and upload photos of issues such as damp and mould through our online reporting form, providing a clear contact for support and advice.

Tenants can report issues here [www.westdevon.gov.uk/housing-disrepair](http://www.westdevon.gov.uk/housing-disrepair)

Find out more about the actions we are taking to improve the quality of housing for tenants across West Devon [https://www.westdevon.gov.uk/\\_/new-online-service-help...](https://www.westdevon.gov.uk/_/new-online-service-help...)

#housing #wdbc

**West Devon Borough Council**  
Published by Sprout Social · July 7, 2023 ·

It's #RuralHousingWeek! It aims to highlight the important role affordable housing plays in maintaining rural communities.

We work with partners to deliver affordable homes for local people, including older or sick residents to enable them to live independently for longer. Helping our younger families to stay in the place where they have grown up.

If you cannot afford to rent or buy a home on the open market, affordable or low-cost housing could help.

Find out more [www.westdevon.gov.uk/article/3519/Affordable-Housing](http://www.westdevon.gov.uk/article/3519/Affordable-Housing)

#ruralhousing

**South Hams District Council**  
Published by Sprout Social · November 27, 2023 ·

- ✓ Own your own home?
- ✓ Have heating that isn't mains gas?
- ✓ Have an EPC rating of D, E, F, G?
- ✓ Have a gross household income of less than £31k per year?

If so, you could be eligible for help with improving the energy efficiency of your home.

We are working with partners [South Dartmoor Community Energy](#) to help those who are on lower incomes in the most need of upgrading.

The improvements will also help reduce carbon emissions across the District - our top priorities.

Find out more here - <https://www.southhams.gov.uk/.../helping-residents-...>

#southhams #housing #climate #community

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## Energy efficiency help for 100 homes in west Devon

28 November 2023



### Save on your energy bills this year



Is your home draughty and expensive to heat? With utility bills expected to rise this year, now is the time to think about the energy efficiency of your home.

If you own your house, have a household income of less than £31k and have heating that isn't mains gas with an EPC rating of D, E, F or G, you could be eligible for some home improvements. This could include better insulation and a carbon heating system.

We are working with partners [South Dartmoor Community Energy](#) to help lower income households in the most need of upgrading.

Don't know your EPC rating? You can [look it up](#).

Check whether you are eligible and [apply online](#).



### We have joined over 100 councils to address the homelessness crisis

We have joined forces with councils across the country to urge the Government to take action to support people facing homelessness and in need of shelter.

**West Devon Borough Council**  
Published by Sprout Social · July 12, 2023 ·

We are joining forces with organisations across Devon to help solve crisis.

As part of the new Devon Housing Commission - a partnership between authorities and supported by the [University of Exeter](#), we can start to address housing issues which are having an impact on people's health and wellbeing.

Have your say on issues related to housing by responding to a survey <https://bit.ly/461632A>

Find out more <https://bit.ly/3PY14GR>

#westdevon #wdbc #housing #devonhousingcommission

PL News · Plymouth News · South Hams

## New Plymouth houses can't be used as holiday second homes

Work is due to start at Collaton Cross on the edge of the city with many of the 125 houses...

By [William Telford](#) Business Editor  
14:31, 26 SEP 2023

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## Devon council-built affordable homes a 'generation first'

24 November 2023 · Comments





### Supporting Communities To Deliver More Homes

In our drive to provide more affordable homes, we have today (30 November) announced we will invest an initial £100,000 to help local communities deliver more houses in the areas which need it most.

30 November 2023

**News Release**  
Communications and Media Team

Tel: 01803 961368 Email: [communications@swdevon.gov.uk](mailto:communications@swdevon.gov.uk)

**New Council Homes Opened in St Anns Chapel**

Issued: 24 November 2023

For the first time in a generation, South Hams District Council has built its own affordable homes which will help tackle the District's housing crisis.

The development of eight new affordable homes in St Anns Chapel was officially opened yesterday (23 November), giving some of the prospective tenants the opportunity to view the homes.

# The Next Steps

The next steps in delivering the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 are outlined in the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2023/24.





### Your pathway to home ownership

Rentplus is a new company based in Plymouth that will tackle the housing crisis and give thousands of people the chance to own their home for the first time.

- We will:**
- Build 5,000 affordable homes across England by 2020
  - Offer renewable five-year tenancies with the opportunity to buy every five years
  - Give tenants a gifted deposit of 10% of the property's value
  - Increase affordable housing stock without need for grant funding
  - Reduce local authority waiting lists
  - Work in partnership with house builders, developers, housing associations and local authorities in the South West and across the UK
  - Provide high quality, energy efficient homes.



For more information, visit [www.rentplus-uk.com](http://www.rentplus-uk.com)

### Let's talk about housing



### Community drop in HERE today





South Hams  
District Council

[www.southhams.gov.uk](http://www.southhams.gov.uk)



West Devon  
Borough Council

[www.westdevon.gov.uk](http://www.westdevon.gov.uk)