



Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership

Strategic Housing Framework 2013 – 2016

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Forward

To be inserted when document is finalised and to be signed off by SSHP

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Our Vision

The Strategic Housing Vision for Somerset strives to:

- Provide the opportunity for people to live in decent, warm and affordable homes, where communities are sustainable and built on partnership working with shared responsibilities.
- Work in partnership to deliver efficient housing services.
- Respond to change and maximise opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of people living and working in Somerset.
- Ensure that current and future housing is sustainable by developing housing that is affordable, reducing homelessness and improving access to services for vulnerable adults.

1.2 Our Priorities

The three priorities listed below have been identified as the key issues for the sub-region. More information on these issues can be found in the section called – Our Priorities.

Priority 1	<p>To increase the supply of affordable housing to support economic growth and development.</p> <p>Key Areas of Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Effective use of planning➤ Increasing supply of land for affordable housing➤ Identifying need effectively➤ Identifying more creative ways of delivering affordable homes➤ Sustainable developments➤ Continue to maximise New Homes Bonus➤ Co-ordination of partnership working with partner landlords such as housing associations
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Priority 2	<p>To make best use of the of sub-region’s existing housing stock.</p> <p>Key Areas of Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ To ensure that Homefinder Somerset continues to deliver mobility and choice of housing options to those wishing to access affordable housing in Somerset.➤ Ensure that those already in social housing have mobility
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	<p>when they need it through the promotion and facilitation of mutual exchange wherever possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bringing homes up to the decent homes standard wherever possible. ➤ Bring empty homes back into use and utilise them for those in housing need. ➤ Maximise works to improve energy efficiency and thermal comfort ➤ Combat deprivation by ensuring the diversification of the tenure mix within existing and new developments. ➤ Implementing co-ordinated approaches to small scale adaptations and repairs to enable people to remain in their homes.
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<p>Priority 3</p>	<p>To meet the housing and accommodation related support needs of the sub-region’s most vulnerable and least resilient residents.</p> <p>Key Areas of Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support the delivery of the priorities within the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy ➤ Support the priorities within the Housing, Health, Care and Support Strategy for Older People in Somerset ➤ Support the delivery of the priorities of the Somerset Homelessness Strategy ➤ Support the delivery of the key outcomes from the Somerset Youth Housing Strategy ➤ Deliver the pitch requirements as set out in the GTAA 2011
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Our framework and the key areas of focus with it, is focused on:

- Building on existing partnerships to develop shared approaches to the issues we face and ensuring that the links between housing and health are maintained and developed further.
- Addressing sub-regional challenges in ways that are appropriate to each locality and the specific housing issues that are faced in those areas.
- Wherever possible we shall continue to work together on shared issues, developing joint strategies and policies and finding common solutions where appropriate, where separate approaches are required we shall endeavour to make these as consistent as possible whilst respecting local circumstances.

Please note that this is a living document that may be affected by both local and national potential policy changes arising as a result of elections or changes to funding etc. Much of the data within the evidence base is taken from the Somerset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) as at September 2012. As the JSNA becomes updated with 2011 census information the document may be refreshed if the update JSNA data shows significant changes in overall trends identified within this framework document.

The framework approach will enable each partner to identify specific actions that will be implemented within individual local authority areas supported by the overarching common key areas of focus identified within this strategic framework.

2. Introduction

2.1 This document sets out a new sub -regional housing strategy framework for Somerset. It describes how the strategy has been created and is intended to:

- Provide a framework for the future of housing in Somerset and identify sub-regional priorities;
- Show the crucial roles played by partnerships in delivering and improving housing and housing services in the sub-region and;
- Illustrate the linkages between this framework and other key national and sub-regional policies and strategies.

2.2 The document is structured in the following way:

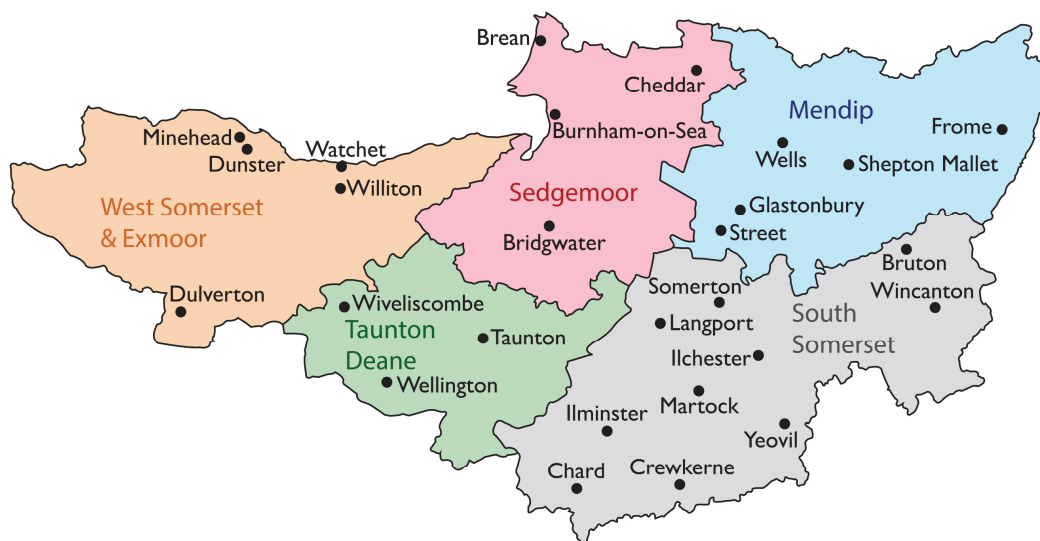
Section A The Evidence Base for the Strategic Framework

Section B The Strategic response to that evidence

Section C The priorities and key areas of focus for the Somerset Housing Partnership authorities.

2.3 For the purposes of this strategic framework document the area of Somerset comprises the following local authorities within the boundaries of Somerset County Council:

- Mendip District Council
- Sedgemoor District Council
- South Somerset District Council
- Taunton Deane Borough Council
- West Somerset Council



- 2.4 The authorities in the sub-region, social landlords¹ and other key partners have a long and successful history of working together to develop and improve housing services and standards. This partnership working pre-dates the current government's emphasis on strategic, cross-border, multi-discipline partnerships and has been delivered through the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership (SSHP).
- 2.5 The SSHP was formed in 2004 to bring together key stakeholders from all housing and related fields (including health and social care) to:
- Share ideas and experience and work towards a greater understanding of the housing needs and aspirations of the sub-region's diverse population;
 - Raise awareness of the issues affecting the sub-region and lobby for additional funding;
 - Work together to improve the standards of new and existing housing within the sub-region; and
 - Ensure the provision of appropriate, affordable homes, in the right locations, for future generations.

The partnership comprises the five housing authorities, Somerset County Council and NHS Somerset and reports into the shadow Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board.

- 2.6 This partnership has already delivered a number of key Somerset wide projects:
- Homefinder Somerset Choice Based Lettings scheme
 - Overarching Somerset Vision for Strategic Housing
 - Skills mapping exercise to establish where the strengths and weaknesses lie within the partnership.
 - Financial inclusion framework
 - Youth Housing Strategy
 - A foundation document for the Housing, Health, Care and Support Strategy for Older People
 - A multi-agency approach to the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)
 - Somerset Tenancy Strategy (in conjunction with key social landlords within the Homefinder Somerset partnership)
 - Somerset Homelessness Strategy (in preparation)
 - Cost and Performance Analysis project for housing authority partners

¹ Social landlords are Registered Providers (RPs), independent housing organisations registered with the Homes & Communities Agency under the Housing Act 1996. Most are housing associations, but there are also trusts, co-operatives and companies.

- 2.7 The partnership is also currently jointly reviewing the Homefinder Somerset Common Allocations Policy in light of the recent allocations guidance from government, in particular the requirement to ensure that the needs of those leaving the armed forces are recognised within the policy. This review is being carried out with our Homefinder Somerset social landlord partners.
- 2.8 We recognise that working together to produce a Housing Strategy Framework for the partnership will provide our partners with a clear approach of what our priorities are across the sub-region. However this is not a ‘one size fits all’ approach: different localities require different approaches and different solutions. Our framework will allow each partner to fulfil their own duties and priorities in addressing housing needs, within the boundaries of the common principles set out within the framework document.
- 2.9 We also recognise that housing and health are intrinsically linked and want this framework to tie together these two important areas of service delivery even though they are delivered by different public bodies. The shadow Health and Wellbeing Board will further this relationship. The recent government Homelessness Strategy – Making every contact count re-inforces this approach by specifically stating that local housing authorities should be working together with colleagues in health to ensure the integration of housing and health services. There will be a legal duty to do so within the draft Care and Support bill which mirrors the existing legal requirement on the local NHS to ensure the integration of services and equality of access for all.²
- 2.10 We are in a time of unprecedented change with the government reducing public spending, implementing major changes to welfare benefits (in particular Housing Benefit) and ending permanent social housing tenancies for most new tenants. Changes to the allocation of social housing and to the homelessness legislation (in terms of discharge of duty into private sector accommodation) have also been made³. Whilst the detail of some of these proposals has yet to be finalised by government⁴ there is a consensus that they will have a significant impact on homelessness and homelessness/housing options services. At the same time, the economic outlook remains uncertain and local authorities are facing unprecedented cuts in funding and consequentially to service provision – both factors are likely to add to the pressures on housing options services and make the focus and role of strategic housing all the more vital.
- 2.11 This framework document has been produced by a project team consisting of all the strategic housing leads from the housing authorities and representatives from the NHS and Somerset County Council.

² <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2200459.pdf> paragraph 37 page 16

³ Allocation of accommodation: Guidance for local housing authorities in England <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2171391.pdf> and Part 7 s148/149 of Localism Act 2011 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/part/7/chapter/1/crossheading/homelessness/enacted>

⁴ Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 – Consultation <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/21513539.pdf>

- 2.12 Please note that this is a living document that may be affected by both local and national potential policy changes arising as a result of elections or changes to funding etc.

- 2.13 The framework approach will enable each partner to identify specific actions that will be implemented within individual local authority areas supported by the overarching common key areas of focus identified within this strategic framework.

Section A - Strategic Housing Framework – Evidence Base

3. The National Context

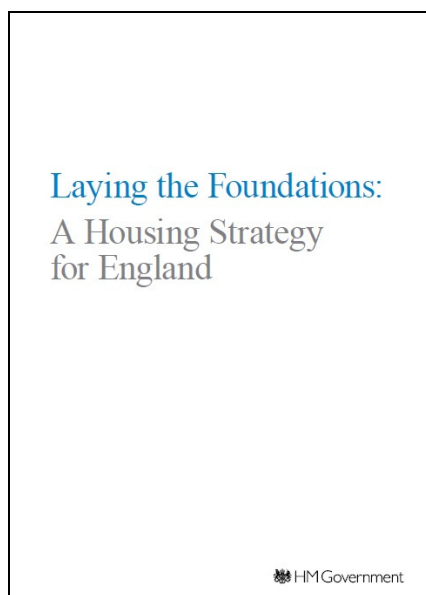
3.1 There are a number of key legislative, strategic and evidence issues that set the scene for this framework. These have been broadly grouped as follows:

- Government Housing Strategy
- Key strategic housing issues
- Homelessness
- Affordable Housing
- Planning Policy

Laying the Foundations – A Housing Strategy for England November 2011⁵

3.2 This national strategy for housing in England set out the government’s key areas of action to ensure a thriving, active but stable housing market is in place that offers choice, flexibility and affordable housing given how critical this is to our economic and social wellbeing. The strategy sets out a package of measures and reforms to:

- Support the delivery of new homes and support aspiration
- Support choice and quality for tenants
- Promote better quality homes, places and housing support
- Tackle empty homes



In drawing up our strategic framework we have taken account of these measures within our priorities.

Key Strategic Housing Issues

3.3 The following are key strategic housing issues that our framework takes account of:

⁵ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2033676.pdf> Nov 2011

- Housing Act 2004⁶ which created the housing, health and safety rating system for dwellings, the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) empty dwelling management orders, tenancy deposits and the assessment of accommodation of Gypsy and Travellers
- Living, Working Countryside – The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing 2008⁷ which stated that large scale migration to rural areas has pushed house prices significantly above the national average whilst those working in rural areas earn substantially less than their urban counterparts. It reinforces the need to create better job opportunities for those living in rural areas whilst providing affordable housing for them if rural areas are not to become exclusive enclaves of the wealthy and retired
- Delivering Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods – A National Strategy for an Ageing Society (2008)⁸ set out the priorities for older people:
 - that they will have housing that supports healthy, active and independent living in welcoming communities (lifetime homes standards)
 - housing, neighbourhoods and communities will become more inclusive, attractive and sustainable for an ageing population
 - more mainstream and specialist homes of the right type and location for older people
- The Community Infrastructure Levy⁹ enabling local authorities to place a charge on new developments within the area that can then deliver additional funding which can be used to deliver a wide range of infrastructure projects that support growth and benefit the local economy. This levy effectively replaces the planning obligation process that was previously in place
- Building Better Lives – Getting the Best from Strategic Housing¹⁰ (2009). This Audit Commission report focuses on the need to think of housing more broadly as a vehicle to combat poverty, ill health, educational under-achievement and promote strong and safe communities. The report states that council's should look not only at new builds but in improving the standard of existing housing stock for the benefit of all
- The Energy Act 2011¹¹ introduces both the 'Green Deal' and the requirement that private sector residential landlords allow tenants requests to undertake energy efficiency improvements (from April 2016) and that all private

⁶ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/34/contents>

⁷ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/livingworkingcountryside>

⁸ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/deliveringlifetimehomes.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/communityinfrastructurelevy/>

¹⁰ [http://www.audit-](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/localgov/buildingbetterlives/Pages/buildingbetterlives.aspx)

[commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/localgov/buildingbetterlives/Pages/buildingbetterlives.aspx](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/localgov/buildingbetterlives/Pages/buildingbetterlives.aspx)

¹¹ http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/legislation/energy_act2011/energy_act2011.aspx

residential properties will be at the minimum EPC rating of E by 2018. The 'Green Deal' itself creates a new financing framework to enable the provision of fixed improvements to the energy efficiency of households and non-domestic properties, funded by a charge on energy bills that avoids the need for consumers to pay upfront costs

- The General Power of Competence provide by the Localism Act 2011.¹² That allows local authorities to:
 - carry out any lawful activity
 - undertake any lawful works
 - operate any lawful business; and
 - enter into any lawful transaction

This will provide local authorities with the freedom to work together to improve services and drive down costs, working creatively to meet local needs.

Homelessness

3.4 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to:

- provide free advice and information about homelessness and preventing homelessness to everyone in their district
- assist eligible individuals and families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and in priority need
- produce a homelessness strategy that sets out the way in which authorities will prevent homelessness in their areas

3.5 The local housing authority partners are working together to create their second Somerset wide homelessness strategy for Somerset. This strategy sets out the partnership's response to the current national challenges generated by:

- Welfare benefit reforms, as set out below:

Table 1: Changes to Housing Benefit, Local Housing Allowance and Council Tax Benefit

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Uprating and increasing the non-dependent rate from April 2011 is likely to place pressure on households with adult children still living at home who cannot contribute towards household expenses○ Capping the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is likely to make applicants for private sector letting less attractive to landlords. In |
|---|

¹² The DCLG brought the GPC into force with effect from 18 February 2012 by means of the *Localism Act 2011 (Commencement No.3) Order 2012*.¹⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/411/contents/made>

addition the change to the way in which LHA is uprated (from a market led percentile to an index) will lead to further disparity between the level of LHA and actual market rents in the private sector.

- **Capping the total benefits** to a household at no more than the national average wage is likely to impact on larger families and any reduction in benefit will be removed via a reduction in housing benefit.
- **Limiting payments for people under 35** to the shared room rate (up from 25), will make it harder for single people under 35 to afford private rented accommodation if they rely on housing benefits.
- **Limiting Housing Benefit entitlements** for working age people in the social housing sector deemed to be under occupying their homes could increase arrears for those tenants that are under occupying their properties.
- **Uprating LHA in line with Consumer Price Index (CPI)** instead of Retail Price Index (RPI) will impact on the number of private sector homes available for rent in terms of affordability.
- **The move towards a Universal Credit** will end housing benefit payments being made directly to landlords, making benefit claimants potentially less attractive as tenants and making it harder for socially excluded applicants to gain private sector tenancies. In addition universal credit will be paid monthly which may lead some claimants into budget difficulties.
- **Abolishing Council Tax Benefit** leaving local authorities to develop their own local discount schemes (protection for pensioners has been guaranteed) determining the amount of support that the most vulnerable need to meet their council tax bills within the constraints of local budgets. This could impact on the same group that are affected by other benefit changes and in the worst case drive people into homelessness and expensive temporary accommodation. The five Somerset districts are working on a separate schemes for council tax benefit.

- The Government's vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out (July 2011) ¹³ places a clear emphasis on single homeless people who are not in

¹³ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/1939099.pdf>

'priority need'¹⁴ who are living on the streets or are in insecure accommodation such as hostels or shelters. Local authorities are now required to provide count statistics or robust estimates for the numbers of rough sleepers in their areas. Rough sleeping in England is on the increase with latest government figures showing a 23% rise from autumn 2010 to autumn 2011 figures¹⁵

- Changes to the way homeless duty can be discharged. Local authorities can now fully discharge their duty to secure accommodation by arranging an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector (for a period of 12 months), without requiring the applicant's agreement. Where applicants become homeless again within two years, the duty will be retained by the original authority¹⁶
- Making every contact count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness (2012)¹⁷ sets ten local challenges for housing authorities to ensure that every contact local agencies make with vulnerable people and families really counts to ensure that we prevent households, regardless of household make up, from reaching a crisis point where they are faced with homelessness

3.6 The Government has introduced a Troubled Families programme to address those families that have serious problems including parents not working and children not in school, and has the potential to cause youth crime and anti-social behaviour. A lot of time and money is spent by local service providers routinely responding to these problems. Previous government research has highlighted that 2 per cent of families suffer significant multiple problems that in turn make them more likely to place demands on local services, such as health, social care and criminal justice. In England this equates to 120,000 families.¹⁸

3.7 As part of the Troubled Families programme, the Government, alongside local authorities, wants to change the way that these families are worked with by:

- joining up local services
- dealing with each family's problems as a whole rather than individually
- appointing a single key worker to get to grips with their problems and work intensively to help them change for the long term

The Government will contribute up to £4,000 per family towards the cost of successfully intervening with eligible families across England. In Somerset this

¹⁴ Priority need categories as set out within the homelessness legislation

¹⁵ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/20936571.pdf> Rough Sleeping England Autumn 2011

¹⁶ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted_part7, chapter 1 section 148/149

¹⁷ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2200459.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/troubledfamilies/>

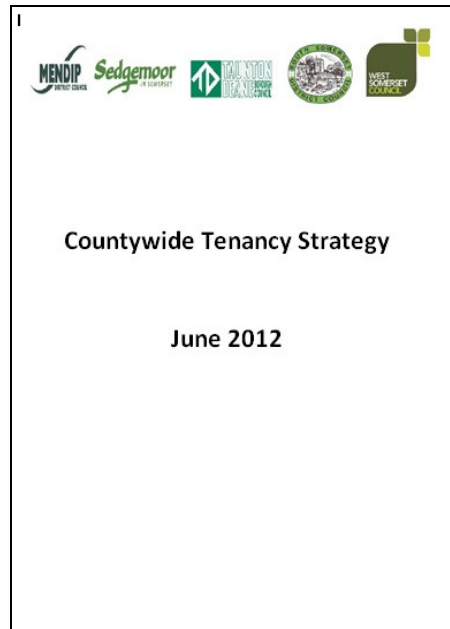
programme is being co-ordinated by Somerset County Council working with the local housing authorities.

Affordable Housing

3.8 There are a number of legislative, strategic and policy changes that are affecting the provision and use of affordable homes nationally:

- The Localism Act 2011 enacted changes that mean that tenancies for life for new social housing tenants have been replaced by the facility to offer fixed term (with a usual minimum of 5 years) flexible tenancies, renewable depending on household circumstances¹⁹. Impacts may include reduced turnover in social housing, reduced demand for new social housing tenancies (not least because rents on new build and possibly re-lets will increase to up to 80% of market rents) and challenges to community sustainment. On the other hand, the narrower gap between social and market rents may, as the Government hopes, start to change perceptions about the acceptability of the private sector as a long term housing solution. The Somerset Tenancy Strategy (jointly drawn up by the five local housing authorities together with social landlord partners) sets out the approach that the housing authorities wish landlords to take on:

- the types of tenancy that social landlords grant
- the circumstances in which they grant a tenancy of a particular type
- where they grant fixed term tenancies, the length of the term, and also the circumstances in which such a tenancy can be ended;²⁰
- the requirement for a review of the tenancy six months prior to any termination date for the tenancy (allowing local authorities and landlords more time to provide housing options advice)



- The New Homes Bonus²¹ from government provides additional funding or a 'bonus' for new homes by match funding the additional council tax raised for

¹⁹ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted_part7 chapter 2 section 154 onwards

²⁰ <https://www.homefindersomerset.co.uk/Data/ASPPages/1/106.aspx>

²¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingsupply/newhomesbonus/>

new homes and empty properties brought back into use, with an additional amount for affordable homes, for the following six years. The 2012-13 allocations include the first affordable homes premium whereby the development of each additional affordable home attracts an enhancement of a flat rate £350 per annum.

- The Localism Act 2011 has provided local housing authorities with a number of new freedoms with regard to the way in which they manage their housing register.²² In addition the revised guidance on allocations from government²³ provides for additional priority to be given to key groups, such as service and ex-service personnel. As mentioned earlier, the Homefinder Somerset partnership is currently discussing the best way to implement these changes within the current allocations policy.
- The new Affordable Homes Programme (2011-2015) aims to increase the supply of affordable homes (an additional 170,000 homes within the period) with the majority of these homes being provided at the new affordable rent level.^{24 25} Social landlords are also able to convert existing social rented stock to the new affordable rent. This change will increase rents for prospective tenants and also impacts on social landlords in terms of pressures upon them to deliver the financial requirements of the new funding model. A recent National Audit Office report (July 2012) has highlighted that the majority of the new homes are due for delivery in the final year of the programme and some providers are expressing concerns that they may not be able to charge the rent levels needed to make the programme financially viable.²⁶
- Increasing the discounts available for Right to Buy (RTB) and preserved RTB to enable more tenants to purchase their homes. The Government has also made a commitment to ensure that the receipts of every home sold under the RTB scheme are used to fund a replacement on a one for one basis, with a new home for affordable rent.²⁷

Planning Policy

- 3.9 With the abolition of centrally-determined targets for new homes (both private and affordable), the existing Regional Spatial Strategies no longer apply, replaced by locally-determined plans. This is likely to lead to some uncertainty in the market and a possible hiatus in new house building in the short to medium term particularly given the overall economic climate.

²² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/part/7/chapter/1/crossheading/allocation/enacted>

²³ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2171391.pdf>

²⁴ Affordable rent in this context meaning up to 80% of prevailing market rent.

²⁵ <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/affordable-homes>

²⁶ National Audit Office – Affordable Homes Programme Report

<http://www.nao.org.uk/idoc.ashx?docId=bbc6f7f9-588f-45c8-b529-e43734bbf2b6&version=-1>

²⁷ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/homeownership/righttobuy/>

3.10

The National Planning Policy Framework²⁸ (March 2012) sets out the Government's planning policy for England. This is a framework within which local people and councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans which reflect the needs and priorities of the community.



National Planning Policy Framework



- 3.11 These neighbourhood planning provisions²⁹ within the Localism Act 2011 empower communities to shape the development and growth of a local area through the production of a neighbourhood development plan, a neighbourhood development order or a Community Right to Build Order. This will provide local people with a genuine opportunity to influence the future of where they live.
- 3.12 Whilst the requirement for planning permission to build new Houses of Multiple Occupations (HMO) has been reversed³⁰ by this government local authorities can still make an Article 4 Direction³¹ to ensure that specific geographical areas do require planning permission for new HMOs. Given the changes to welfare benefits for under35s and the need for more shared housing, planning changes to implement Article 4 Directions will need to be fully reviewed for their impact on the housing market.
- 3.13 Following on from a commitment made in *Laying the Foundations, A Housing Strategy for England* to tackle the problem of households earning high incomes who continue to occupy subsidised housing, the Government has issued a consultation document on introducing a 'Pay to Stay' scheme³² whereby landlords could charge a higher rent to tenants on high incomes who want to stay in their social homes.

²⁸ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/nppf>

²⁹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/637/contents/made>

³⁰ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1759707.pdf>

³¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2160020.pdf>

³² <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2160581.pdf>

- 3.14 In addition the Government has also introduced consultation that would help landlords reduce the prevalence of tenancy fraud within the social housing stock³³. This includes measures that would greatly increase both the deterrent to tenants to commit fraud and landlords' ability to detect and prosecute those who do. It would also extend local authorities' powers of prosecution, allow for restitutionary payments to be made to landlords and remove the loopholes that allow those abusing their tenancies to retain them.
- 3.15 The national context within which this framework is set provides its own challenges for the local housing authority partners when addressing the priorities – however there are also more local issues set out in section 4 that we need to take account of.

4. Background and The Local Strategic Framework

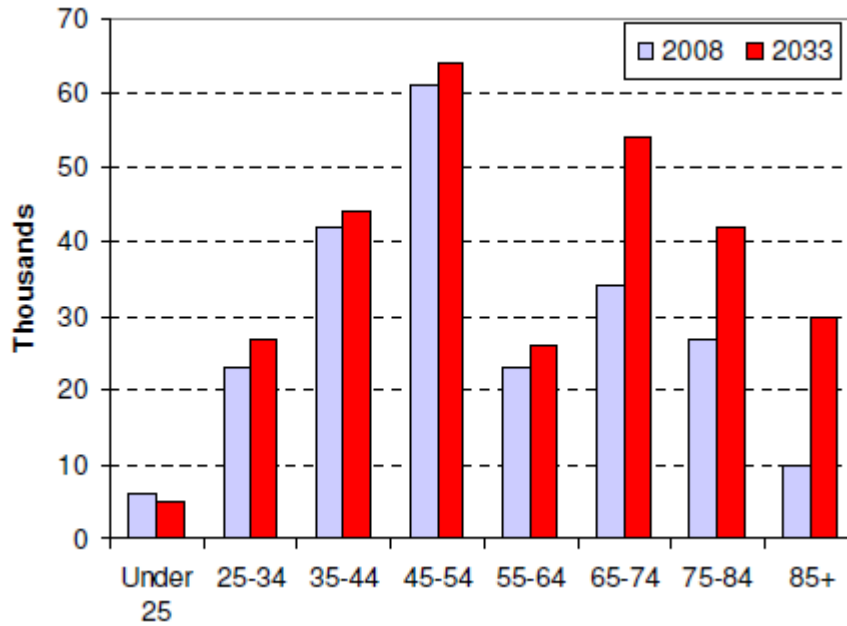
Demography

- 4.1 It is estimated that around 530,200 people live in Somerset. Outside of Somerset's main towns, the county is characterised by a dispersed pattern of settlement and a relatively low population density and migration. Somerset has fewer 20 to 29 years old than would be typical. This is thought to be due to young people leaving the county to attend university or for employment (please see the internal migration section for further information). 21% of Somerset's population is aged 65 or over. This figure increases to 30% in West Somerset.
- 4.2 Somerset's non-white British population is estimated to have more than doubled in the last nine years from 3% in 2001 to 7% in 2009. This is a much larger increase than seen regionally and nationally. The largest non-White British group is the "White Other" category, associated with an influx of migrant workers and their families from the A8 states of Eastern Europe after 2004. In Somerset's schools the five most common first languages after English have remained the same over the last three years, with Polish the most common followed by Portuguese, Bengali, Malayalam and Tagalog/Filipino.
- 4.3 In 2033, the Somerset population is projected to be 619,400, an increase of 18% from 2008. The largest increase is projected to be in Somerset's older population in particular the 90+ population, which will increase by 267% from 5,100 in 2008 to 18,700 in 2033. By 2030 there are projected to be around 70,000 people over 65 living alone in Somerset, most of whom will be over 75. This will pose significant challenges for health, housing and social care. The largest increase in terms of household types will be in single person households.

Table 2 Projected change in households by age, Somerset³⁴

³³³³ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2064044.pdf>

³⁴ Source JSNA Somerset April 2011 Section 6 Housing



4.4 One in four people live in one of Somerset’s three largest towns: Taunton (58,200 people, 11% of the population), Yeovil (41,800 people, 8% of the population) and Bridgwater (35,200 people, 7% of the population). At district level population density is highest in Taunton Deane with 238 people per km² compared to 48 people per km² in West Somerset.³⁵

Economy and Employment

4.5 Our framework should influence those who have a greater direct impact on the local economy and its employment levels such as the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).³⁶ LEPs are led by local authorities and businesses across natural economic areas. They are intended to provide the vision, knowledge and strategic leadership needed to drive sustainable private sector growth and job creation in local areas. The Heart of the South West LEP covers Devon and Somerset and has shown that we have significant economic issues to overcome.

Table 3 Economic Overview of heart Of South West LEP³⁷

	Heart of South West LEP Area	National Average
Productivity		
Output per worker	£32,000	£45,000 (UK)
% premises not receiving 2 Mbps	17.00%	11.00%
Number of people per square kilometre	162	398 (England)

³⁵ All population data taken from JSNA Section 2

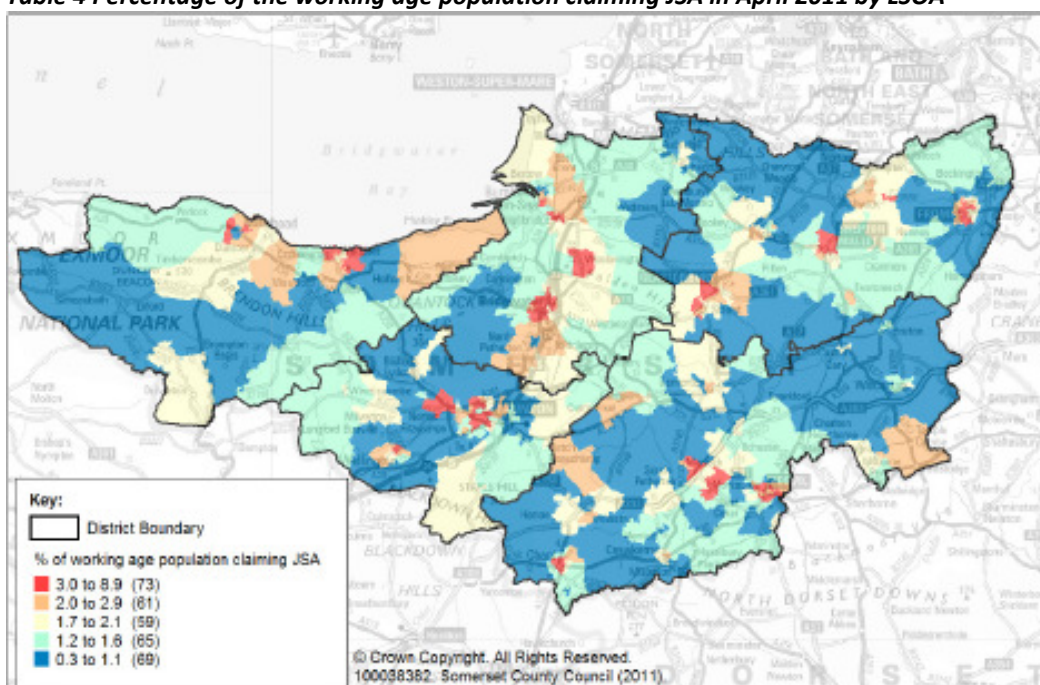
³⁶ <http://www.heartofswlep.co.uk/home>

³⁷ <http://www.heartofswlep.co.uk/vital-statistics>

Earnings		
Weekly Wages	£355.40	£405.70 (England)
Gross disposable household income	£13,520	£14,890 (UK)

4.6 Whilst the overall rate of unemployment in the area is below the national average³⁸ there are large variations within the Somerset area in the numbers of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) from a high of 8.9% in Bridgwater Fairfax to 0.3% in Ruishton and Creech.

Table 4 Percentage of the working age population claiming JSA in April 2011 by LSOA³⁹



4.7 Youth unemployment is a particular concern, with Sedgemoor having the highest level of youth (18 to 24) unemployment (7.4%) and West Somerset the lowest (4.5%).

Table 5 Percentage of JSA claimants by age band (April 2011)⁴⁰

³⁸ In April 2011, 2.2% of Somerset's working age population were claiming JSA, compared to 2.6% regionally and 3.7% nationally. Source JSNA April 2011 Section 3

³⁹ Source Somerset JSNA April 2011 Section 3

⁴⁰ Source JSNA Section 3

	18 to 24 (%)	25 to 49 (%)	50 to 64 (%)
Mendip	6.4	2.3	1.2
Sedgemoor	7.4	3.0	1.4
South Somerset	4.8	1.8	1.0
Taunton Deane	5.6	2.3	1.1
West Somerset	4.5	2.4	1.1
Somerset	5.8	2.3	1.1

Deprivation

4.8 The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Somerset (JSNA) has used the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)²² to measure deprivation at local levels. The IMD ranks each Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) in England using 38 indicators split into seven domains:

- income
- employment
- health deprivation and disability
- education, skills and training
- barriers to housing and services
- crime
- living environment

4.9 There are 327 LSOAs within Somerset, 14 of which fall within the 20% most deprived nationally. These 14 LSOAs contain approximately 21,200 people and can be found in Taunton, Bridgwater, Highbridge, Williton, Shepton Mallet and Yeovil.

4.10 Comparing the IMD 2010 with the 2007 version shows that in some of the ‘most’ deprived areas of Somerset deprivation has increased:

- five of the 14 most deprived LSOAs also fall into the 10% most deprived nationally, three more than in 2007. Together, these five LSOAs represent around 7,700 people
- two of the 14 most deprived LSOAs also fall within the 5% most deprived nationally; there were no LSOAs in this category in 2007. These LSOAs are in Bridgwater Sydenham (1,600 people) and in Taunton Halcon (1,700 people)

4.11 Barriers to housing and services are the most prevalent form of deprivation within Somerset. Eighty-seven out of 327 LSOAs in Somerset fall into the 20% most deprived nationally, affecting 147,900 people.

Affordability

4.12 The ratio of house price to earnings is greater in all the Somerset housing authorities than the national average. The ratio is particularly high in West Somerset where, even in an economic downturn, house prices at the market entry levels are almost nine times the average earnings figure. This makes it almost impossible for most

people to get onto the property ladder or move into the area for employment.⁴¹ In the South West region there has been a 21% increase in the number of households that are housed in the private rented sector in the last 14 years.

Table 6 Trends in Tenure – South West Region⁴²

Tenure type	Owner Occupiers	Social rented	Private sector rented
1997	72.6%	15%	12.4%
2010/11	70.9%	12.7%	15%
%change	-2.3%	-15.3%	+21%

4.13 Outside of the London, the South East and East Anglia, the South West region has the highest private sector rents (as at 2010).⁴³

4.14 Within Somerset (as at 2010) 86% of the available stock was in the private rented sector with almost half of all housing association stock being in South Somerset, largely due to the transfer of all council housing stock.⁴⁴

Housing Demand

4.15 The number of people on the Homefinder Somerset housing register has doubled between 2000 and 2010 compared with increases of approximately 60% in the South West and England in general.⁴⁵ Housing supply remains an issue. On average we are able to house between 12.5% and 16.8% of applicants on the housing register⁴⁶ in any given year.

Empty Homes

4.16 In 2010-11 there were 7,837 empty homes in Somerset with almost 90% of these in the private sector and 36% of them being empty for more than 6 months.

Table 7 Empty homes data for Somerset 2011-12 – Source Empty Homes Agency Ltd⁴⁷

Local Authority/Borough	Total Dwellings	Total Empty	% Empty	Short Term Empty	Local Councils	Housing Associations	Other Public Bodies	Private Owners	Long Term Empty
Mendip	49,197	1,403	2.85%	918	-	77	-	1,326	485
Sedgemoor	52,025	1,643	3.16%	1,173	52	30	-	1,561	470
South Somerset	73,853	2,588	3.50%	1,572	-	109	-	2,479	1,016
Taunton Deane	49,930	1,596	3.20%	1,167	32	62	-	1,502	429
West Somerset	17,563	545	3.10%	336	-	12	4	529	209
Total	242,568	7,775	3.2%	5,166	84	290	4	7,397	2,609

⁴¹ Joint Strategic Needs Assessment <http://www.sine.org.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allid=50761> section 6 page 2

⁴² English Housing Survey – Household Table FT1111 (S135a) <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/xls/2176166.xls>

⁴³ http://www.housing.org.uk/pdf/HomeTruths2011_England.pdf

⁴⁴ Joint Strategic Needs Assessment <http://www.sine.org.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allid=50761> section 6 para 6.3

⁴⁵ Ibid para 6.7

⁴⁶ Based on Homefinder Somerset accepted offer and housing register data for 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12

⁴⁷ Empty Homes Agency 2011-12 statistics <http://www.emptyhomes.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Empty-Homes-Stats-2011-2012-Complete.xls>

This is a wasted resource that can be brought back into use to help combat the shortage of housing.

- 4.17 The sub-region's rural communities not only suffer from a lack of affordable homes, but the sustainability of existing communities is at risk due to increasing pressure on transport, schools, shops, healthcare and other services.

Rough Sleepers

- 4.18 Whilst rough sleeper data has to be provided to the Government annually, the Avon and Somerset Rough Sleepers Steering Group (being led by Mendip District Council) is collecting data monthly (not all authorities collect monthly) as follows:

Table 8 Extract from Rough Sleeper Figures – Avon & Somerset Rough Sleepers Steering Group

Local Authority Area	Nov-	Dec-	Jan-	Feb-	Mar-	Apr-	May-
Mendip		21	*	*	*	*	*
Taunton Deane	25	27	22	17	22	22	24
Sedgemoor	10	5	*	*	*	*	*
South Somerset	6	10	8	9	9	8	9
West Somerset	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Totals	41	53	30	26	31	30	33

* denotes data not currently monitored in LA district on monthly basis

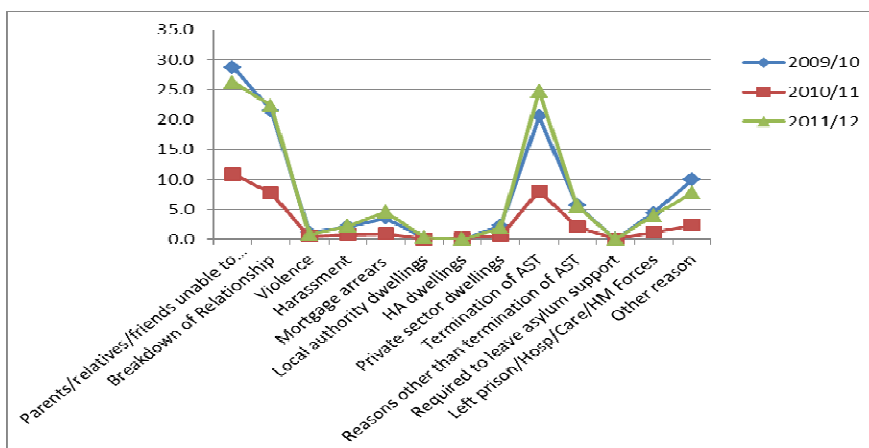
- 4.19 The number of rough sleepers in Taunton Deane and Mendip, and to an extent in South Somerset were high and the figures in Taunton Deane show a marked increase from where they were in 2010 and were the highest in the South West (apart from the unitary authority of Cornwall) in autumn 2011.⁴⁸ More recently in South Somerset the introduction of specialist outreach workers has seen a massive decline in rough sleeping in that area.

Homelessness

- 4.20 While the causes of homelessness across the sub-region are complex, P1E statistics show that (in 2011/12) termination of an assured shorthold tenancy, and eviction from the family home (through parental eviction or relationship breakdown) are the major causes of homelessness in the sub-region. This has been the case for the last three years, and whilst 2010/11 saw a reduction, the figures show acceptances have returned to 2009/10 levels with the reasons for homelessness remaining static across all 3 years.

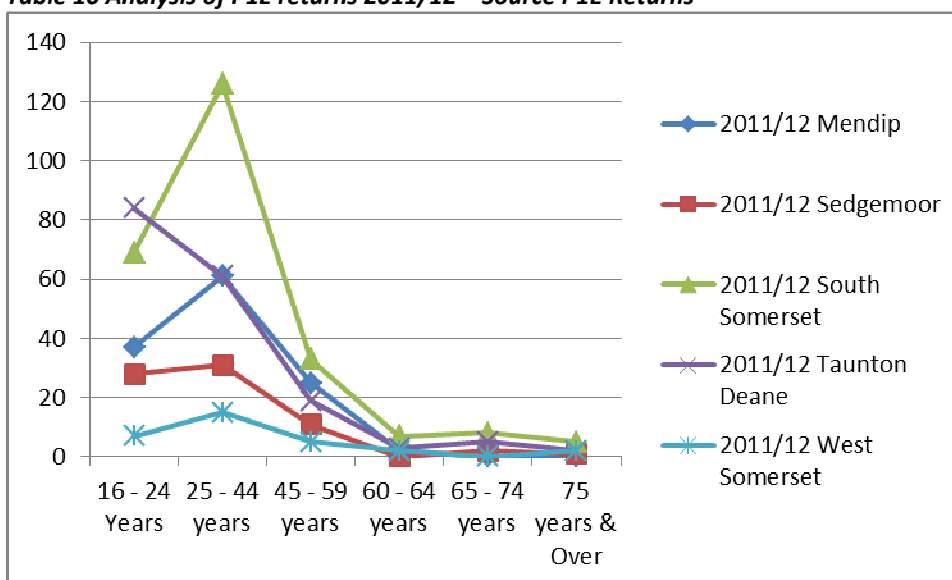
Table 9 Acceptances by Reason (shown as a percentage) 2009/10 to 2011/12 for the sub-region– Source P1E Returns

⁴⁸ Rough Sleeping England Autumn 2011 Data Tables
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/xls/20936651.xls>



4.21 Looking at 2011/12 homeless acceptances by age breakdown the majority of acceptances are from those under 45 years old.

Table 10 Analysis of P1E returns 2011/12 – Source P1E Returns



4.22 The upward trend in single person households⁴⁹ coupled with private sector rents at record high levels⁵⁰ will potentially increase the number of households who apply for local authority assistance with their housing. It will therefore be key that we make the most of the resources that we have in delivering housing options services.

Proposed Development of Hinkley Point Power Station

4.23 All of the Somerset authorities will in some way be impacted by the proposed development of the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station (if full planning permission is granted) The housing markets in the Sedgemoor, West Somerset and Taunton

⁴⁹ Joint Somerset Needs Assessment 2011 Section 6.2

<http://www.sine.org.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allid=50761>

⁵⁰ Research undertaken by LSL property Services July 2012 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-19288208>

Deane housing authority areas will be most dramatically affected by this development.

- 4.24 EDF Energy's workforce assumptions regarding the scale of temporary workforce are that the lifetime of the project is likely to require some 26,600 full time equivalent (FTE) workers across the lifetime of the build project with a peak of 5,600 FTE on site by 2016. Of this number it is agreed that an estimated 34% could be home-based leaving 66% (approximately 3,700 workers) requiring accommodation in the local area. The analysis undertaken by EDF includes geographic areas represented by a ninety minute travel zone to Hinkley Point and includes Sedgemoor, West Somerset, Mendip and Taunton Deane.⁵¹ We also believe that there is potential for South Somerset to be affected because parts of the South Somerset area are within the ninety minute drive time as identified in EDF documentation.
- 4.25 This development (if it goes ahead) will have a significant impact on the availability of private sector accommodation and may well increase homeless applications as private sector tenants are given notice by landlords wishing to let their properties to EDF workers.
- 4.26 All the Somerset housing authorities aim to make best use of existing resources to try to ensure that there is a sufficient supply and range (in terms of property size) of decent accommodation to meet demand. Any development such as Hinkley Point needs to be considered in the context of local needs in order to avoid exacerbating pressures on the provision of housing.
- 4.27 In 2008 the Strategic Housing Market Assessment highlighted data from 2006 to show a demand in the private rented sector from households aged under 30 years old. More recent data from Homefinder Somerset supports this finding although there are still high levels of demand from the 30s to 40s age bracket. This heightens concern that the demand from Hinkley workers for accommodation will have a particular impact on the under 40s who are reliant on low cost accommodation in the affected areas.⁵² This will place additional demands on private sector accommodation in the affected areas which will impact on the ability of local housing authorities to place/discharge homeless applicants into private sector accommodation.

Affordable Housing

- 4.28 The key driver for entering the affordable housing⁵³ market is the fact that other forms of tenure are unaffordable (home ownership and private renting). In areas where incomes are low relative to the market price of homes, there is pressure to provide more homes which those on lower incomes, including benefits, can afford. Without these homes, many people, especially the very old, very young and the

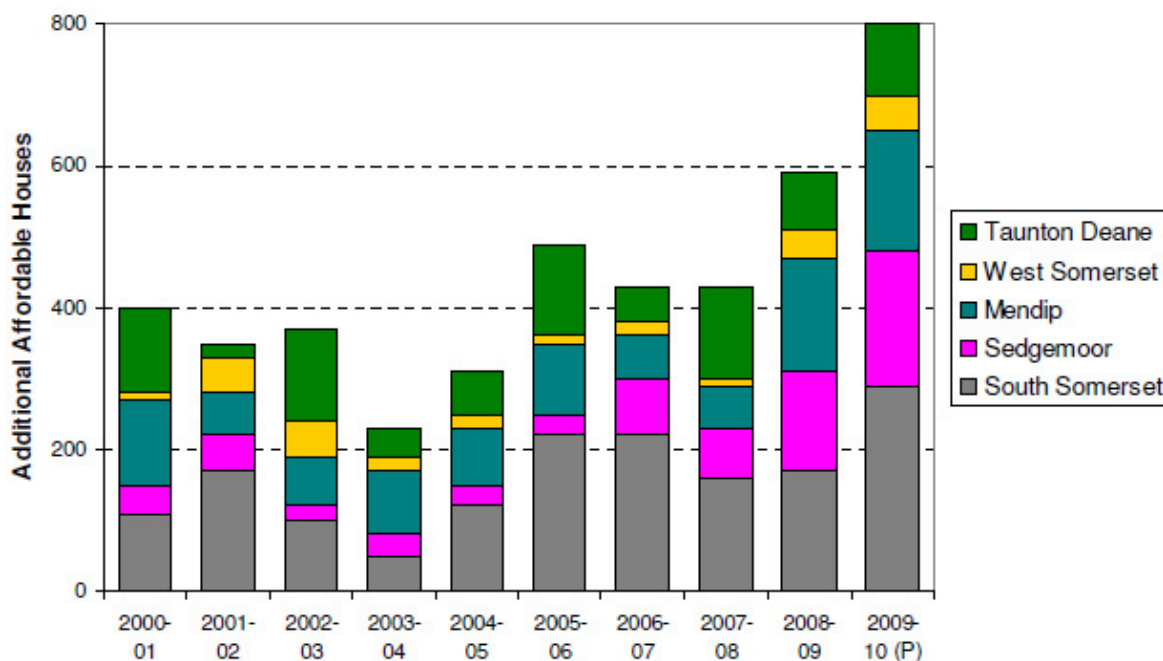
⁵¹ EDF Energy Proposed Development at Hinkley Point Accommodation Strategy

⁵² EDF (2011) Draft Accommodation Strategy

⁵³ 'Affordable housing' is a term used to describe housing made available for people who cannot otherwise afford housing available on the open market.

vulnerable, will be forced to move out of the area or into situations that could adversely affect their health and wellbeing. The past few years have seen an increase in additional social, intermediate and low cost home ownership housing. Mendip, Sedgemoor and South Somerset housing authorities have provided more new properties than at any time in the past decade..⁵⁴ Social rental units have comprised the majority of these additional homes but the proportion that is intermediate housing⁵⁵ has increased from 10% ten years ago to 30% as at April 2011.

Table 11 - Trends in additional affordable dwellings provided by local authority⁵⁶



(P) denotes Provisional figures

Source: Homes & Communities Agency/ Local Authorities

- 4.29 The 2008 Strategic Housing Market Assessments covering Taunton, South Somerset, Sedgemoor and West Somerset and Mendip (part of the West of England Housing Market Assessment) indicate that demand for affordable housing is set to outstrip supply and the subsequent economic downturn is likely to widen that supply gap.
- 4.30 In Mendip, the total net annual need for affordable housing between 2009 and 2021 was forecast to be 271 social and 54 intermediate homes, but based on existing policies, only 37 per year were predicted to be supplied, creating an ever increasing gap.⁵⁷
- 4.31 The Taylor report 'Living Working Countryside' (2008)⁵⁸ identified the issue of the supply gap that exists in rural areas. Nationally 90% of existing rural residents wish

⁵⁴ JSNA Section 6

⁵⁵ Intermediate renting is the intention of renting property at a subsidised rent from a housing association. It is higher than a social rent but below that found in the prevailing market.

⁵⁶ Source JSNA section 6

⁵⁷ Source JSNA section 6

⁵⁸ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/livingworkingcountryside.pdf>

to stay in rural areas whilst 50% of urban residents wish to move to rural areas. This creates excess demand consequentially raising market prices beyond the economic reach of rural residents. This is shown by the number of second homes in the area. Research in 2009 showed that almost 6% of West Somerset's homes are second homes, placing this area tenth out of all rural and coastal authorities.⁵⁹

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

- 4.32 Councils across Somerset jointly commissioned the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) from De Montfort University to assess the need for residential and transit pitches for the gypsy and travelling community in the county, as required by national policy. This work highlighted the following needs.

Table 12 Summary of requirements highlighted in Somerset GTAA Jan 2011

Pitch requirement across Somerset
The report outlines a need for 131 additional pitches across the study area between 2010 and 2015. The detail and stratification by district is provided in chapter six.
An estimated 64 further pitches will be required by 2020.
Transit provision is needed for around 100 caravans by 2015 across Somerset. The detail and stratification by district is provided in chapter six.
At least 4 Showmen's yards needed by 2015 ¹

Summary of pitch requirement by district

	Pitches 2010 - 2015	Pitches 2015 - 2020	Transit Pitches
Mendip	69	24	80
Sedgemoor	24	10	5
South Somerset	10	8	10
Taunton Deane	25	19	5
West Somerset	2	3	0
	131²	64	100

⁶⁰See footnote for details of 1 & 2 references above

- 4.33 The number of gypsy and traveller caravans is counted twice a year. The most recent published total for Somerset is 503 (January 2011). This is very slightly down year-on-year but higher than two years ago. Currently, Mendip has more than any other district and with Taunton Deane, accounts for more than two in three caravans counted in the whole county.

⁵⁹ JSNA section 6 housing page 9

⁶⁰ ¹Only one Showmen's survey was achieved in the sample, so this need relates solely to the identified need for the one family surveyed. ²Due to rounding of figures during calculation (see table 6.2 in the main report) there is a difference of 1 between rows and columns in the main set of figures for 2010 – 2015 between the study area as a whole and the total of all districts. The collective calculation for the county results in a figure of 131; but when distributed by district the total is 130.

- 4.34 Just over half of all gypsy and traveller pitches currently in Somerset are private, the vast majority (92%) with permanent planning permission and almost one in four pitches are socially rented. The remainder are on other sites, either owned or not by the gypsies themselves. Of those on other sites, three in four are what is classed as 'tolerated'. This proportion has increased considerably since 2009 when a substantial majority were 'not tolerated'.⁶¹

Older People

- 4.35 Many older people want to live independently in their own home for as long as possible. The 'Housing and Older People Study, Taunton and South Somerset Housing Market Areas' (Fordham Research, 2010) reports that few older people (aged 55 and over) plan for future housing needs and it is only unexpected events or sudden deterioration in health that necessitates moving to specialist accommodation. However, when asked why they didn't plan ahead, a major factor was not knowing the options open to them and the precautions they should take to prepare. Almost one in four older person households, equivalent to around 12,000 in Somerset, said they had one or more age-related problems with their home.⁶²
- 4.36 The most commonly required adaptations to help older people manage in their homes, were a downstairs toilet and handrails. However, only half those who needed adaptations actually had them. This is partly the result of not knowing how to arrange for adaptations to be made to their homes and believing the adaptations needed are unaffordable. As with overall housing need in Somerset, Fordham calculated that over the next five years there would be an unmet need for almost 100 extra units per year of affordable specialised accommodation for older people across the two Housing Market Areas, which cover all districts apart from Mendip. There was a preference for sheltered housing with a live-in warden, the traditional form of warden provision, although the current trend is towards 'community wardens'.

House Conditions

- 4.37 Housing Stock Projections by the Building Research Establishment (BRE, 2007)⁶³ estimated that more than two in five of all private sector stock in Somerset (excluding Mendip) would fail to meet the national Decent Homes Standard (DHS)⁶⁴. The proportion ranged from 41% in Sedgemoor to 55% in West Somerset.⁶⁵
- 4.38 The 2006 Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix25 also showed that West Somerset had a relatively high proportion of 'unfit' dwellings, indicating that this particularly rural district faces a notable issue in terms of private housing condition. The BRE report (2007) also pointed out that half of households categorised as 'vulnerable' lived in non-decent homes, with little variation across the districts. All local

⁶¹ Source JSNA section 6 Housing

⁶² Source JSNA section 6 Housing

⁶³ <http://www.bre.co.uk>

⁶⁴ Taunton and South Somerset Housing Market Assessment

⁶⁵ Source JSNA Section 6 page 36

authorities have improvement programmes. In 2009-10, 1,027 dwellings were improved with relation to the DHS, the vast majority benefiting (what are termed as) 'vulnerable' groups. In particular, 497 dwellings which were improved benefited pensioners and 511 benefited families with children. The DHS also affects local authority stock. At 1st April 2010, 1,867 Local Authority dwellings were designated 'non decent' while 455 had received work to prevent non-decency in 2009-10.⁶⁶

Fuel Poverty

- 4.39 Of all the English regions the South West has the highest proportions of dwellings with Energy Efficiency Ratings (EER) F and G⁶⁷ (22.2%) and of those with a Category 1 Excess Cold Hazard (18.1%)⁶⁸ There is a clear link between poor energy efficiency (and consequential fuel poverty⁶⁹) and excess cold hazard which in turn affects the health of residents.
- 4.40 The 2010 Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix⁷⁰ estimates there are around 31,000 dwellings in Somerset with Category 1 hazards and this total excludes private dwellings in Taunton Deane for which no data was available. Based on the dwellings for which data are available, the proportion for the county is 16%, below the regional average, but above the national average of 12%. The proportions are particularly high in south and west Somerset. The latter district also stands out as having a relatively low average Standard Assessment procedure (SAP) rating on which the EERs are based and is the only district within Somerset with a SAP rating below the national average.
- 4.41 South Somerset's average SAP rating is relatively high, but it also has a high proportion of dwellings with a SAP rating below 35, indicating a wide range across the district. Over 400 private sector dwellings with Category 1 Hazards in Somerset were made free of hazards as a direct result of local authority action in 2009-10.
- 4.42 A statistically positive relationship between low thermal efficiency of housing and excess winter deaths (EWD) and the considerable number of EWDs attributable to cardio-vascular disease (CVD) and respiratory diseases has been shown to exist.⁷¹ Cold housing can impact on health in various ways. For instance, children living in cold homes are more than twice as likely to suffer from a variety of respiratory problems, including asthma, than those living in warm homes. It is clear that fuel poverty/cold housing can impact a variety of health outcomes and affect different groups of people, including those that may be asset rich but revenue poor.

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Energy efficiency ratings have a scale from A (the most efficient) to G (the least efficient)

⁶⁸ The Health Costs of Cold Dwellings CIEH

http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/warm_homes_nhs_costs.pdf

⁶⁹ Fuel poverty is defined as having to spend 10% or more of a household's net income to heat their home to an adequate standard of warmth (usually 21 degrees centigrade for the main living area and 18 degrees for the other occupied rooms.

⁷⁰ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/lahousing200910>

⁷¹ <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/the-health-impacts-of-cold-homes-and-fuel-poverty/the-health-impacts-of-cold-homes-and-fuel-poverty-full-report.pdf>