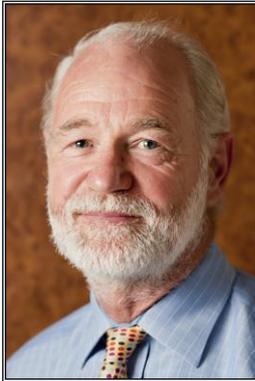




Housing Strategy Implementation Plan



Foreword



By Councillor Ric Pallister OBE,
Leader South Somerset District Council

Secure and affordable housing that is dry and warm is a pre-requisite to a healthy life whatever one's age and this has never been more important than now as we watch the housing needs gap widen year on year.

However, housing is more than just a roof over a family or individual's head and it is more than just bricks and mortar. These are just the physical structures that help to create the space and environment we live in, which in turn should translate into a home. Place, community and neighbours all play their part and were a strong feature in years gone by but that is now at risk as we are told that a tenure for those renting, be that through a Housing Association or privately, is far from secure. For many this is a strong disincentive to invest time, money and effort in a house, garden or neighbourhood to create a home.

Affordability is now a major factor for many; with rising utility bills outstripping wages, far too many residents of South Somerset are facing the effects of poverty and it seems to be getting worse.

Our task is not only to create the houses we desperately need, but also to work with the tenants to maintain their tenancies and invest in their homes.

In this plan we have tried to address all the elements of creating a home and supporting the households. We will never be able to do enough, but I believe that by working together across the public and private sector we can make a difference in the delivery of more houses that can become homes for those unable to make provision for themselves.

Credit

Throughout this document we have used various photographs to illustrate the text. Some of these are sourced internally but most have been kindly supplied by one or other of our housing association partners depicting recently completed and pipeline schemes.

Contents

	Page
Foreword	2
Contents	3
Introduction	4
Objectives	6
Objective 1 – Health & Wellbeing For All	8
The quality of the housing stock	8
Tenure mix	9
Space standards, Lifetime Homes & other design issues	10
Housing for independence	13
Objective 2 - To Increase The Supply Of Affordable Housing	14
Sustainability and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment	15
Other opportunities for affordable housing	17
Maximising the New Homes Bonus	18
Co-ordination of housing partners	18
Self-build & custom-build housing	19
Community Land Trusts	19
Objective 3 – Making Effective Use Of South Somerset’s Housing Stock	21
Local lettings plans and policies	21
A rural lettings policy	22
Tenancy Strategy	24
Making use of empty properties	25
Aids and adaptation works	25
Dorcas House Trust	26
Objective 4 – Meeting The Housing-Related Support Needs Of The Most Vulnerable and Least Resilient Residents	27
Sheltered and extra care needs	27
Homelessness	28
Temporary accommodation	29
Rough sleeping	29
Housing-related support	30
Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs	31
Action Plan	34
Evidence	38
Evidence relating to Objective 1	38
Evidence relating to Objective 2	41
Evidence relating to Objective 3	56
Evidence relating to Objective 4	59
Appendices	69
Appendix A - Relevant Action Plans & Strategies	69
Appendix B - Sources of Evidence	71
Appendix C - Consultation Process	73

Introduction

This document covers the strategic approach of the District Council towards the provision of affordable housing in South Somerset. It outlines overall policy and suggests a series of discrete actions to help bring about the objectives listed.

Following the introduction of a new statutory requirement, the district council first published a Housing Strategy in October 1992 covering the three year period 1992-1995. The last full Housing & Accommodation Strategy was published in May 2004, covering the period 2004 – 2007, although an update document was also published in 2008.

Since the publication of the last full Housing Strategy the following related strategies and plans have been adopted:

- Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Strategy (2006 -2009)
- Private Sector Housing Strategy (2007 – 2012)
- Empty Property Strategy (Jointly with Mendip) (2010)
- Temporary Accommodation Strategy (2011)
- Council Plan (2012-2015)
- Somerset Tenancy Strategy (2012)
- Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2012-2015)
- Youth Housing Strategy (2012-2015)
- Rural Housing Action Plan (2013)
- Somerset Homelessness Strategy (2013 – 2016)
- Asset Management Strategy (2014)



Last year we adopted the county-wide Housing Strategy framework, which sets out the direction for all five local housing authorities (the district and borough councils) in Somerset. This implementation plan has been drawn up taking into account the following principle (as set out in the county-wide framework):

“Wherever possible working together on shared issues, developing joint strategies and policies and finding common solutions where appropriate; where separate approaches are required endeavouring to make these as consistent as possible whilst respecting local circumstances.”

This Implementation Plan is intended to be an overarching document. In developing it we have included those aspects of the county-wide housing strategy framework which require a district response or a degree of local refinement. The Council’s scrutiny task & finish group (made up of elected members), which originally looked at the county-wide framework document, asked that this document:

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

- ensures SSDC addresses priorities based on its locality and demographic
- is supported by the most up-to-date information and evidence
- details the objectives and priority areas that should be addressed while providing flexibility in how this is achieved
- is accessible and uses plain English throughout

We have reviewed all existing relevant SSDC strategies & action plans (as listed in Appendix A) to check for consistency with the adopted framework. Where the actions stated within these documents have been largely achieved, we have looked at what is outstanding and included those relevant actions in this document. We have also updated the local evidence base to check what things have changed since each of these strategies or plans were originally adopted and whether we now need to do something differently as a result. We have also included some new approaches in response to other factors which were not previously on the radar. Where something listed above has either been overtaken by events or run its due course, we have included the need to review it as part of the action plan arising from this document.

We have undertaken consultation (details are set out in Appendix C) and amended proposals in the light of the responses to this consultation.

The main part of this plan describes the issues, considers our options and proposes actions. It is set out in accordance with the four objectives (listed below), and as far as possible discussing issues in one place and avoiding repetition even though some issues will straddle these objectives.

Wherever possible the options and proposed actions include where we could or should be working with neighbouring councils or other agencies in a collaborative way to save resources, become more effective or both.

Objectives

The county-wide housing strategy framework sets out three objectives but this plan sets out four, because we feel the first is fundamental. These are:



Objective 1 - Health and wellbeing for all

- Bringing homes up to the Decent Homes standard¹ wherever possible
- Maximising works to improve energy efficiency and thermal comfort
- Ensuring the diversification of the tenure mix within existing and new developments
- Ensuring all new developments conform with the minimum standards prescribed by the Homes and Community Agency²
- Supporting the delivery of the priorities within the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy – developing effective information and advice
- Ensuring that composition of new developments make allowance for storage and waste
- Sustainable development – energy efficiency and diversity, local facilities and places of work

Objective 2 - To increase the supply of affordable housing to support economic growth and development

- Effective use of planning
- Increasing supply of land for affordable housing
- Identifying need effectively
- Identifying more creative ways of delivering affordable homes
- Sustainable developments³

¹ The 'Decent Homes standard' is set nationally by the government and sets out minimum expectations such as the energy efficiency of a dwelling and the age of certain component elements.

² At the time of publication it is unclear exactly what these minimum standards now are as they have been subject to some consultation, but previously this covered aspects such as minimum internal floor area.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

- Continuing to maximise the New Homes Bonus⁴
- Co-ordination of partnership working with partner landlords such as housing associations

Objective 3 – To make effective use of South Somerset’s housing stock

- Ensuring that Homefinder Somerset continues to deliver mobility and choice of housing options to those wishing to access affordable housing in Somerset
- Ensuring that those already in social housing have mobility when they need it through the promotion and facilitation of mutual exchange wherever possible
- Bringing empty homes back into use and utilising them for those in housing need
- Implementing co-ordinated approaches to small scale adaptations and repairs to enable people to remain in their homes

Objective 4 - To meet the housing and accommodation-related support needs of Somerset’s most vulnerable and least resilient residents by working in partnership

- Participating in the refresh and implementation of the financial inclusion strategy, ensuring any changes to benefits are taken into account
- Constructive input into the review of extra care housing and support housing to support how the personalisation agenda in social care will affect housing service delivery
- Supporting the delivery of the priorities of the Somerset Homelessness Strategy, including the delivery of the Pathway for Adults (P4A)⁵
- Supporting the delivery of the key outcomes from the Somerset Youth Housing Strategy, including the implementation of the Pathway to Independence (P2I pathway)⁶
- Revising the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) and delivering the pitch requirements as set out in the GTAA 2013

³ This includes links to economic opportunities.

⁴ The ‘New Homes Bonus’ is a form of subsidy paid by central government to local government calculated according to the increase in the number of homes within the district, partly as a direct financial incentive to ensure that Local Authorities are not wilfully blocking new developments.

⁵ The ‘Pathway For Adults’ (P4A) is a combination of support packages commissioned by the County Council to assist individuals and families in maintaining an appropriate tenure. It covers a broad range of client groups including, for example, those escaping from domestic violence.

⁶ The ‘Pathway to Independence’ (P2i) is a programme of support packages commissioned by the County Council to assist young people, including those leaving care, to establish their own home or maintain an appropriate tenure.

Objective 1 – Health & Wellbeing For All

The quality of the housing stock

Just over a decade ago the Government introduced the Decent Homes standard as a 21st century benchmark representing the minimum aspects of quality that any dwelling should achieve. At the same time a target was set for all social landlords (councils, housing associations, etc.) to bring all their stock up to Decent Homes standard by now.



Thanks largely to a programme of replenishment and refurbishment agreed by Yarlington Housing Group (then known as South Somerset Homes) as part of the stock transfer arrangement when they took ownership of all the remaining former council housing, the Decent Homes standard was completely met for social housing last year at the point when the last remaining pre-stressed reinforced concrete homes were demolished, prior to replacement.

It is still possible for an individual property to fall outside the Decent Homes Standard when, for example, the heating system reaches a certain age and lower level of efficiency. So, in order to ensure that social housing remains within the Decent Homes standard, Yarlington and other housing associations need to maintain a cyclical programme of repairs and replenishment. This is slightly more problematic with some of the older stock (mainly former council dwellings transferred to Yarlington), where some retro-fitting may be necessary to achieve expected energy efficiency levels.

The problem of properties failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard in South Somerset exists largely in the private sector, the two areas of concern being:

- marginal owner-occupiers;
- (parts of) the private rented sector.

In 2007 we adopted a private sector housing strategy to address this (and other issues), largely through a series of grants to assist landlords and marginal owners, especially with respect to energy efficiency, an important part of the Decent Homes Standard. A lot has changed since then with the Government reforming the grants system, the introduction of soft loans⁷ in conjunction with Wessex Reinvestment Trust and the creation of the Green Deal. We do not propose to discuss these aspects further in this document; rather we feel this is best dealt with through a revised private sector housing strategy. Before setting out a new strategy we will first consider undertaking a new private sector stock condition survey to provide reliable up-to-date data on which to revise the relevant approach.

⁷ A 'soft loan' being one made available at an advantageous rate of interest, lower than might be available from a commercial lender

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

Action: Explore options to undertake a private sector stock condition survey, subject to available funding.

Action: We shall review and update the private sector housing strategy, with the intention of publishing a new document.

Tenure mix

We seek to achieve a diversification of tenure within existing and new estates. Former council housing estates have been broken up through the process of the Right to Buy and this continues, albeit at a slower pace, through the preserved Right to Buy still enjoyed by those former council tenants who have remained tenants of Yarlington since the day of the stock transfer.

On new estates we seek a proportion of new homes to be provided by a housing association, or other recognised provider, as affordable⁸ under planning obligations (i.e. sold at a price which allows the housing association to service the debt incurred on the rental stream available, whilst keeping the rent affordable). The proportion we initially seek under current planning policy is 35% of all the dwellings proposed on the site, although this figure may decrease if the developer is able to demonstrate that the overall package of planning obligations calls into question the economic viability of the site.



The tenure mix within the 35% is further broken down with at least two thirds being housing made available for social rent⁹ and the remaining (up to) one third being other forms of intermediate¹⁰ housing; traditionally this has largely been shared ownership. Further, we seek to pepper-pot (scatter) the affordable housing provision throughout the site, rather than have it as a mini-mono-

tenure estate in one corner of the larger estate. Our approach has been, as far as possible, to ensure that on casual inspection the ordinary bystander would not be able to immediately identify the particular tenure of any property on the overall development.

In the past this approach has been compromised for a number of reasons, for example where the economics of a site have led to the developer wishing to produce a significant proportion of the affordable housing at an early stage in order to

⁸ Put simply, 'affordable' here means available at a cost which is affordable for those who cannot afford market housing (either for rent or to buy) under current prevailing circumstances, i.e. it is sub-market.

⁹ 'Social rent' is the traditional rent regime operated by housing associations and, generally, is the cheapest available type of affordable housing.

¹⁰ 'Intermediate' is basically any form of housing which is more expensive than social rent but remains sub-market; this includes most forms of shared ownership and discounted market housing.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

generate a (guaranteed) cash flow to help overcome necessary up-front infrastructure costs. Allowing an earlier provision of affordable housing has the advantage of helping to bring the entire site forward (when it otherwise might have remained stalled) and being able to rehouse a larger number of households from the register sooner rather than later. However, the disadvantage is a greater degree of clustering which has a longer term impact on the social mix within the overall estate. There have also been cases where the housing association has expressed a preference for some degree of clustering in order to ease future maintenance programmes. In one appeal decision¹¹, the inspector allowed the development to go ahead on the basis that, for this particular site, affordable housing was provided in a single strip along one edge of the site which, he felt, was well situated for access to town centre services.

We have almost always sought on-site provision of affordable housing, rather than the obligation being met through provision on an alternative site or through the developer paying a commuted sum¹² which we can then deploy to subsidise affordable housing elsewhere. Again, this is motivated by the desire to see a balance of social mix throughout rather than creating mono-tenure estates of any particular tenure. The one example where we might seek a commuted sum rather than on-site provision of affordable housing through planning obligations is where the site in question is an infill site otherwise completely surrounded by a former council housing estate which has not been subject to a high level of take up of Right to Buy or the preserved Right to Buy. In this example, the infill site is entirely private sector and adds to the overall balance of the wider neighbourhood.

Space standards, Lifetime Homes & other design issues

Where affordable housing is produced under planning obligation, our approach is to ensure that such housing meets the same standards as would be the case had the same Housing Association received public subsidy (by way of grant) either from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) or the district council. We are mindful that one of the unintended consequences of the so-called bedroom tax is the expectation that, for Housing Benefit purposes, any bedroom will be



treated as large enough for two children of an appropriate age and gender mix, regardless of the actual size of that bedroom. This leaves us to consider space standards with reference to only ever having an even number of bedspaces,

¹¹ The appeal was on a site known as Mitchell Gardens in Chard.

¹² A 'commuted sum' is a cash payment to the council equivalent to the cost of providing subsidy to create the housing on the same site but then available to spend on alternative provision on a different site.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

although traditionally housing associations often refer to an odd number of bedspaces.

The minimum sizes we have been using until now refer to internal floor areas and are originally derived from the Housing Quality Indicator regime initiated by the now defunct Housing Corporation (although still referred to by the Homes and Communities Agency which took over its investment functions). They are:

1 bedroom flat	47 sq. m
2 bedroom flat	66 sq. m
2 bedroom house	76 sq. m (86 sq. m if 3 storey)
3 bedroom house	86 sq. m (94 sq. m if 3 storey)
4 bedroom house	106 sq. m (114 sq. m if 3 storey)
5 bedroom house	126 sq. m (134 sq. m if 3 storey)

The government consulted on housing standards during 2013, including the degree to which the Lifetime Homes standard is met. The government rightly pointed out that over the years a series of different standards have been developed by various agencies, which can lead to some confusion amongst the development industry and unnecessary additional costs in making adjustments to standard house types to meet local circumstances. As the results of this consultation were unknown, the Homes and Communities Agency then issued ambiguous messages on the standards to be met for properties within its most recent bid round (for 2015-18).



On 12 September 2014 the government issued a new consultation in which it set out proposed amendments to building regulations which it intends to legislate for in 2015 and a proposed national space standard for new housing. The government's stated intention is that the space standard will not be statutorily imposed but can be referenced in local planning policy where justified and subject to viability. However a single national space standard can effectively replace the 'many different space standards used by local authorities'. The consultation did not

seek views on this approach, but did seek views on the details of the proposed space standard.

Unfortunately, this strategy has been published before the results of this latest consultation are known. However, we know that the proposed national space standard is, generally, higher than the internal space standards we have been using until now (although the government's proposal does not take into account the current Housing Benefit regulations, which assume that all bedrooms can be occupied by at least two children). We are therefore minded to adopt the proposed national space standard, although we currently (at the time of publishing this document) do not know the final form of that proposed space standard. We also accept that there are

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

some circumstances (such as the refurbishment of an existing building) where they may be harder to meet for very practical reasons.

The proposed standard, as published on 12 September 2014 in draft form, can be summarised as follows:

Number of bedrooms	Number of bedspaces	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
Studio	1 person	39 (37)*			1.0
One bedroom	2 persons	50	58		1.5
Two Bedrooms	3 persons	61	70		2.0
	4 persons	70	79		
Three Bedrooms	4 persons	74	84	90	2.5
	5 persons	86	93	99	
	6 persons	95	102	108	
Four Bedrooms	5 persons	90	97	103	3.0
	6 persons	99	108	112	
	7 persons	108	115	121	
	8 persons	117	124	130	
Five Bedrooms	6 persons	103	110	116	3.5
	7 persons	112	119	125	
	8 persons	121	128	134	
Six Bedrooms	7 persons	116	123	129	4.0
	8 persons	125	132	138	

*Smaller if shower room and no bath

Whilst the government has stated that these standards can be referenced in local planning policy, our intent would be to use them in other circumstances, such as being part of the conditions on which we provide grant subsidy to housing associations and others to build or acquire new housing.

The Lifetime Homes standard was originally proposed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation many years ago following research into apportioning costs between amending initial design features and making future adaptations. Over the years gradual changes in building regulations have reduced the marginal cost of including the Lifetime Homes standard, for example by all new dwellings having electric sockets placed at an appropriate height above the floor. Criticisms have remained that other features are disproportionate in upfront costs for developers when considering the number of instances where a future adaptation might be avoided.

We therefore propose that all newly built affordable houses (whether achieved through planning obligations or through grant funding) are to have a wide enough staircase, wherever possible in a single straight run, to allow for easy fitting of a stair-lift chair when required. This being the only feature of the original Lifetime Homes standard we would seek to retain over and above those that have effectively been incorporated into building regulations.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

In recent developments there has been more comment on the provision of space for waste storage, the use of water butts and, where HCA funding has been used, the provision of garden sheds, sometimes taking a disproportionate amount of the garden space. These features could be considered in a wider review.

Action: We shall develop an affordable housing design code, in collaboration with other local housing authorities if possible, using national space standards as a minimum.

In the past we have tried to incorporate Secured by Design¹³ wherever possible, although on a site by site basis there are sometimes conflicts between the objectives of Secured by Design and other desired aspects, for example the preservation of existing rights of way across the site. Including as many Secured by Design features as possible on an estate should reduce the incidence of opportunist crime and other antisocial behaviour, reinforced by a robust approach to housing management from housing association partners and private sector landlords. More recently the government has signalled the intention to reduce the overall burden of regulation on the private sector, including developers, and this has called into question the future of Secured by Design.

As we develop a design code for affordable housing we could include some aspects of Secured by Design. However this may become impractical when Secured by Design features by their very nature should cover the estate as a whole and our expectation is that affordable housing will be scattered, either through pepper-potting or through small clusters, throughout a larger site.

Housing for independence

The Somerset Health & Wellbeing Strategy contains an action to achieve 'housing for independence':

"There needs to be an increased focus on the changing housing needs of the Somerset population, with particular emphasis given to widening the housing options for achieving and maintaining independent living."

This can be achieved through greater analysis of the tenure and property types commissioned on new sites and a review of the support systems in place to enable people to remain in their own home wherever possible or to retain or regain their independence for as long as possible.

¹³ 'Secured by Design' covers aspects of proposed designs and estate layouts with the intention to increase the security features of the built environment and reduce poor design features which might assist criminal behaviour.

Objective 2 – To Increase The Supply Of Affordable Housing

The district council has a long and very successful history of providing affordable housing, particularly for rent at sub-market levels, but also for other tenures such as shared ownership. There are two main mechanisms for achieving this:

- through housing associations (and others) building on their own sites, or renovating buildings that they have acquired, using public subsidy i.e.
 - Grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)
 - Grant funding from the district council
 - Publicly owned land or buildings transferred at nil or reduced cost
 - Some combination of the above
- through private developers being obliged to sell a proportion of the dwellings on their site to a housing association (or other affordable housing provider) at a reduced rate as part of their package of planning obligations under a s106 Agreement¹⁴.

Over the past six years we have delivered 1,460 new homes (representing a net gain of 1,116 new homes when taking into account replacements for demolished system built concrete dwellings) having deployed just over £2½m of our own capital resources and, in turn, levered in almost £53m of central public funding via the Homes and Communities Agency. More detail can be seen in graphs 1-4 and charts 1-4 in the evidence section (pages 41-45).

Action: We shall deliver a further 270 new homes during 2014/15 and aim to deliver at least a further 270 during the 2015/18 programme period.

Our current planning policy is that all qualifying sites (i.e. over a certain threshold) should provide 35% of the dwellings as affordable. Our current threshold is 15 dwellings or ½ hectare, but our intention is to reduce this to six. We are unable to reduce the threshold to six until we have an adopted Local Plan which, at the time of producing this draft, is subject to examination. The government has consulted on issuing a national minimum of ten which, if implemented, would undermine our locally based policy.

Action: We shall reduce our threshold through planning policy as soon as we are able to do so, either to six dwellings (as originally planned) or to ten (if this is imposed by central government policy).

Viability issues are important with several sites having recently had their overall affordable housing contribution reduced due to the economics faced by the developer; however, in all cases the affordable housing has been part of a package of reductions, with other obligations also being reined back, and we have considered

¹⁴ 's106' is section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). A s106 Agreement is a legally binding document which binds all parties to certain provisions, such as contributing towards community facilities, within the meaning of the Act.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

overage clauses which (at least in part) restore the lost obligations should the economics of the site improve over time, prior to completion.

So, given that some sites fall below the threshold and others have reduced contributions due to viability, the overall level of affordable housing achieved through the planning obligation route falls short of the 35% expressed in the policy.

Whatever is agreed in the s106 Agreement does not necessarily get reflected in actions on the ground. In some cases, we have apparently secured a level of affordable housing through the s106 Agreement but many years have passed before the developer in control of the site has even really begun. In other cases we have agreed that the affordable housing provision does not need to commence on day one but at some later trigger point, taking into account some of the upfront costs that a developer might face (and thus needing a greater proportion of open market sales in the early stages).

On the other hand, we have agreed a greater degree of clustering and greater provision of the affordable housing in the early stages where this has given the developer a guaranteed income (albeit not at full profit compared with open market housing) to help overcome major infrastructure costs (such as essential road works). In a couple of cases, this has led to a major site being well over 35% affordable whilst still partially completed, even though it might, for overall viability reasons, fall below 35% overall when finally completed.

The 35% target is derived from the projected need for affordable housing compared to the projected overall need for housing (of all tenures) for the period of the Local Plan.

Sustainability and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

In this context, we are using sustainability in the economic sense rather than discussing the green features of housing. In some places our views on how much housing is required are based on expressed demand and an assumption of the future demographics. In other places our views are influenced by what future demand for housing might be predicted as a result of new job opportunities arising, i.e. sometimes the projected size of a settlement in the Local Plan is influenced by the projection of economic development rather than population or household growth per se. The new government guidance on Strategic Housing Market Assessments¹⁵ expects us to take these factors into account.



¹⁵ A Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is a technical assessment of the current trends and shortfalls within a functioning housing market area intended to inform future housing and planning

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

The last SHMA was published in February 2009 based on data gathered in 2008. The evidence within the SHMA is now out of date and needs an urgent refresh. The county-wide framework relies more heavily on current housing register data and we can continue to do so for lettings purposes and to help inform desired property mixes in proposed sites as they come forward, but for longer term planning purposes we need a refreshed SHMA. We require a full refresh in accordance with latest guidance published in the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)¹⁶.

The housing register (see tables 9-12 on pages 52-55) provides a live picture of expressed housing need, but it has a number of limitations and is not necessarily a complete picture. For example we often find that in small villages there is a range of hidden need because many households who cannot afford to live in the village do not apply on the register. Their reasons may include:

- feeling that there is little or no point as they never see any vacancies occurring in their village;
- thinking that the register is only for those who wish to rent (and not for those who aspire to home ownership, such as through shared ownership).

Because of this low take-up on the register, villages often undertake a local housing needs survey to establish the current level of local need and such surveys are often used as evidence when seeking planning permission outside of the ordinary development boundary for a rural exceptions scheme¹⁷.

The SHMA has different limitations: whilst it took into account the (then current) backlog of need as expressed through the housing register, it extrapolated need over the plan period by looking at income levels and household formation projections. It told us that two thirds of all those requiring affordable housing could only afford the prevailing rent regime (which we now refer to as social rent). The new SHMA needs to tell us more about local incomes and the affordability of different types of affordable housing (including the government's new affordable rent model and testing out the potential for discounted market housing). The previous SHMA gave us some idea of what proportions were needed of different size dwellings (e.g. one, two or three bedrooms) but did so before the slight amendments to entitlements brought about by the changes to the Housing Benefit system. We should also gauge, through the SHMA process, what proportions of new dwellings should be bungalows.

The SHMA should be refreshed as soon as possible. There are limitations on partnership working brought about by the point in the local plan cycle that each authority has reached. We should try to work collaboratively again, if we can, but cannot afford to let this desire hold us up from getting on with it.

policy. The government's recent change in guidance to the Housing And Economic Development Needs Assessment is intended to take into account the local economic factors.

¹⁶ The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is published by the government and provides technical guidance on a range of planning policy topics.

¹⁷ A 'rural exceptions scheme' is where affordable housing is permitted, as an exception, outside of the usual development boundary for the settlement on the basis that the local needs of the settlement for affordable housing cannot otherwise be met within the same settlement.

Action: We shall refresh the SHMA, in collaboration with neighbouring planning authorities if possible, with the intention of having full analysis available by December 2015.

Other opportunities for affordable housing

Our ability to acquire new housing directly is limited by financial rules over the operation of a 'Housing Revenue Account' (which was effectively closed when the Council undertook a transfer of all its tenanted homes to a newly created Housing Association which has since become Yarlinton). We intend to identify more creative ways of delivering affordable homes, possibly using some of our own available capital funding to lever in further investment. One way in which we could achieve this might be through the creation of a joint venture vehicle with a partner organisation, such as a housing association. In turn, an active joint venture organisation, or some similar model, could give greater certainty of bulk sales to some developers and thus bring forward stalled sites.

Action: We shall assemble a portfolio of around twenty properties and investigate creating a joint venture vehicle, or other options, to provide for local housing needs



In recent years, some housing associations, such as Yarlinton, have employed alternative construction methods such as some timber framing systems which require less intensive labour on site. This has tended to be on sites where they are in control of the entire site rather than on larger sites where the affordable housing is only one element. We could also investigate

further alternative forms of construction, such as other forms of modular units, to reduce overall construction costs and promote these to the wider development industry.

Action: We shall investigate alternative forms of construction

Often developers sell houses on their new estates on a part-exchange basis as a way to assist the purchaser. These acquired properties may be of variable quality and sizes and scattered over a much larger area than the immediate area of the site which the developer has brought forward.

Every year we undertake the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)¹⁸. It might be that smaller parcels of land put forward for inclusion in the SHLAA could be developed by a housing association, one example being where we need to identify land on the edge of a village for a rural exceptions scheme.

¹⁸ The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is a process undertaken by spatial policy planners to identify the local capacity to provide for the required increase in dwellings.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

Housing associations continue to use smaller infill sites to produce affordable housing and, occasionally, redundant buildings such as former clothing factories. Here housing associations are in competition with private developers and may not always be able to compete on land prices. Where they are able to bring forward such sites, public subsidy is usually required, although some form of cross subsidy through a limited amount of market sale might be possible.

There may be some scope in finding some additional public sector land (but note, as previously stated, the desire to achieve diversification and avoid single tenure estates). We no longer own land in any great amount, although a couple of schemes are currently on site on land which we are leasing long term to a housing association partner. We have tried to consider public sector land in the past and this has also led to a couple of other schemes being brought forward based on a housing association purchasing land from the county council. However other public sector agencies, most notably the Ministry of Defence and the British Rail Residual Board were not so forthcoming. We look forward to working with the HCA, which is acting as the government's clearing house, and challenging why some of these land holdings have not been brought forward.

Maximising the New Homes Bonus

Since the introduction of the New Homes Bonus¹⁹, we have been a net gainer (compared with the loss of other central government funding), due to the number of new homes that have been brought forward during the qualifying period. For example the amount for 2013/14 exceeded £ 2.3m, about half of which was derived from the creation of new affordable housing, which also attracts an additional premium on the New Home Bonus. Funding an Empty Property Officer post has proven to be a spend-to-save measure as the net decrease in empty properties has also contributed significantly to the level of New Homes Bonus we qualify for.

Co-ordination of housing partners

We co-ordinate with partners such as housing associations and private sector landlords in order to provide a consistent response to issues in the affordable and private rented sectors.

We have had a partnership arrangement with a small number of housing associations for many years, choosing our main partners on a range of criteria; that is, not just concentrating on the efficiency and effectiveness of their development function, but also taking into account their record of housing management, such as their ability to robustly respond to substantiated incidents of antisocial behaviour.

Our current main partners are **Aster, Jephson, Knightstone, Raglan and Yarlington**, but we will also work with **Hastoe** on some more rural sites.

¹⁹ The 'New Homes Bonus' is a form of subsidy paid by Central Government to Local Government calculated according to the increase in the number of homes within the district, partly as a direct financial incentive to ensure that Local Authorities are not wilfully blocking new developments.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

The last time we ran the selection process, we did so with Sedgemoor and Mendip District Councils. This had the added advantage of sharing resources to run the process and housing associations having to produce one submission rather than three. The result was that we chose exactly the same five main partners as Mendip and we both share four of these with Sedgemoor. There is currently a proposed merger between Jephson and Raglan, with a joint transition board already appointed. Assuming this does go ahead, we will be reduced to four main partners, as will Mendip. There is a risk to us (in terms of sector capacity) of having too many eggs in too few baskets, which could seriously impact on our delivery should anything happen to any one of the remaining partner housing associations (for example a moratorium on new building brought about by a significant failure on a site elsewhere in the country). We also want to continue to give private sector developers a wide enough choice when suggesting potential named housing associations to receive the affordable housing in s106 Agreements. The previous selection exercise was run too long ago to justify a simple promotion of the Housing Association that came sixth.

Action: We shall undertake the housing association partnership selection process, in collaboration with Sedgemoor and Mendip District Councils, with the intention of having a revised partnership in place by April 2015.

Self-build & custom-build housing

There is potential for some housing in the district to be provided via a self-build or custom-build route. The government is keen to promote these forms of provision and will be consulting on whether councils should set aside some of their own land to be made available for custom-build options (the so-called 'Right to Build').

Self-build tends to be where the future occupants either collectively or individually work on the site themselves, potentially buying in specialist trades at different stages of the construction. The 'sweat equity' accumulated through working on the build themselves either converts to a reduced rent (where the scheme is managed by a landlord such as a housing association) or to a reduced construction cost (where the scheme is to be owned by the participants).

Custom-build refers to where a house is not purchased from a volume builder but is commissioned as an individual unit. Custom-build could include self-build but could be entirely contracted out to a private builder (presumably a small scale company), provided that the future occupants remain in control of the process. In theory, this form of custom-build could prove to be cheaper than purchasing a standard house type from a volume builder, but the individual choices involved probably do not command the same economies of scale.

Community Land Trusts

Community Land Trusts are good examples of communities taking control and transforming the future of their local community. They are non-profit, community-based organisations run by volunteers that develop housing, workspaces,

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

community facilities or other assets that meet the needs of the community, are owned and controlled by the community and are made available at permanently affordable levels.



South Somerset currently has two active CLTs (at Norton-sub-Hamdon and at Queen Camel), both of whom are working in collaboration with a housing association (Yarlington and Hastoe respectively). In each case the CLT has taken ownership of land previously used for agriculture on the edge of their village and are entering

into a long term lease with the housing association. The ground rent raised under the lease forms the basis of a community fund for other projects. The CLT and the housing association are both legally bound by the s106 Agreement which ensures that the houses will be available for very local people in perpetuity.

In both cases the housing association has secured funding from the HCA under a special community-led pot of funding, thanks to the partnership with the CLT. In both cases the houses are a mixture of rent and shared ownership.

Objective 3 – Making Effective Use Of South Somerset’s Housing Stock

Since December 2008, we have worked with the four other local housing authorities and all the major housing association landlords in the county on a single housing register and choice based lettings system, known as Homefinder Somerset. All applicants are placed in one of three broad bands (‘gold’, ‘silver’ or ‘bronze’), which relate to their relative level of housing need and have an effective date (usually the date that they first applied). Rarely, the most urgent cases are placed in a fourth ‘emergency’ band.

Almost all available homes are advertised on a weekly basis, with applicants placing bids on those properties they are eligible for (e.g. with the right number of bedrooms or with the right type of adaptation for their family). Subject to verification the landlord will ordinarily offer the property to the bidder in the highest band, and where there is more than one eligible applicant in the same band, the bidder with the longest effective date.

In the early part of 2014, further changes were implemented to the system following new government guidance and changes to the welfare benefits system. The two most significant changes were:

- closing the register to those who cannot demonstrate a local connection to Somerset (with some exceptions such as certain services personnel)
- changing the bedroom eligibility to match current housing benefit rules on the age and gender split of children who can share a bedroom

A monitoring board, which represents all the councils and landlords involved in the Homefinder system, exists to check that actual outcomes (and other procedural practices) sufficiently reflect the intentions of such changes.

The partnership is now working together to introduce a county-wide mutual exchange site which should be introduced in November 2014 (see table 14 on page 57 for mutual exchange statistics).

Local lettings plans and policies

In some cases, housing associations operate a local lettings plan (for initial lets of a new scheme) or a local lettings policy (longer term covering casual vacancies as they arise over time) in order to produce a sustainable community. In this context the word ‘local’ should not (necessarily) be taken to imply that lettings are only for local people – but that the plan or policy covers a local area rather than all stock in a single district.

One example might be on initial lets to set aside a significant proportion for existing tenants (of all housing associations) in need of a transfer. This creates a scattering of subsequent vacancies, not necessarily all of the same size as the original stock and not even necessarily in the same settlement, which can then be let through the

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

Homefinder system as normal, thus probably rehousing a high proportion of those in high level need such as gold and emergency band households. In this way a batch of new properties can contribute towards reducing a high level of need, but not necessarily directly and not all at the same time in the same location.

Local lettings policies have been used as a longer term measure where there are special circumstances, such as the need to turn an estate around, and often in conjunction with a range of other measures such as organising residents' associations and undertaking environmental works or refurbishing communal areas. The relevant legislation requires consent from the local housing authority and we, in turn, have delegated power to our portfolio holder to agree such local lettings policies, provided they are still justified and provided the total housing association stock covered by any such policy does not exceed 3% at any one time. Our concern here is that too many such restrictions would reduce our ability to meet our statutory obligation towards those in the reasonable preference²⁰ groups and may have other equalities impacts. Approval of such local lettings policies is time limited, so there are five such policies due for review.

Action: Review each of the following local lettings policies with a view to renewing, revising or revoking:

- Roping Road, Yeovil (Yarlington)
- Wellington Flats, Yeovil (Yarlington)
- Henson Park, Chard (Yarlington)
- Fosse Park, Yeovil (Jephson)
- Old Lloyd's Bank & Hanover House, Langport (Yarlington)

A rural lettings policy

There is a potential for a rural housing lettings policy. This would be similar to the local lettings policies described above but could cover all housing association vacancies arising in our most rural settlements where the amount of available affordable housing has reduced over time. Similarly to the cumulative effect of the local lettings policies referred to above, we need to ensure that the proportion of vacancies affected remains low in order to ensure that we fulfil our



²⁰ The 'reasonable preference' groups are those types of applicant households set out in the relevant legislation as having the greatest need, such as those who are overcrowded or living in insanitary conditions. The local housing authority must demonstrate that its policies and processes provide sufficient weight towards these groups, i.e. they should stand a greater chance of being rehoused than applicants who are not in a reasonable preference group.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

statutory obligation towards the reasonable preference groups and consider other equalities issues.

The take up of the Right to Buy (and, since the transfer of former council stock to Yarlington, the preserved Right to Buy) has been disproportionate in rural settlements; at the same time, the opportunities for further provision have tended to be more limited. In many cases, we have spent years taking a rural exceptions scheme from concept to reality in order to meet very local needs that otherwise are not getting served through letting the existing stock if and when it becomes available.

Rural exceptions schemes typically give preference initially to: those with a proven local connection to the target village; then to those with a proven connection to the 'doughnut ring' (of immediately adjacent parishes); and finally to anybody with a connection to the district. Where there is more than one household with a need for the size and type of property on offer and a local connection on the same tier,



the normal Homefinder rules apply and this vacancy will be let to the household with the highest banding and, if in the same banding, the longest effective date. Usually the logic of the 'doughnut ring' of immediately adjacent parishes is to include all adjacent parishes (with a population of less than 3,000) even if they happen to be in a different district because the target village lies on the district border.

A Rural Housing Lettings Policy, similar to the one adopted by Mendip District Council²¹, would treat all vacancies in the target village as if they were subject to the same rules as rural exceptions schemes, but without going through all the expense and effort of creating a small number of new dwellings. Whilst being somebody with a very local connection and being in one of the reasonable preference groups are not mutually exclusive, we need to judge the number of affected dwellings carefully in order to ensure the balance between trying to meet very local needs and meeting our wider statutory obligations.

An analysis of total housing association general needs dwellings in villages with less than 3,000 population suggests that a cut-off point of 20 dwellings (or less) would encompass 50 parishes and represent 3.27% of all Housing Association stock (although probably a lower percentage of vacancies as these tend to arise less frequently in rural locations, initial analysis suggests around 2.5%).

²¹ <http://www.mendip.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=3587&p=0>

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

Another option might be to include all vacancies arising where there are 10 general needs dwellings or fewer (which would cover 38 parishes) and every other vacancy where there are 11 or more but fewer than 25 dwellings (which would cover a further 20 parishes). This would be equivalent to 3.22% of all stock (again, initial analysis suggests around 2.5% of vacancies).

Action: We shall develop and implement a balanced rural lettings policy with the intention that it takes effect from August 2015.

We are committed to bringing forward more affordable homes in very rural locations through the use of the rural exceptions policy and the emerging Local Plan policy SS2²². The Rural Housing Action Plan will need to be revised in due course and include specific actions in certain locations. In the evidence section we have updated one of the main summary tables from the previous Rural Housing Action Plan, showing where local surveys have been undertaken and where local schemes have been developed since (table 13 on pages 56 & 57).

Action: We shall review the rural housing action plan with the intention of publishing a new plan by May 2015.

Tenancy Strategy

The Localism Act 2011 placed a new statutory responsibility on local housing authorities to develop a Tenancy Strategy to guide social landlords (mostly housing associations) in developing tenancy policies for their own stock. It also required those landlords to have regard to the strategy. This was in response to the new freedoms for such landlords in granting new tenancies on fixed terms and on a different rent regime (to be up to 80% of the local market rents).



Starting in July 2011 we led a county-wide project team, including some of the larger housing association landlords, to create a single county-wide tenancy strategy to provide consistency across the county for all concerned. After significant consultation we adopted this strategy in July 2012. The other four local housing authorities in the county agree that it is now time to review the strategy in the light of actual outcomes resulting from lettings under the range of tenancy types and rent regimes currently available in the social sector.

Action: We shall participate in the review with the intention of adopting a new county-wide tenancy strategy by June 2015.

²² Policy SS2 in the emerging Local Plan effectively replaces the previous rural exceptions policy and will allow development outside of the defined boundary in rural settlements where it can be demonstrated that such development is sustainable, such as new affordable housing that otherwise could not be built.

Making use of empty properties

Since the adoption of our Empty Property Strategy, we have had a very good track record in recent years of reducing the number of empty properties in the district. As at October 2013 we were 8th most successful council in the country at bringing empty properties back into use (546 properties). See graphs 9 and 10 on page 58 for a visual comparison with other authorities in Somerset.

In part this has been achieved by employing a specialist officer who can take a tenacious but tailored approach to each individual property. In some cases owners have brought the property back into use without any input from the council. In other cases we have made available an empty property grant, with conditions attached obliging the owner to let the refurbished property for a minimum period to somebody nominated by our Housing Options Team at a market rent within current housing benefit limits. We have also been able to refer some properties to Somerset Care & Repair who have also been able to bring the property back into a habitable condition whilst taking control of it under a lease and, in turn, being able to let.



Aids & adaptation works

We provide a number of other grants to assist private landlords and owner occupiers with the condition and suitability of their property. This includes the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) to those in need of a specialist adaptation to meet their physical requirements, for example the provision of a wet floor shower room for those no longer able to get in or out of a bath. Across the rest of the county these works are organised through a Home Improvement Agency (HIA)²³, in place under a contract organised by the county council. This HIA contract is currently due for renewal.

The government have organised some social care and health funding into a new 'Better Care Fund' which is to be jointly managed by the County Council and the

²³ The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) provides services to owners of homes who need assistance to keep their home safe, warm or weather proof, particularly where the issue may cause or worsen a health problem. The HIA also assists tenants and helps with specific adaptations for the home to meet an individual's specific physical needs, such as organising the work covered by a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

Clinical Commissioning Group²⁴. There will be opportunities for the Better Care Fund to be deployed in more innovative ways to improve housing conditions and, thus, reduce the call on primary care services.

For just over a year the County Council has employed a housing specialist Occupational Therapist who has been able to intervene in certain cases to find better housing solutions, sometimes avoiding the need to use DFG funding altogether. We will support the continued funding of this service, possibly as a priority for the Better Care Fund.

A sub-regional group of local housing authorities across Avon and Somerset has funding to enhance services that will reduce non-priority single homelessness and rough sleeping. The group's gap analysis has identified a particular problem with mental health users who have been discharged from services in Somerset including in-patient wards. The group would like to invest in a service that will improve the experience for clients who are discharged from hospital but with nowhere to go.

Dorcas House Trust

The Council is the corporate trustee of a charitable trust set up to provide accommodation in Yeovil for single women. For almost 100 years this provision was made through a building known as Dorcas House but, following consent from the Charity Commission, this was disposed of in the light of it no longer being economically viable. We now hold the funds in trust and are obliged to procure alternative provision.

Action: We shall procure replacement properties for the Dorcas House Trust.

²⁴ The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is the body created to commission some specialist services, working in collaboration with the public health services of the County Council, following abolition of the Primary Care Trust. The CCG is effectively practitioner led.

Objective 4 – Meeting The Housing Related Support Needs Of The Most Vulnerable and Least Resilient Residents



Over the past year a county-wide project team has been reviewing financial inclusion work across the County with a view to producing a new Financial Inclusion Strategy. There has been a raft of reforms to the overall benefits system over the past couple of years, with more changes to come (such as the rolling out of Universal Credit). In particular changes to Housing Benefit such as the freezing of the Local Housing Allowance and the introduction of

the so-called bedroom tax, the introduction of an overall benefits cap and the changes to Council Tax Reductions have created a difficult new environment for those on marginal incomes to navigate through.

Action: We shall provide a high quality comprehensive Welfare Benefits advice service to ensure that people are able to access the advice they need and refer/signpost to other organisations where appropriate.

Sheltered and extra care needs

Historically, South Somerset has had a good range of sheltered and extra care housing options, now mostly provided by Yarlington Housing Group. The additional support provided in such schemes (often referred to as 'housing-related support') is not funded through rents but through a separate contract with the County Council which gained responsibility for the Supporting People²⁵ regime.



The service is being challenged from two directions. Firstly, the demographics: with an ageing population we expect the demand for sheltered and extra care schemes to rise in coming years. Secondly, the pressure on public funding, with the county

²⁵ The 'Supporting People' regime was created just over ten years ago to bring together under one umbrella a series of separate forms of support services (for example support previously paid for by the Housing Corporation, the Probation service, the Local Housing Authority or Social Services). What all of these services had in common was the need to provide support to individuals or families in order to enable them to maintain their current tenure.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

council making significant savings on contracts issued under the auspices of Supporting People. A third, related, factor is the movement towards personalised budgets²⁶, which calls into question the economies of scale that can be achieved under traditional budgets.

The County Council is also considering the relationship between places that it funds in residential care and the type of support that it can purchase for individuals in extra care schemes. It may be that some minor adjustment of the types of services provided means that an individual can be helped through a placement in an extra care scheme rather than placed in residential care (which often results in a greater loss of independence at a higher cost to the public purse).

Together with Yarlington and other housing providers, the district council is participating in a stakeholder partnership board created by the county to consider how to remodel the contracted services provided in extra care housing schemes. We remain concerned that prevention is key and that an appropriate level of support services provided at extra care schemes will reduce the call on other public services, i.e. there is an economic as well as a moral case for maintaining the type of support that has been provided historically.



Similarly, we would wish to assist people to remain independently in their own home for as long as possible and for some people this can be achieved through the assurance of having a dispersed community alarm unit²⁷.

Action: We shall provide and promote a high quality community alarm service through South Somerset Careline to support vulnerable residents staying in their homes.

Homelessness

The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a statutory duty on all local housing authorities to produce a Homelessness Strategy, the first of which had to be in place by July 2003. Last year we agreed the second county-wide Homelessness Strategy with the other four districts (we formally adopted it on 7th November 2013). As this document is so relatively recent we have not discussed most of it again here. More recent evidence suggests that we are seeing a continuing reduction in the number of homeless households making an approach (where homelessness is not prevented),

²⁶ Under 'personalised budgets' it is expected that individuals in need of help and support will be given control of the public funds available to meet their needs and exercise their own judgement as to how best to purchase that help or support and who from. This has significant implications for providers of such services who are used to the financial security (and economies of scale) of a block contract from the county council.

²⁷ A dispersed community alarm is usually fitted to the property but could be activated by a pendant worn by the resident and, in an emergency, it will contact a dedicated call centre who can assess the situation and call in relevant help. It is 'dispersed' because it can be fitted in any dwelling, rather than only those built in a group connected to a sheltered housing scheme, for example.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

being found to be owed a duty by us under the act²⁸ and subsequently being placed in some form of temporary accommodation²⁹.

Action: We shall continue to deliver the actions set out in the Homelessness Strategy.

Temporary accommodation

We have continued to reduce our reliance on temporary accommodation³⁰ and have kept the use of bed & breakfast to an absolute minimum, whilst nationally the reliance on B&B has grown and the number of families left, unlawfully, for over six weeks has increased dramatically over the past couple of years. In 2011 we published the Temporary Accommodation Strategy with the intention of maintaining a flexible portfolio of properties available for use as temporary accommodation and being prepared for the possibility of a spike in homelessness due to local economic circumstances.

Action: We shall review the actions set out in the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and publish a revised plan in the light of current circumstances by March 2015.

Rough sleeping

The government has targeted rough sleeping, and the prevention of rough sleeping, as a priority within homelessness services provided by local authorities and other agencies. It has set aside a specific grant fund and divided this nationally among several groups of local authorities. In May 2011, £60,000 was allocated to a group of eight housing authorities (the five in Somerset, plus North Somerset, Bristol and Bath & North East Somerset) and placed in the stewardship of Mendip District Council. A cross authority steering group (including voluntary sector representation) was created to consider best use of these funds and it first met in June 2011. In 2012 the Government awarded a further £499,000 to the Avon & Somerset cluster. The steering group appointed a co-ordinator (managed by Mendip) and one of her first tasks was a thorough gap analysis, comparing facilities and services across the eight authorities against a good practice checklist.

Various vulnerable client groups (who may be at risk of rough sleeping if they fail to manage their current circumstances) are provided with assistance under contract (issued by the county council), based around certain properties. Much of this housing-related support³¹ is designated and time limited. One common missing factor in trying to help many (but not all) vulnerable people regain confidence and appropriate skills to engage in society, at least to the extent where potential repeat

²⁸ See graphs 12 & 13 on pages 63 & 64 and map 4 on page 66.

²⁹ See graph 14 on page 65 and map 5 on page 67.

³⁰ See graph 14 on page 65

³¹ 'Housing-related' support services are defined as services that aim to develop or sustain an individual's capacity to live independently in accommodation. Housing-related support services are not general health, social care or statutory personal care services, but rather services whose aim is to support more independent living arrangements.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

homelessness can be avoided, is the operation of a day centre facility providing a structured approach. The lack of a day centre facility in South Somerset was identified as the highest priority emerging from the gap analysis undertaken by the rough sleeping co-ordinator.

The council owns a grade 2 listed building at 80 South Street, Yeovil. In recent years it has had various uses including as an art gallery with associated café and as office accommodation, at one time housing the Town Centre Manager, and as a meeting room facility. We have agreed to lease this property to Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (BCHA) and allocated grant towards the refurbishment of the upper floors to create some self-contained flats. Funds are also being made available from the rough sleepers steering group to help turn the ground floor into the much-needed day centre facility to be run by Barnabas, part of the BCHA Group.

Action: We shall deliver the new Day Centre provision for supported housing clients in South Somerset in partnership with BCHA

Housing-related support

Over a number of years a range of housing-related support projects for various vulnerable groups has developed, often with input of capital grant from the district council. More recently, the county council consolidated the majority of these various support services into two major 'pathway' contracts, known as 'P2i' (Pathway to Independence) and 'P4A' (Pathway for Adults), both of which commenced in May 2013. The P2i contract is geared towards young people, including those leaving care, and the P4A contract is geared towards older adults with one or more of a wide range of vulnerabilities. Both contracts include services towards homeless people, both statutory homeless (within the meaning of the Act) and those who are homeless within the plain English meaning of the word.

There are four other key areas of housing-related support which formerly came within the Supporting People regime. In terms of numbers of people affected, the largest is the older people's contracts, centred around sheltered and extra care facilities and described earlier. The second largest area is providing support for those with learning disabilities, which the county is currently reviewing.

The two other main contracts are SDAS³², which covers drug and alcohol misuse, and the domestic violence contract which includes the provision of refuge and safe houses.

The P2i contract (younger people) has just entered the second year at which time there was a decrease in terms of the accommodation-based support, which effectively meant a reduction of



³² Somerset Drug and Alcohol Service (SDAS) offers free, confidential advice and support to anyone whose life is being adversely affected by drug and/or alcohol use.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

approximately 29% in such placements (from 84 to 60), albeit accompanied by an increase in the level of floating support (but still representing an overall step-down). Whilst this represents a risk in terms of the potential bottleneck of newly arising cases, so far this has not impacted on our sustained reduction of temporary accommodation.

The changes in the contracts, and the P2i contract in particular, have led to a complex picture of buildings being procured, designed and subsidised for one purpose (within the ownership of one particular provider) now being used for a slightly different purpose (with the support contract being awarded to a completely different provider). We have been pro-active in trying to make sure that the best use is made of all the existing stock, especially that which we have put our capital subsidy into at some point in the past.

Action: We shall investigate options for future use of historically subsidised properties no longer required for the P2i contract to meet local housing needs

One of the emerging issues within many of the projects mentioned above is the apparent silting up of the accommodation-based support units with the lack of appropriate move-on, including for those who still require a level of support (called floating support - because it follows the individual rather than being provided at a specific property). Some of the difficulty may arise from Housing Associations being unwilling to rehouse former project residents into general needs housing because they believe that either

- the individual is not truly ready to move on; or
- the level of floating support offered to them is inadequate; or
- the individual may refuse the floating support once the new accommodation is secured; or
- a combination of the above

In addition, the number of available properties may be in decline, partly because of the competition we now have with those needing to downsize because of the effect of the so-called bedroom tax.

Action: We shall develop a move-on plan for supported housing projects by December 2015.

One of the properties that have become vacant as a result of the various changes is owned by Chapter One and known as Christopher House. Following the award of grant from the HCA's 2015/18 funding programme, the building shall be remodelled to create some self-contained flats. We shall support Chapter One in their plans to create a new use for this building.

Gypsy & Traveller accommodation needs

We already provide some residential pitches for Gypsies and Travellers in South Somerset, having taken control of the county-owned sites some fourteen years ago. At the time of publishing this document, two of the council's Gypsy sites are fully

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

occupied, with two pitches remaining vacant at Twisted Willows near Ilton. There are currently four outstanding applications on the waiting list for our sites.

Since the 2006 Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Strategy document was adopted:

- we have terminated our contract with a private sector provider to manage the sites under our control;
- we have fully refurbished the sites under our control, now providing park homes;
- we have extended the site at Ilton and taken back into public control a further piece of associated land there;
- the county council-owned transit site (in Sedgemoor) has fallen into disuse;
- the Supporting People grant towards our site management and community liaison work has been withdrawn;
- a Travellers' CLT³³ has been created with a county-wide remit, although currently based in Mendip;
- relevant regional structures have been disbanded;
- the government has revised and re-issued planning guidance;
- we have failed to locate a transit site in South Somerset;
- we continue to hold unspent monies from central government grant in an acquisition fund;
- the county-wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment has been undertaken and updated;
- we have provided (including through the appeal process) sufficient residential pitches through the planning process.



The most recent analysis of evidence, the GTAA³⁴, was conducted on a county-wide basis last year. Data was collected in May 2013 with the final document being published in September 2013. One area that remains a little unclear from the evidence presented in the GTAA is the needs of Showmen, i.e. travelling entertainers who may need yards for storage of equipment or animals. We want to be clearer about exactly what these needs might be.

In terms of residential pitches we are already ahead of schedule thanks to providing planning permission (including losing appeals) to enough privately owned residential sites so that we are likely to need no specific action over next few years (see table 17 on page 68). In that respect we are unique, with the other districts in the county (and probably much further afield) having predicted shortfalls making it harder for

³³ A Community Land Trust (CLT) is a community-led organisation that provides land and buildings to meet the long-term needs of its community.

³⁴ The Somerset Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) provides independent evidence of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Somerset.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

them to prevent unsuitable sites gaining permission at appeal. In planning terms, once the Local Plan has been adopted, we need to produce some policy guidance (known as DPD³⁵) to allocate sites to meet the identified need. In the spirit of the countywide framework we would like this to be a joint DPD if possible, providing consistency for individuals and communities across the county. The proposed timing for this is set out in our Local Development Scheme (LDS)³⁶.

However we still need to identify a suitable stopping point for Travellers who are travelling through the district and/or a transit site. We intend to work in collaboration with the other councils in Somerset to investigate solutions across the county.

Action: We shall identify and secure emergency stopping point/transit site for travellers within Somerset in collaboration with other councils in Somerset.

³⁵ DPD stands for Development Plan Document.

³⁶ The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is part of the local planning framework where the planning authority sets out its proposals for developing detailed policies and guidance, such as DPD, including a timescale showing the order in which these should be dealt with.

Action Plan

Page Ref	Action	Equalities Analysis required?	Lead Officer	Resources	Target Date
9	Explore options to undertake a private sector stock condition survey	No	Environmental Health Manager	Time to explore the options available within existing staff capacity but full survey subject to funding being made available	October 2015
9	Review and update the private sector housing strategy	Yes	Environmental Health Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity	July 2015
13	Develop an affordable housing design code, in collaboration with other local housing authorities if possible, using national standards as a minimum (if these are adopted by government)	Yes	Corporate Housing Strategy Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity	March 2015
14	Deliver a further 270 new homes during 2014/15 and aim to deliver at least a further 270 during the 2015/18 programme period	No	Corporate Housing Strategy Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity. Capital funding in place for the programme up to and including 2014/15; subject to further bids to HCA and council's own funding beyond that date.	March 2015 & March 2018
14	Reduce our qualifying site threshold through planning policy either to six dwellings (as originally planned) or to ten (if this is imposed by central government policy)	No	Principal Spatial Planner	Time available within existing staff capacity	As soon as we are able to do so
17	Refresh the SHMA, in collaboration with neighbouring planning authorities if possible	Yes	Principal Spatial Planner	Time available within existing staff capacity but full refresh subject to funding being made available	December 2015

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

Page Ref	Action	Equalities Analysis required?	Lead Officer	Resources	Target Date
17	Assemble a portfolio of around twenty properties and investigate creating a joint venture vehicle, or other options, to provide for local housing needs	Yes	Strategic Director (Place and Performance)	Time available within existing staff capacity. Capital acquisitions costs subject to approval of release of sufficient funding.	March 2016
17	Investigate gains to be made by promoting alternative forms of construction	No	Housing Development Officer	Time available within existing staff capacity	November 2015
19	Undertake the Housing Association partnership selection process, in collaboration with Sedgemoor and Mendip District Councils	No	Corporate Housing Strategy Manager	Time commitment reduced through collaborative work and available within existing staff capacity	April 2015
22	Review each of the following local lettings policies: Roping Road, Yeovil (Yarlington); Wellington Flats, Yeovil (Yarlington); Henson Park, Chard (Yarlington); Fosse Park, Yeovil (Jephson); Old Lloyd's Bank & Hanover House, Langport (Yarlington)	No	Housing Policy Officer (all five reviews)	Time available within existing staff capacity	Dec 2014 Dec 2014 Dec 2014 May 2015 Dec 2014
24	Develop and implement a balanced rural lettings policy, improving access to affordable housing for those with very local housing needs	Yes	Corporate Housing Strategy Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity	August 2015

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

Page Ref	Action	Equalities Analysis required?	Lead Officer	Resources	Target Date
24	Review the rural housing action plan in order to focus action to deliver a steady supply of new rural housing	No	Housing Policy Officer	Time available within existing staff capacity. Capital funding for specific new proposed schemes subject to bids to HCA or council's own funding.	May 2015
24	Participate in the review of the county-wide tenancy strategy	Yes, county wide	Supported Housing & Strategy Officer	Time available within existing staff capacity	June 2015
26	Procure replacement properties for the Dorcas House Trust	No	Corporate Housing Strategy Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity. Acquisition costs to be met primarily from Dorcas reserves.	To be agreed with Charity Commission
27	Provide a high quality comprehensive Welfare Benefits Advice service to ensure that people are able to access the advice they need and refer/signpost to other organisations where appropriate	No	Welfare & Careline Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity	
28	Provide and promote a high quality community alarm service through South Somerset Careline to support vulnerable residents staying in their homes	No	Welfare & Careline Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity. Equipment available through existing trading budget.	
29	Deliver the remaining actions set out in the Homelessness Strategy	No	Housing & Welfare Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity. Cost largely available through existing budgets, some release of funds through 'spend to save' initiatives.	March 2016

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

Page Ref	Action	Equalities Analysis required?	Lead Officer	Resources	Target Date
29	Review the actions set out in the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and publish a revised plan	Yes	Corporate Housing Strategy Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity. Revenue subsidy available through existing budgets.	March 2015
30	Deliver the new Day Centre provision for supported housing clients in South Somerset in partnership with BCHA	Yes	Supported Housing & Strategy Officer	Time available within existing staff capacity. Capital funding largely secured through three different funding routes including council's own affordable housing development budget.	July 2015
31	Investigate options for future use of historically subsidised properties no longer required for the P2i contract to meet local housing needs	No	Supported Housing & Strategy Officer	Time available within existing staff capacity. Possibility that some capital subsidy may be needed to help with reconfiguration, in which case it will be subject to bids to the HCA or the council's own funding.	Ongoing
31	Develop a 'move-on' plan for supported housing projects to ensure sufficient accommodation is available to avoid such projects 'silting up'	No	Supported Housing & Strategy Officer	Time available within existing staff capacity. Properties may become available through the above initiative or taken out of general needs management by housing association partners.	December 2015
33	Identify and secure emergency stopping point/transit site for travellers within Somerset in collaboration with other councils in Somerset.	No	Corporate Housing Strategy Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity. The council has already secured an acquisition fund.	December 2015

Evidence

A wealth of evidence on housing issues across the County can be found within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) at the following website:

www.somersetintelligence.org.uk

The JSNA is continuously updated, in the sense that different data sets are changed as and when the new data becomes available rather than, say, the entire website being changed annually. Information on the website is, then, likely to be more up to date than any data we reproduce here (which will, inevitably, date). On the other hand some of the data held as part of the JSNA provides a country wide picture but not much more detail on a district by district basis. In the following section we have selected some details which have informed this Strategy Implementation document.

Evidence relating to Objective 1

Housing tenure data

Household spaces are broken down by tenure by district in the two tables below. Although the number of households can vary by district, the proportions remain very similar, differing only by a few percentage points. Most noteworthy is that South Somerset is the only district where the social rented sector is still more dominant than the private rented sector.

Table 1 – by number

Number	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	TOTAL
Owned Outright	17,387	18,320	26,718	16,329	7,024	85,778
Owned - Mortgage	15,051	16,482	22,137	15,064	3,397	72,131
Shared Ownership	349	273	542	251	72	1,487
Social Rented	5,473	5,951	9,697	7,321	2,288	30,730
Private Rented	7,136	7,113	9,272	7,227	2,510	33,258
Live rent-free	761	662	1,135	715	332	3,605
TOTAL	46,157	48,801	69,501	46,907	15,623	226,989

Source: 2011 Census (Table KS402EW) via Somerset Intelligence

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

Table 2 – tenure as percentage of homes in each district

%	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	TOTAL
Owned Outright	37.7	37.5	38.4	34.8	45.0	37.8
Owned - Mortgage	32.6	33.8	31.9	32.1	21.7	31.8
Shared Ownership	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.7
Social Rented	11.9	12.2	14.0	15.6	14.6	13.5
Private Rented	15.5	14.6	13.3	15.4	16.1	14.7
Live rent-free	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.5	2.1	1.6
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: 2011 Census (Table KS402EW) via Somerset Intelligence

Energy efficiency

The following two tables illustrate that, whilst improving energy efficiency is a national as well as a regional issue, the need is greatest among owner-occupiers.

Table 3 – energy efficiency ratings of South Somerset’s housing stock

SAP ³⁷ Band	Households	% of local housing stock	South West	England
A	0	0%	0%	0%
B	1	0%	0%	1%
C	7,798	11%	13%	13%
D	31,057	43%	35%	38%
E	17,049	24%	33%	34%
F	14,460	20%	14%	11%
G	1,414	2%	5%	3%
Total	71,779	100%	100%	100%

Source: Centre for Sustainable Energy, 2013

³⁷ The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is the methodology used by the government to assess and compare the energy and environmental performance of dwellings, where A is the most efficient and G the least. Its purpose is to provide accurate and reliable assessments of dwelling energy performances that are needed to underpin energy and environmental policy initiatives.

For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/standard-assessment-procedure>

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

Table 4 – modelling SAP ratings of the local housing stock by tenure

SAP Band	Private rented	Owner-Occupied	LA/ HA
A	0%	0%	0%
B	0%	0%	0%
C	19%	6%	28%
D	37%	44%	44%
E	19%	24%	24%
F	23%	23%	3%
G	2%	2%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Centre for Sustainable Energy, 2013

There also remain a small percentage of homes without central heating, although the higher proportion in West Somerset seems to indicate that this may be more marked in rural than urban areas, possibly linked to the existing mains gas infrastructure, as shown below.

Table 5 – homes without central heating by district

	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	TOTAL
Number of homes	1,291	1,906	2,513	1,448	828	7,986
Homes as % of total	2.8	3.9	3.6	3.1	5.3	3.5

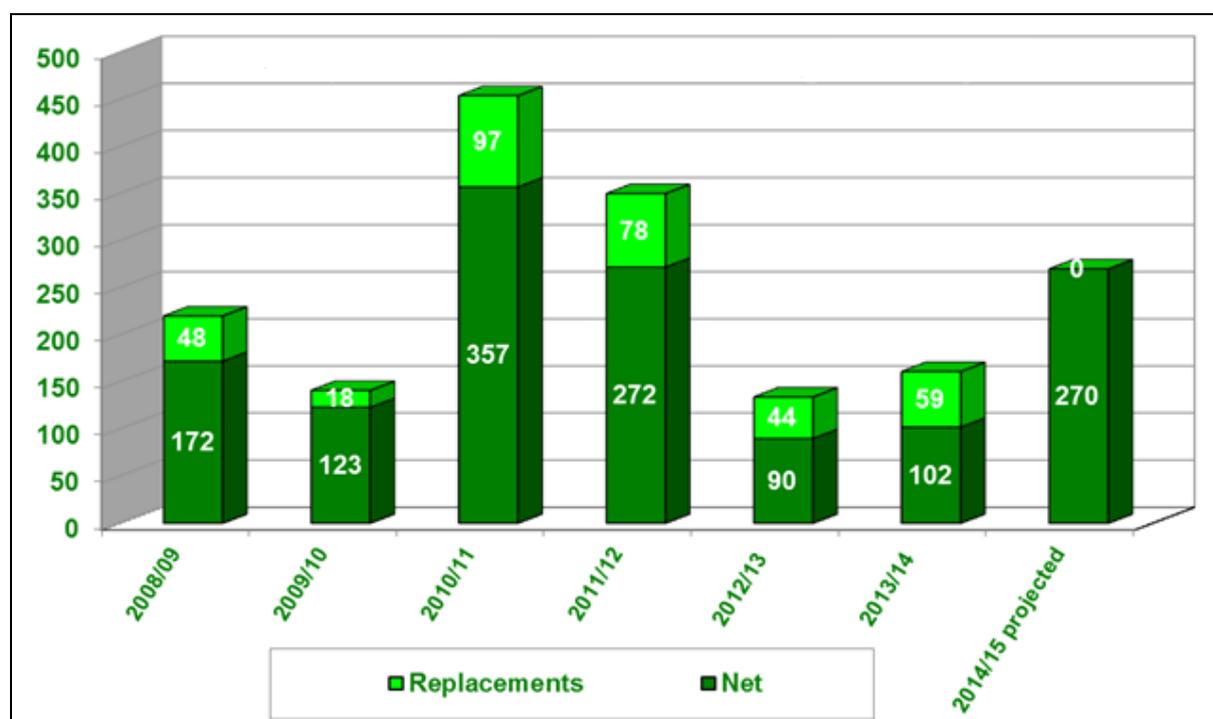
Source: Census 2011 via Somerset Intelligence

Evidence relating to Objective 2

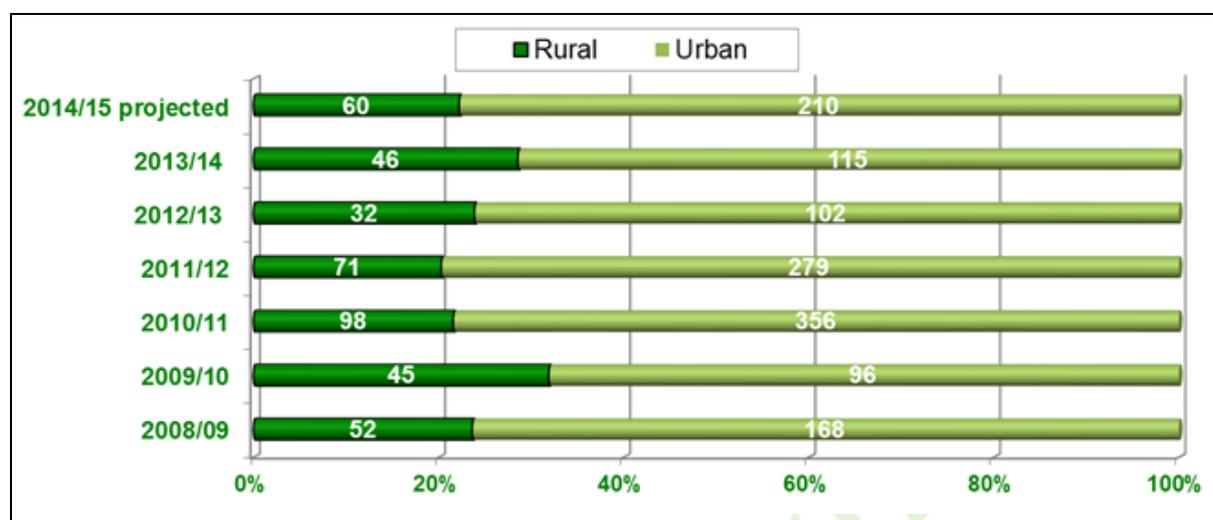
Affordable Housing delivery

The following graphs depict the affordable housing development programme over the previous six years and projected for the current financial year (2014/15). Graph 1 shows both the overall number of new affordable homes delivered and how this breaks down into replacement properties (following demolition of concrete houses for example) and the real net gain.

Graph 1 - affordable housing delivery



Graph 2 - rural housing as a proportion

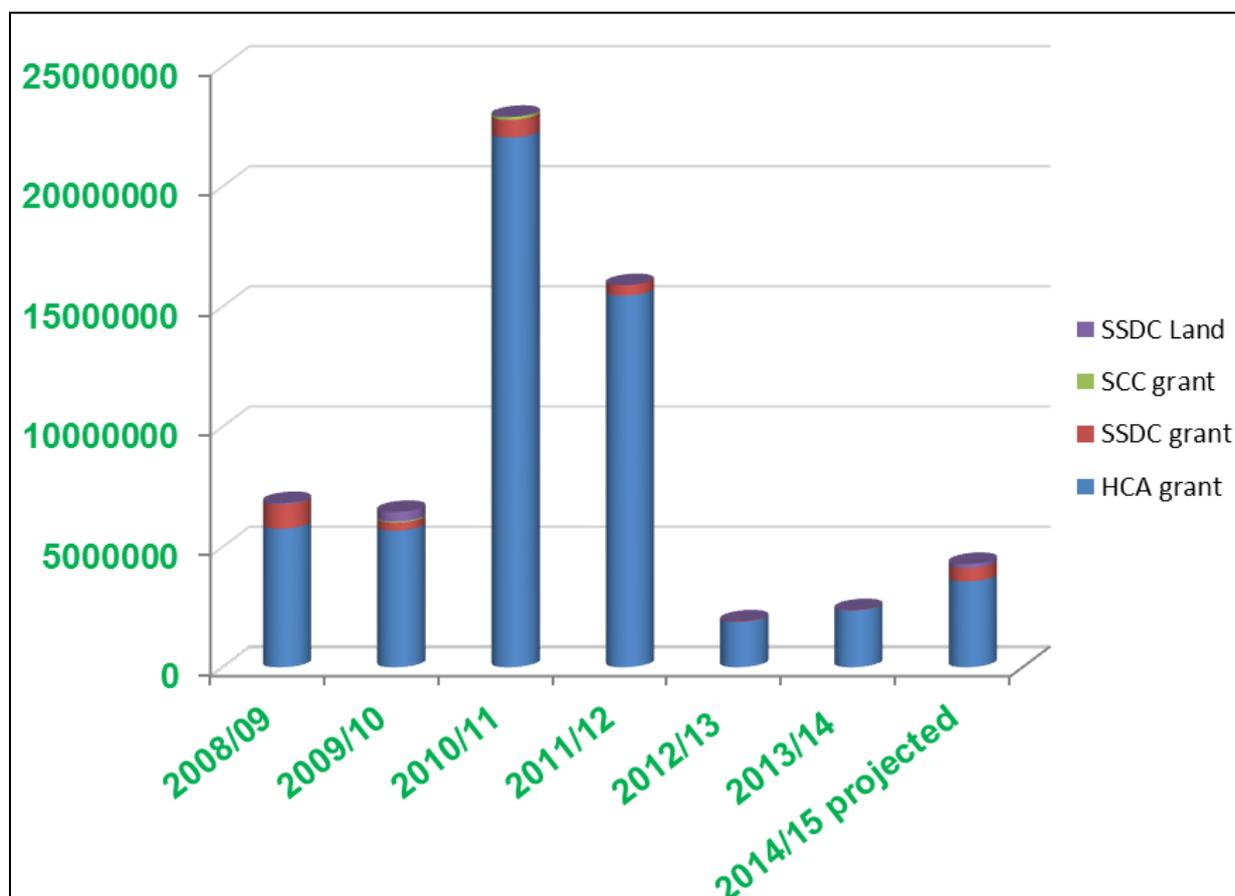


Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

In graph 2 'rural' means within settlements of 3,000 or less population. It shows that we have consistently delivered at least one fifth of the programme each year in our most rural settlements (see also chart 4 further below).

Graph 3 shows the breakdown of sources for public subsidy. Over the past six (complete) financial years this amounts to just over £56m, of which 94% (almost exactly £53m) has come through the Homes and Communities Agency and 5% (just over £2½m) has come as cash grant from the district council. This demonstrates that we have, generally, deployed our own funds in a manner that maximises capture of central resources.

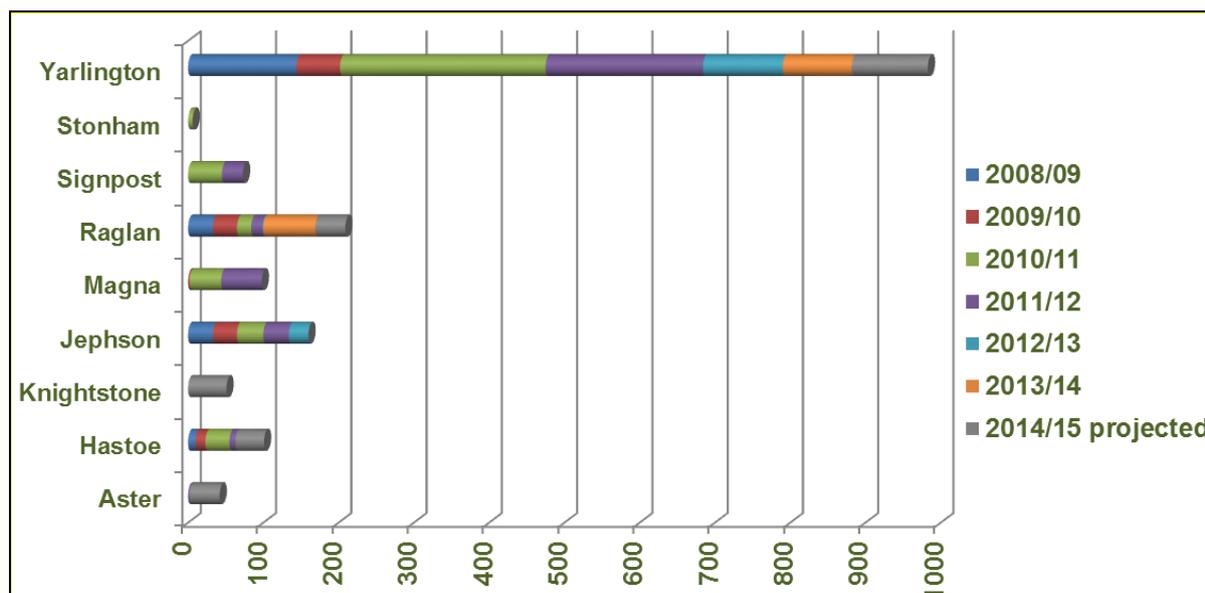
Graph 3 – level of public subsidy associated with completed schemes



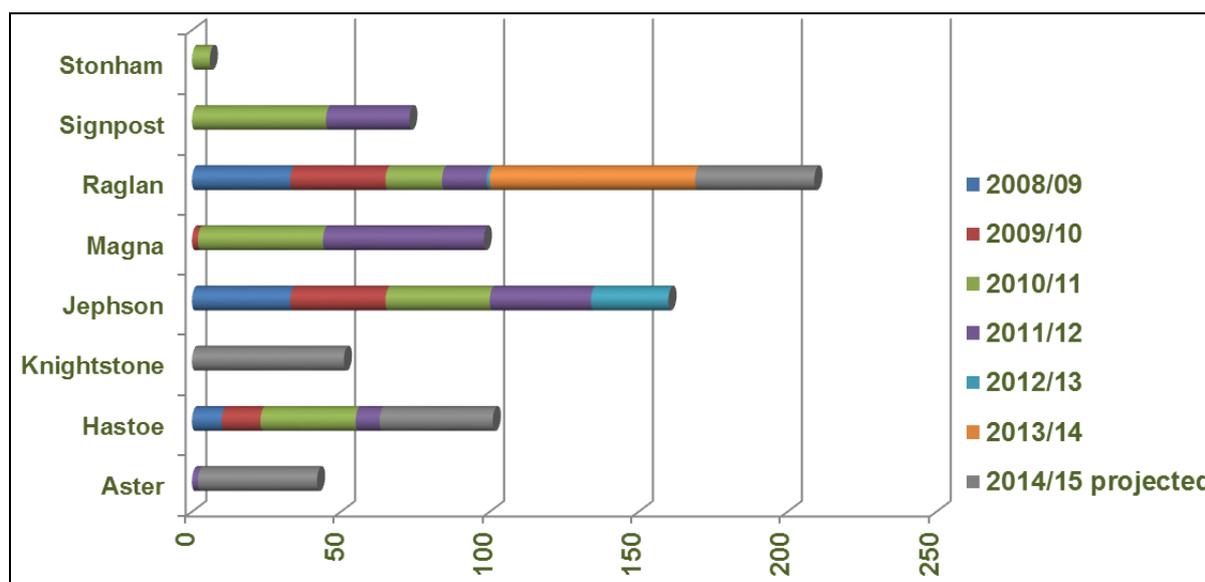
Although Yarlinton are by far the largest social landlord in South Somerset in terms of both stock levels and delivery, a significant quantity of affordable housing has been (and is projected to be) delivered by some of our other partners, as illustrated by graphs 4a and 4b. Over the seven year period Yarlinton will have delivered the best part of a thousand new homes in South Somerset (including replacements for concrete dwellings). Graph 4b excludes Yarlinton and thus better depicts the relative delivery between the other housing associations.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

Graph 4a – delivery by housing association



Graph 4b – delivery by housing association, excluding Yarlington



Charts 1-3 show the proportions of different tenure types within the affordable housing programme and clearly demonstrate the extent to which social rent is being replaced by affordable rent. Chart 4 gives a breakdown of the six-year development programme by location. Almost a quarter of delivery occurs in rural locations, with most other developments taking place, as expected, in major settlements such as Yeovil and Chard.

Chart 1 - breakdown of affordable housing delivered 2008/09 to 2013/14

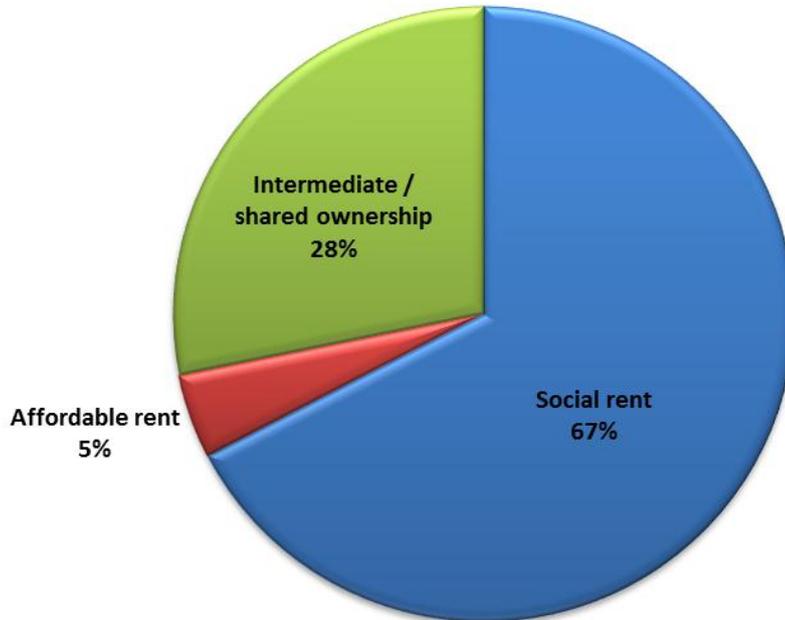


Chart 2 - breakdown of affordable housing delivered 2013/14 only

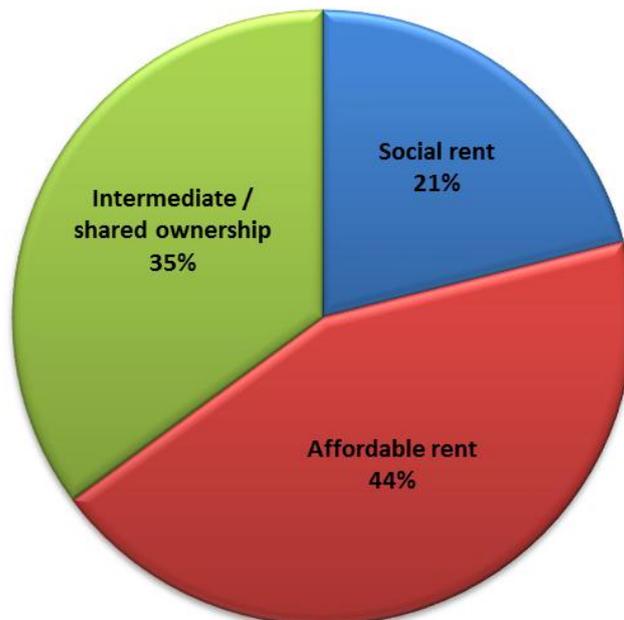


Chart 3 - breakdown of affordable housing programme for 2014/15

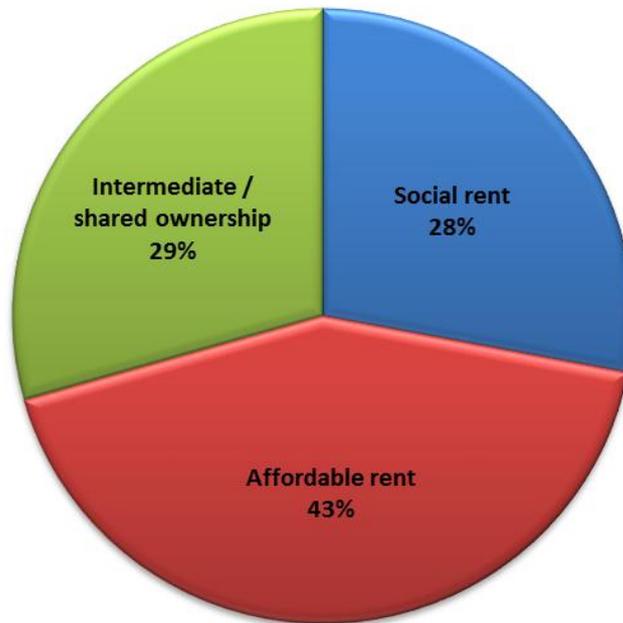
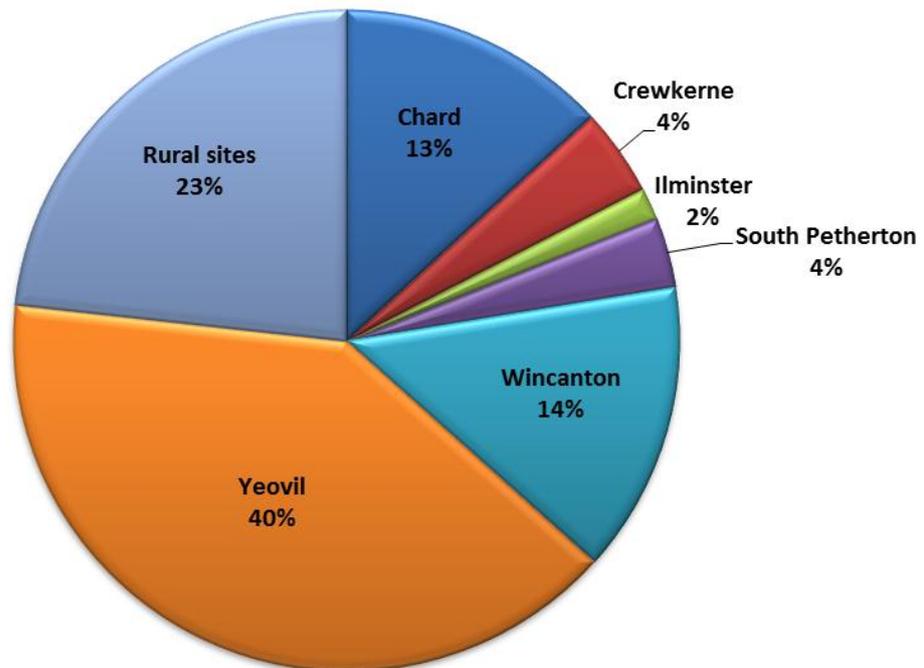


Chart 4 - six-year development by location



House prices and affordability

A comparison of property prices between the component districts and boroughs of Somerset shows some significant differences within the county. Sedgemoor in particular has much lower property prices than other parts of Somerset, whereas areas such as Mendip and West Somerset are often the most expensive on average.

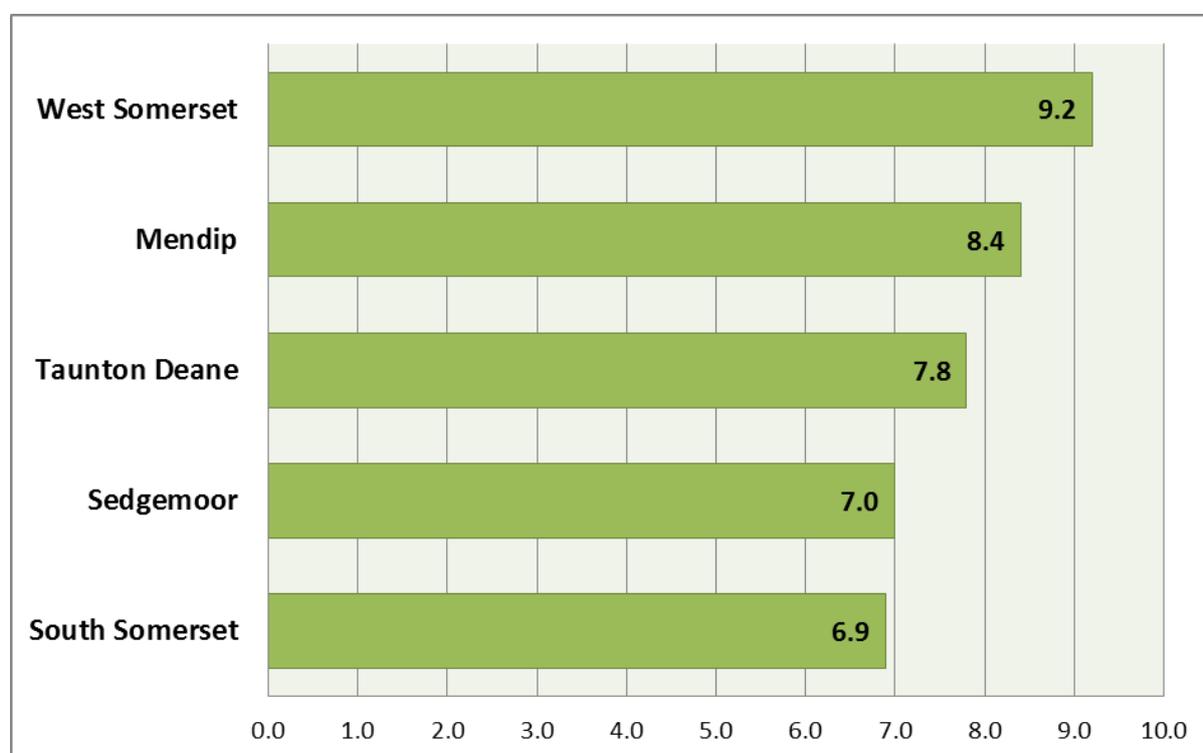
Table 6 – average residential property price, by type of property, 2012/13

District	Flat	Terraced	Semi-detached	Detached
Mendip	£119,659	£173,015	£193,232	£326,128
Sedgemoor	£102,770	£138,832	£175,764	£273,166
South Somerset	£102,504	£156,936	£178,201	£295,326
Taunton Deane	£112,888	£167,825	£190,998	£307,095
West Somerset	£122,232	£150,041	£202,040	£308,172

Source: Somerset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

The data on the following pages compare house price affordability in South Somerset with elsewhere in the county, but also with national averages. On the one hand, the ratio of lower quartile house prices to earnings appears better than in other parts of Somerset; however, lower average wages mean that it remains more difficult for first-time buyers in South Somerset than in many other parts of England, despite lower property prices.

Graph 5 – ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings, Somerset districts, 2013

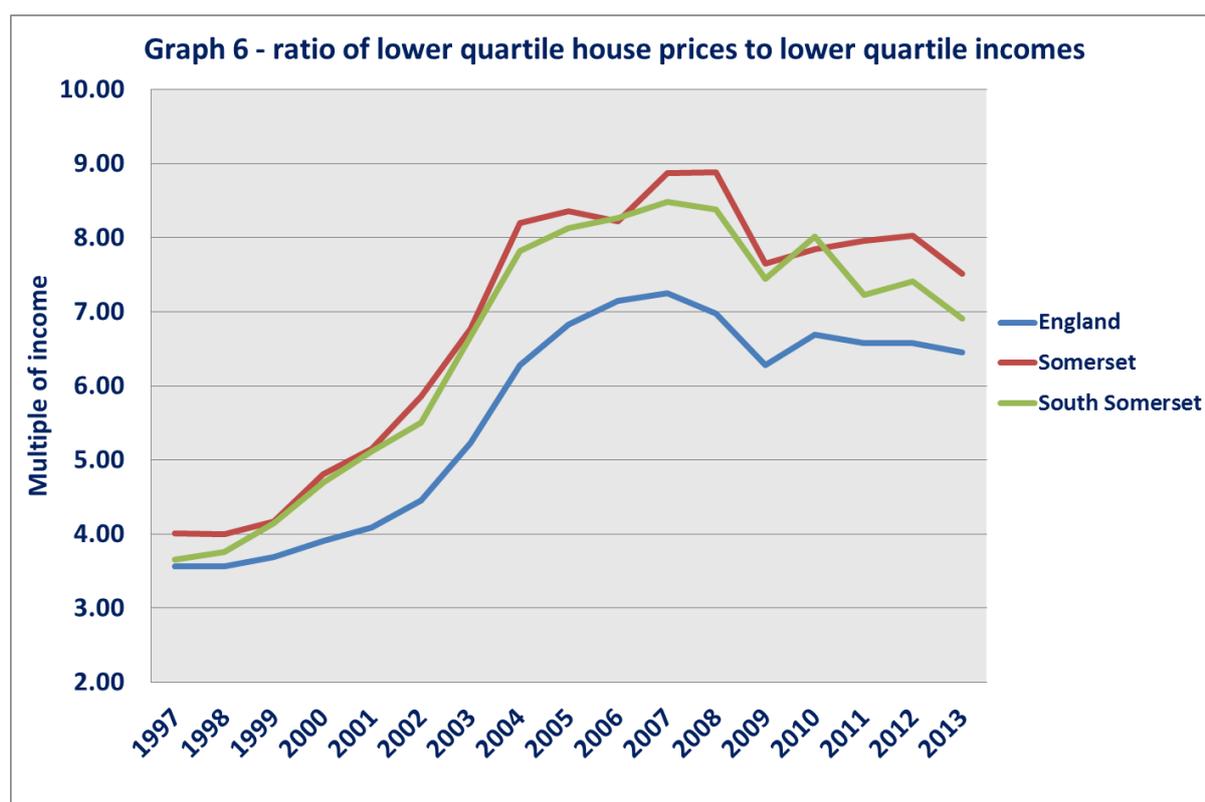


Source: Somerset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Table 7 – house price and affordability – comparison with national figures

	South Somerset	England
Average (mean) house price ³⁸	£210,447	£256,643
Gross annual income needed for a mortgage on above ³⁹	£48,102	£58,661
Average (median) gross salary ⁴⁰	£19,774	£22,199
Ratio of house price to salary ⁴¹	10.6	11.6
Ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings ⁴²	6.91	6.45

Graph 6, below, shows how the figures on the final row of Table 7 have changed over time, including a county comparison figure.



Map 1, overleaf, makes a snapshot comparison of the same with local authorities across England in 2013.

³⁸ Price Paid data for the period 01/01/2014 to 30/06/2014. Data produced by Land Registry © Crown copyright 2014.

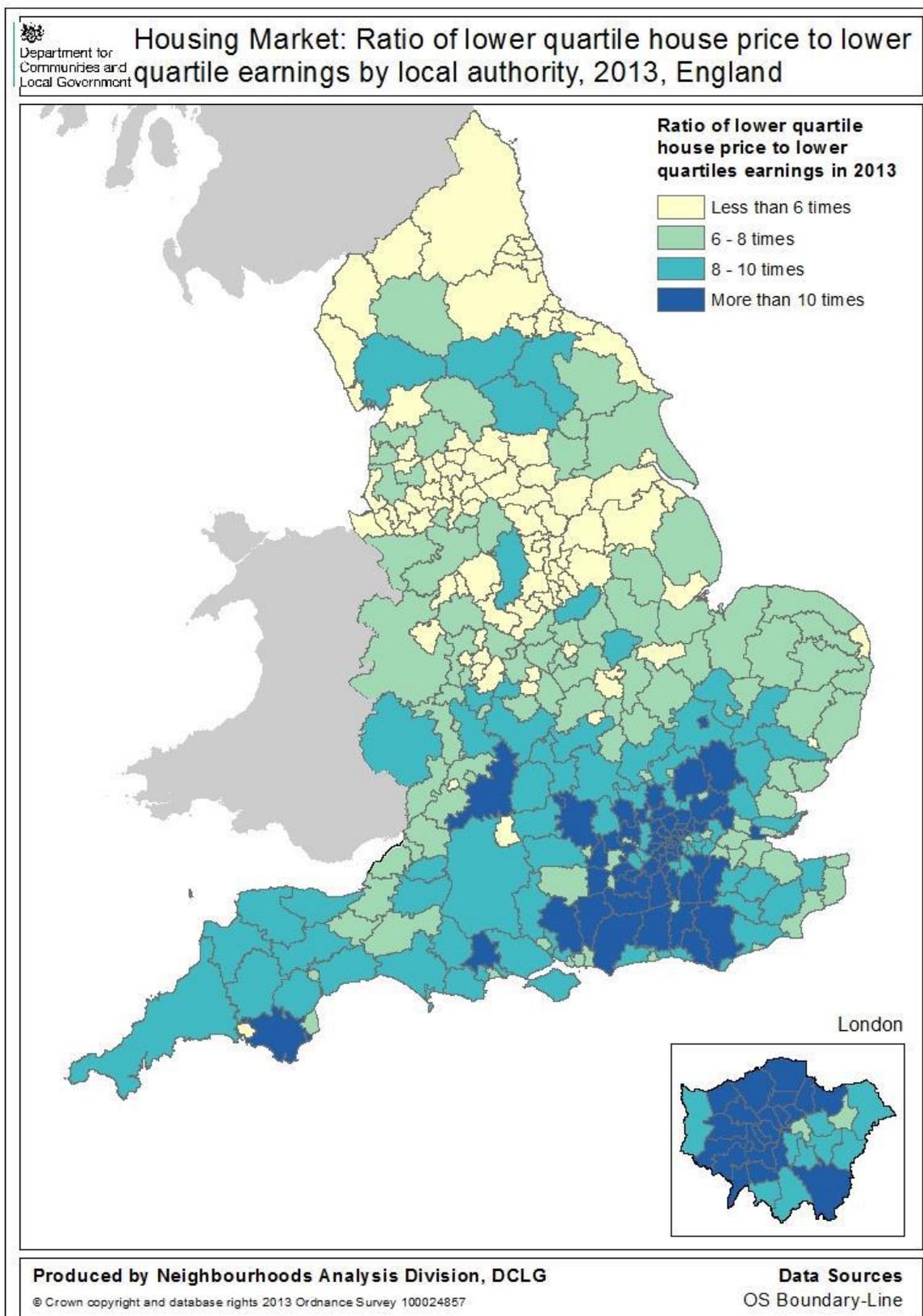
³⁹ 80% of average house price divided by 3.5.

⁴⁰ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), Office for National Statistics, 2013.

⁴¹ House price divided by salary, using the above figures.

⁴² Department for Communities and Local Government, 2013.

Map 1 – ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile incomes



Lettings and Rent Levels

In chart 5, below, 'other settlements' comprises 17 other parishes in South Somerset with three or fewer lets. These lets include those from new schemes as well as casual vacancies arising from existing stock. Yeovil and Chard account for almost half of all advertised vacancies, with significant numbers also in Crewkerne, Ilminster, Martock and Wincanton.

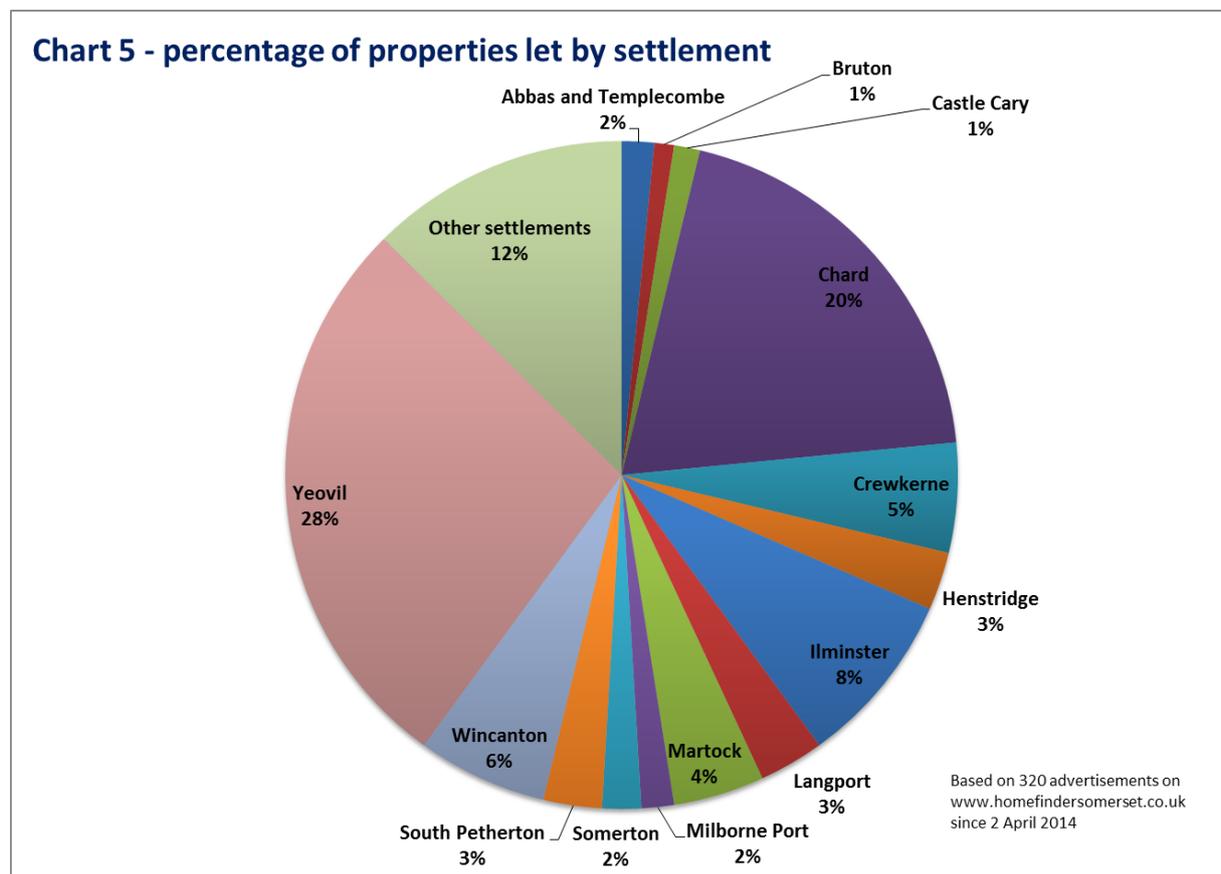
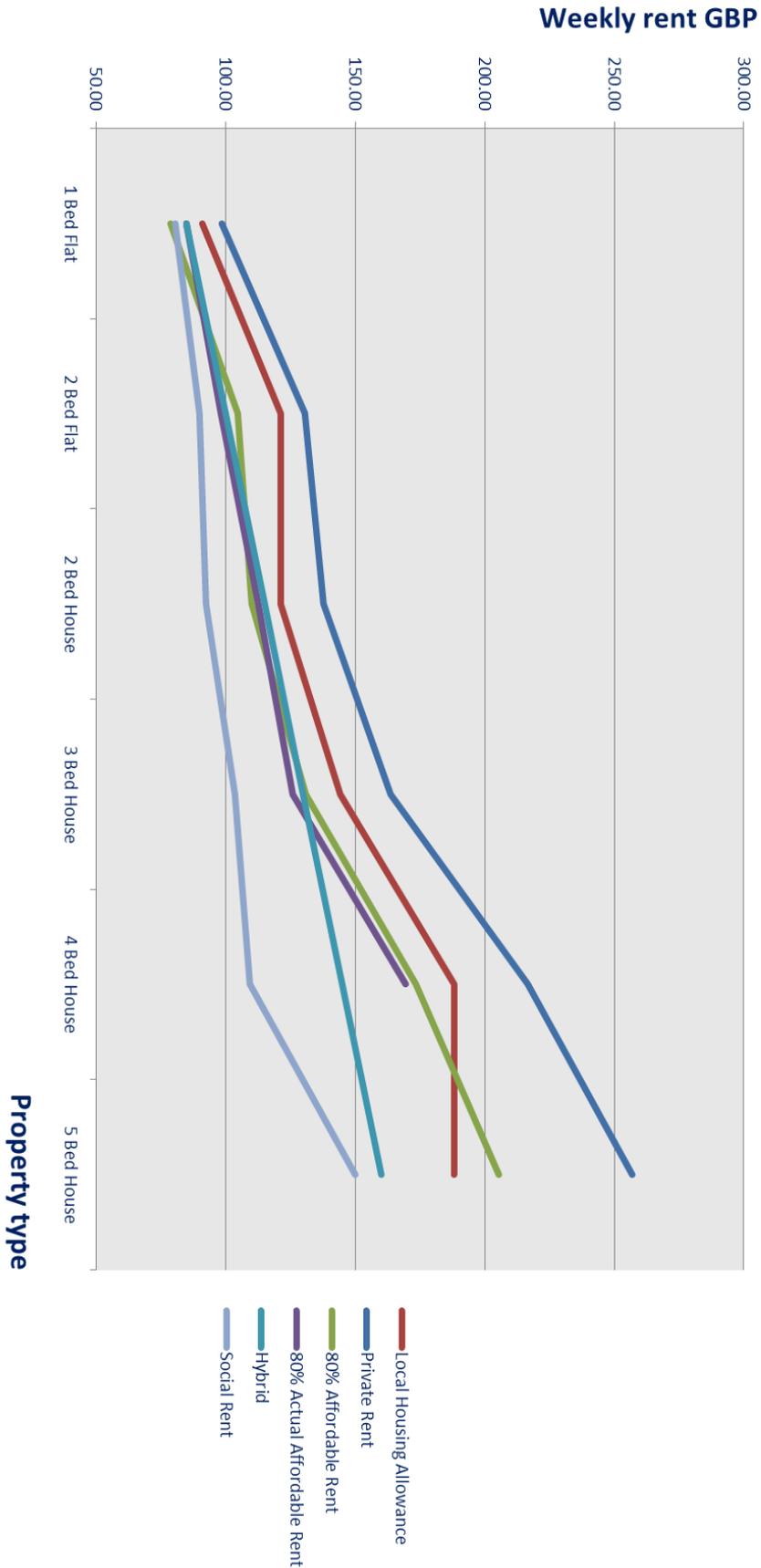


Table 8 is a detailed comparison of rent levels in South Somerset, using advertised vacancies since the beginning of this financial year. It shows a marked divergence in rent levels as property size increases; the private sector quickly becomes much more expensive compared to social and affordable rent. This is expanded in graphs 7 & 8 on the following pages.

Table 8 - weekly rent levels and comparisons

	1 Bed Flat	2 Bed Flat	2 Bed House	3 Bed House	4 Bed House	5 Bed House
Private Rent	99.45	130.01	135.99	163.03	218.81	257.08
Local Housing Allowance	91.15	121.15	121.15	144.23	188.08	188.08
80% Affordable Rent	79.56	104.01	108.79	130.42	175.05	205.67
80% Actual Affordable	81.29	97.09	112.64	125.16	151.89	No data
Hybrid	85.00	100.00	115.00	130.00	145.00	160.00
Social Rent	80.32	89.92	92.09	103.93	109.39	133.49

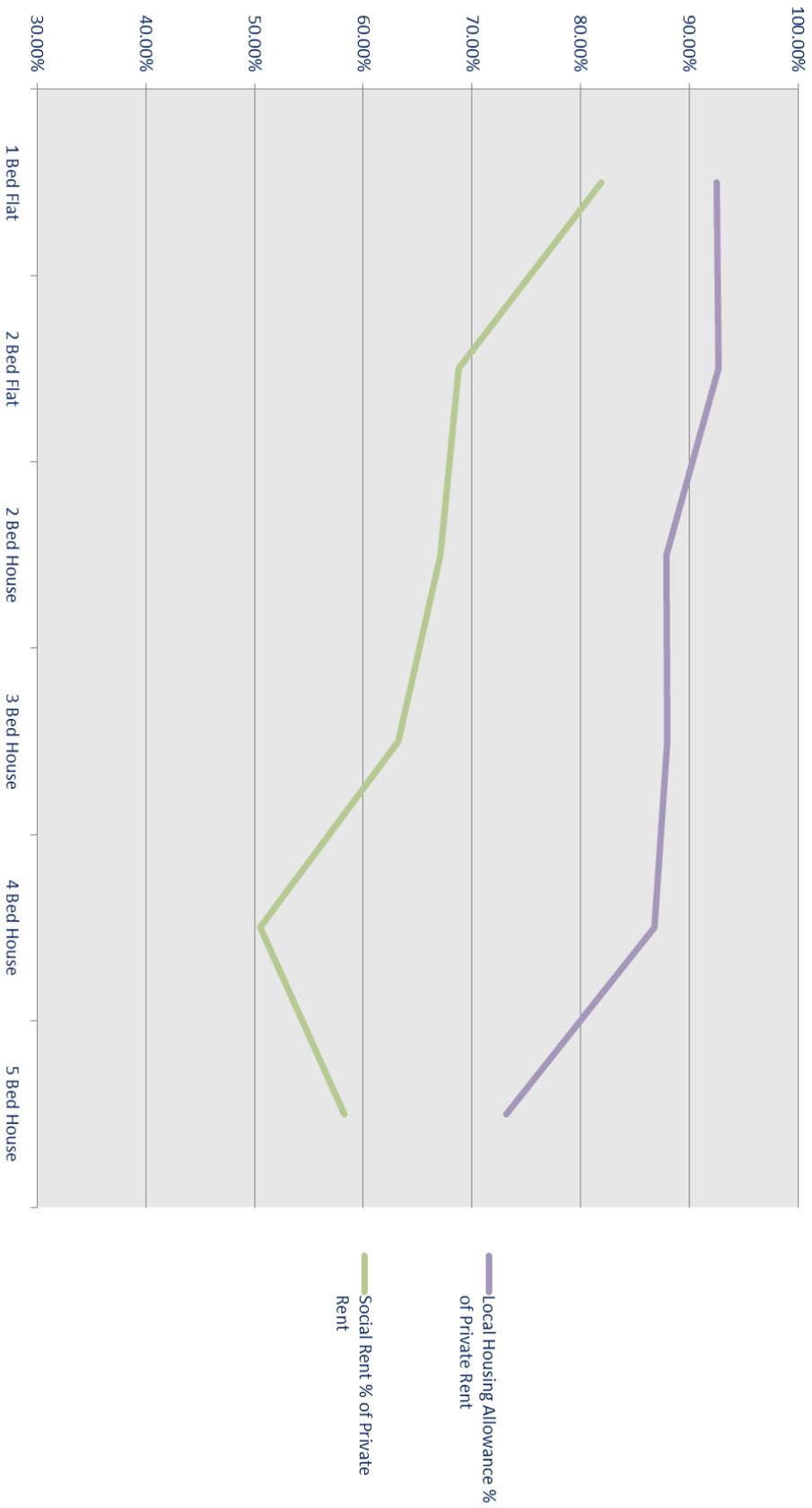
Graph 7 - weekly rent levels



Key:
Private Rent: 609 properties sampled from www.rightmove.co.uk from 02/06/2014 to 10/10/2014
80% Affordable Rent: 80% of the private rent average
80% Actual Affordable Rent: advertised on www.homefindersomerset.co.uk as Affordable Rent properties
Hybrid: calculated on 01/12/2013
Social Rent: average rents of all registered social landlords, taken weekly from www.homefindersomerset.co.uk, starting on 02/04/2014

Affordable Rent properties are smaller in number and due to sample sizes, rent levels are not available for every property type.

Graph 8 - comparison with private rent by property type



Private Rent: 609 properties sampled from www.rightmove.co.uk from 02/06/2014 to 10/10/2014
Social Rent: average rents of all registered social landlords, taken weekly from www.homefindersomerset.co.uk, starting on 02/04/2014

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

Tables 9-12 - Housing Register data on 16 October 2014

The following tables give a snapshot of housing demand broken down by area, ward and parish.

AREA EAST	Housing Register Data					Housing Register Data			
				Total					Total
BLACKMOOR VALE					IVELCHESTER				
Abbas & Templecombe	1	7	17	25	Chilton Cantelo				0
Charlton Horethorne			1	1	Ilchester	2	8	9	19
Compton Pauncefoot				0	Limington				0
Corton Denham				0	Mudford	1	1		2
Henstridge	1	4	12	17	Yeovilton	1		3	4
Holton				0	Total				25
Horsington		1	2	3					
Maperton				0	MILBORNE PORT				
North Cheriton				0	Milborne Port	5	12	20	37
Total				46	Total				37
BRUTON					NORTHSTONE				
Bruton	2	8	17	27	Barton St David			2	2
Total				27	Charlton Mackerell			2	2
					Keinton Mandeville			3	3
CAMELOT					Kingsdon			1	1
Marston Magna	1	2		3	Kingweston				0
Queen Camel	1	1	16	18	Total				8
Rimpton				0					
Sparkford		3	3	6	TOWER				
West Camel		2	2	4	Bratton Seymour				0
Total				31	Brewham			1	1
					Charlton Musgrove				0
CARY					Cucklington				0
Alford				0	Pen Selwood				0
Ansford				0	Pitcombe				0
Babcary				0	Shepton Montague	1			1
Castle Cary	4	14	26	44	Stoke Trister				0
Lovington				0	Total				2
North Barrow				0					
North Cadbury			1	1	WINCANTON				
South Barrow				0	Wincanton	13	41	49	103
South Cadbury			1	1	Total				103
Yarlington	2	6	4	12					
Total				58	TOTALS BY BAND	35	110	192	
					AREA EAST TOTAL	337			

There are an additional **32** applicants from other parts of Somerset whose first choice parish lies within Area East.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

AREA NORTH	Housing Register Data					Housing Register Data			
				Total					Total
BURROW HILL					MARTOCK				
Barrington	2			2	Ash	1	2		3
Kingsbury Episcopi		3	2	5	Long Load				0
Muchelney			1	1	Martock	4	14	32	50
Puckington			1	1	Total				53
Stocklinch				0					
Total				9	ST MICHAEL'S				
					Chilthorne Domer	1		3	4
CURRY RIVEL					Montacute	1		5	6
Drayton				0	Tintinhull	3	1	3	7
Curry Rivel	3	5	7	15	Total				17
Total				15					
					SOUTH PETHERTON				
HAMDON					Lopen				0
Norton Sub Hamdon		3	8	11	Seavington St Mary				0
Stoke Sub Hamdon	5	4	24	33	Seavington St Michael				0
Total				44	Shepton Beauchamp	1	2	2	5
					South Petherton	3	13	21	37
ISLEMOOR					Total				42
Beercrocombe				0					
Curry Mallett	1		1	2	TURN HILL				
Fivehead			1	1	Aller				0
Hambridge & Westport				0	High Ham	1			1
Ilton			1	1	Long Sutton			2	2
Isle Abbots				0	Pitney				0
Isle Brewers				0	Total				3
Total				4					
					WESSEX				
LANGPORT & HUISH					Compton Dundon			3	3
Huish Episcopi			3	3	Somerton	5	18	37	60
Langport	5	14	31	50	Total				63
Total				53					
					TOTALS BY BAND	36	79	188	
					AREA NORTH TOTAL	303			

There are an additional **30** applicants from other parts of Somerset whose first choice parish lies within Area North.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

AREA WEST	Housing Register Data				Housing Register Data				
				Total					Total
BLACKDOWN					NEROCHE				
Buckland St Mary		1	2	3	Ashill			2	2
Combe St Nicholas		3	4	7	Broadway		1	3	4
Wambrook			1	1	Donyatt		1	1	2
Whitestaunton				0	Horton		1	5	6
Total				11	Total				14
CHARD AVISHAYES					PARRETT				
Total	3	17	28	48	Chiselborough		1		1
					East Chinnock				0
CHARD COMBE					Haselbury Plucknett			1	1
Total	3	3	15	21	North Perrott			1	1
					West Chinnock	1		1	2
CHARD CRIMCHARD					Total				5
Total	3	15	17	35					
					TATWORTH & FORTON				
CHARD HOLYROOD					Tatworth & Forton		3	9	12
Total	6	29	59	94	Total				12
CHARD JOCELYN					WINDWHISTLE				
Total	11	27	33	71	Chaffcombe				0
					Chillington				0
CREWKERNE					Cudworth				0
Crewkerne	9	44	60	113	Cricket St Thomas				0
Misterton	2		3	5	Dowlish Wake				0
Total				118	Kingstone				0
					Knowle St Giles				0
EGGWOOD					Wayford				0
Dinnington				0	West Crewkerne				0
Hinton St George				0	Winsham	2	2	4	8
Merriott	2	4	12	18	Total				8
Total				18					
ILMINSTER									
Ilminster	9	29	49	87					
Whitelackington				0	TOTALS BY BAND	51	181	310	
Total				87	AREA WEST TOTAL				542
There are an additional 24 applicants from other parts of Somerset whose first choice parish lies within Area West.									

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

AREA SOUTH	Housing Register Data				Housing Register Data				
				Total					Total
BRYMPTON					YEOVIL EAST				
Brympton			2	2	Total	36	56	72	164
Yeovil Preston	23	36	54	113					
Total				115	YEOVIL SOUTH				
					Total	19	48	69	136
COKER									
Barwick	6	2	5	13	YEOVIL WEST				
Closworth				0	Total	25	35	82	142
East Coker	3	3	4	10					
Hardington Mandeville			1	1	YEOVIL WITHOUT				
Odcombe	2		2	4	Total	20	54	71	145
West Coker		5	9	14					
Total				42					
YEOVIL CENTRAL									
Total	39	103	140	282	TOTALS BY BAND	173	342	511	
					AREA SOUTH TOTAL	1026			

There are an additional **42** applicants from other parts of Somerset whose first choice parish lies within Area South.

In total, there are **128** applicants from other parts of Somerset whose first choice parish lies within South Somerset.

Additionally, there are **166** applicants from within South Somerset whose first choice parish lies elsewhere in Somerset.

The information in the above tables is only accurate at the point in time it was taken – with new households joining the register on a day-to-day basis and existing households being rehoused following the weekly advert cycle.

Evidence relating to Objective 3

Table 13 – Local Parish Housing Needs Surveys completed since January 2004

Parish/es	Date	Population 2011 Census	Households 2011 Census	Need	Developed	Year
Abbas & Templecombe	Oct-08	1560	689	25	9	Nov-10
Aller	Mar-04	410	166	0	5 (net gain)	2006
Ash	Sept-09	626	261	3		
Barton St David	Aug-08	561	233	2	13	May-13
Brewham	Sept-11	441	186	1		
<i>Broadway</i>	<i>Mar-05</i>	<i>740</i>	<i>318</i>	<i>4</i>		
Bruton	Oct-08	2907	1082	27	13 4 15	Feb-10 Dec-10 Mar-12
Buckland St. Mary*	Apr-05	521	214	3		
Charlton Horethorne	Feb-07	591	265	1		
<i>Charlton Musgrove</i>	<i>Sept-11</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>166</i>	<i>0</i>		
Compton Dundon	Dec-10	705	300	3		
Curry Mallet	2004	306	132	2	6	Jan-09
Curry Rivel	Aug-06	2148	938	15	17 2 5 7	Aug-06 Jun-08 Aug-11 Apr-12
<i>Donyatt</i>	<i>Sep-05</i>	<i>347</i>	<i>146</i>	<i>2</i>		
Hardington Mandeville*	May-04	585	236	1		
High Ham	Apr-04	909	371	1		
Hinton St George	March-13	442		0		
Horton	Sept -10	812	361	6		
Huish Episcopi	Apr-04	2095	876	3	18	Sept-10
<i>Kingsdon</i>	<i>Oct-08</i>	<i>303</i>	<i>146</i>	<i>1</i>		
Long Load	May-12	332	145	0		
Long Sutton	Feb-13	833	367	2		
<i>Marston Magna</i>	<i>Mar-09</i>	<i>523</i>	<i>207</i>	<i>3</i>		

* Indicates the survey was not undertaken by the county-wide Rural Housing Enablers and methodology may vary.

Table 13 continued

Parish/es	Date	Population 2011 Census	Households 2011 Census	Need	Developed	Year
Misterton*	June-04	826	352	5	(see note)	
Norton Sub Hamdon	Oct-05	743	308	11	10	Mar-15
Pen Selwood	Sept-11	273	128	0		
Queen Camel	Sept-11	908	355	18	20	Mar-15
Shepton Beauchamp	Sep-04	728	320	5		
South Cadbury	Oct-04	284	132	1	3	Nov-08
South Petherton ⁴³	Jan-08	3367	1562	37	11 23 1 10	Mar-09 Nov-09 Feb-13 Apr-13
Sparkford	Aug-05	617	258	6	8	Feb-13
Stoke Sub Hamdon	Mar-08	1968	861	33		
Tatworth & Forton	Aug-05	2660	1108	12	4 8	Jul-07 Mar-11
West Camel	Oct-08	459	205	4		
West Crewkerne	Sept-11	631	258	0		

It was originally thought that the need established at Misterton would be met through the affordable housing provision within the former yard site adjacent Crewkerne Station. However just before going to print it was accepted that the developer was unable to afford this planning obligation according to an independent viability report.

Mutual exchange

On 31st December 2013 there were 850 live mutual exchange applications across the county, the vast majority of which were split between Mendip, Taunton Deane and South Somerset.

Table 14 - mutual exchange applications by district

	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	TOTAL
Number of applications	212	73	258	293	14	850

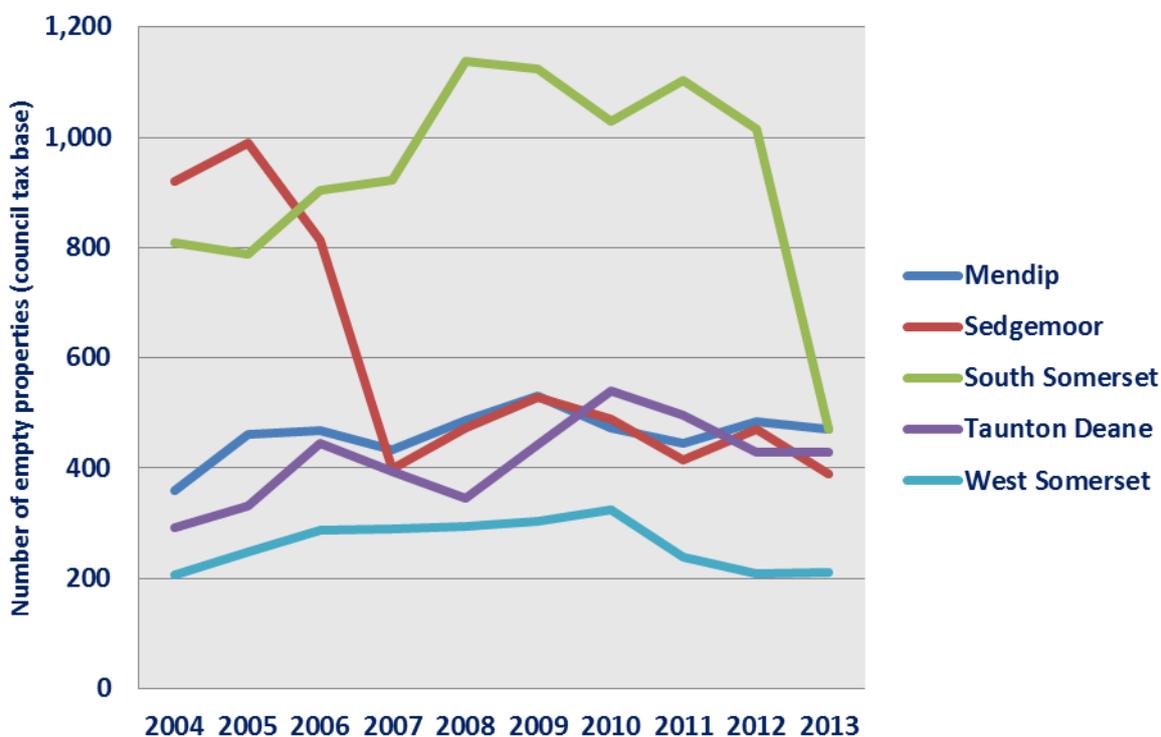
Source: Somerset Intelligence

Empty properties

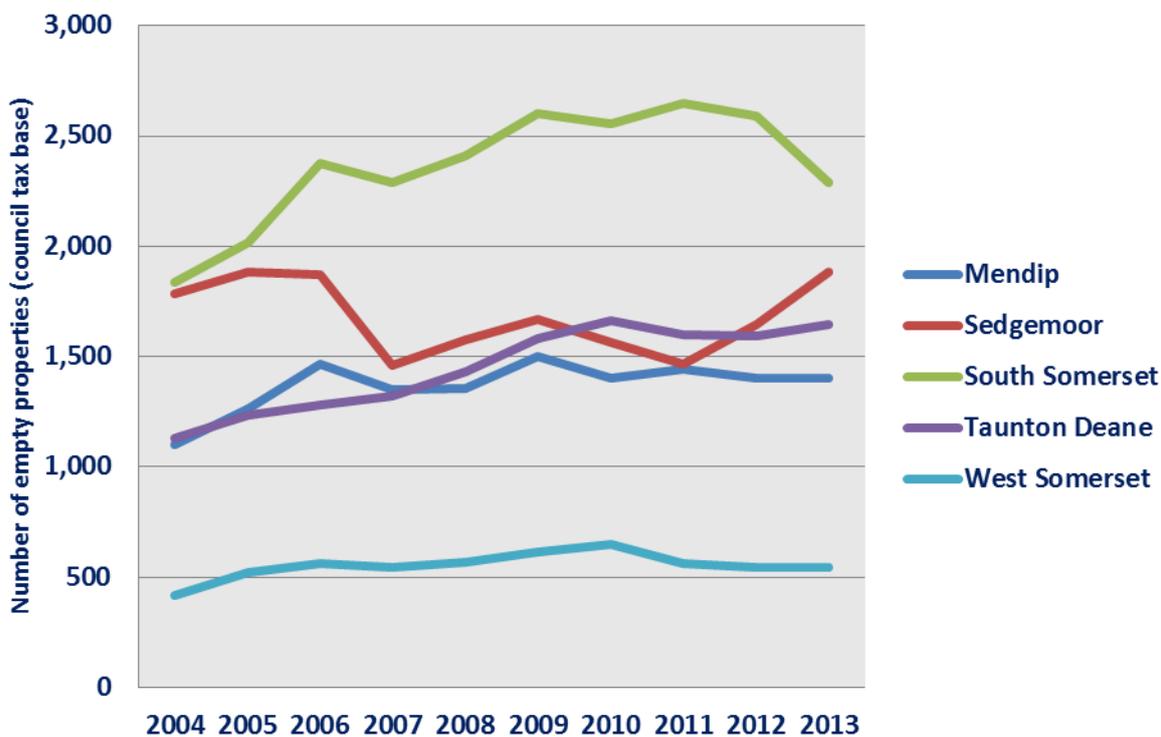
The graphs on the following page clearly show the results achieved following the appointment of the Empty Property Officer in 2012, among all such properties but especially among long-term vacant dwellings.

⁴³ South Petherton included for completeness sake given 2008 survey and fairly recently completed affordable housing provision; however most recent census data shows that the village has now exceeded 3,000 population

Graph 9 - long-term vacant dwellings by local authority, 2004 to 2013

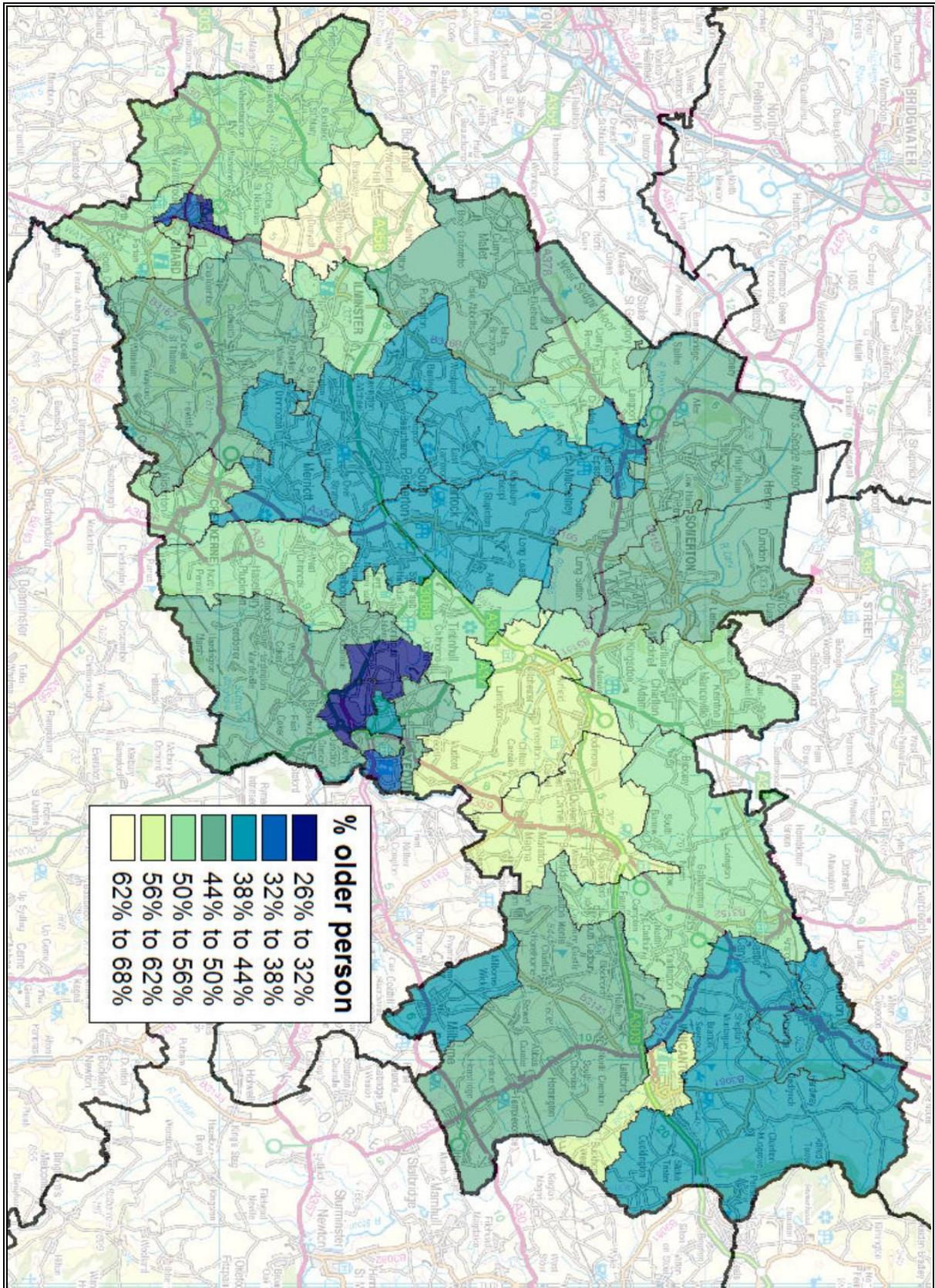


Graph 10 - all vacant dwellings by local authority, 2004 to 2013



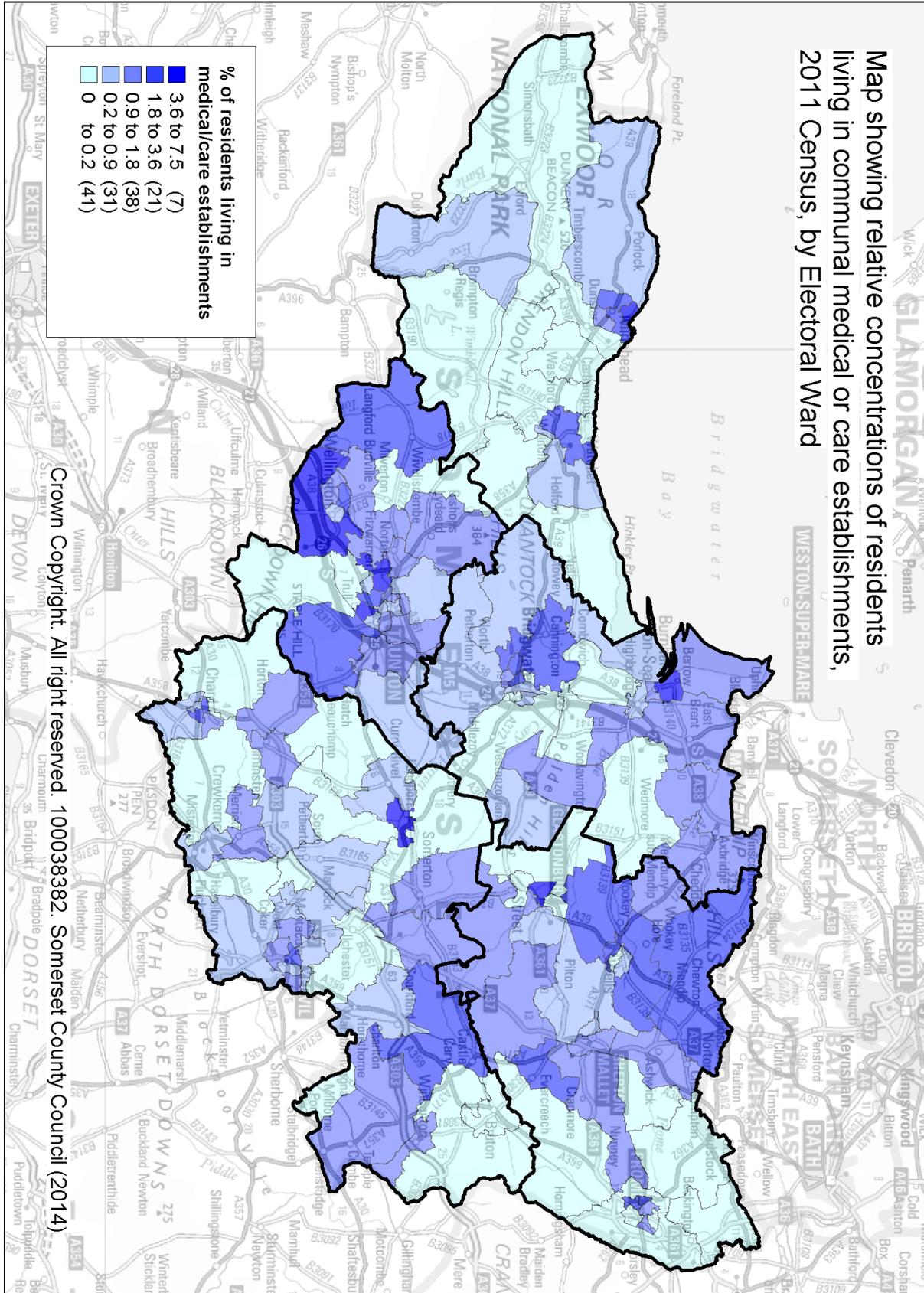
Evidence relating to Objective 4

Map 2 – age demographics in South Somerset as percentage



Source: Somerset SHMA household survey, Fordham Research 2008

Map 3 – percentage of residents living in medical/care establishments in Somerset, 2011 Census



Age & Care Distribution

On the preceding two pages, map 2 shows the higher percentage of older people in rural areas of South Somerset and map 3 shows that the higher percentages of residents living in medical/care establishments are concentrated in and around the major settlements of the district.

Under-occupation and overcrowding

Table 15 – under/over-occupancy – 2011 Census

The number of households within each occupancy rating category on **bedrooms** is broken down by district below:

Occupancy rating ⁴⁴	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	TOTAL
+2 or more	17,713	18,612	26,549	17,024	5,800	85,698
+1	10,783	12,057	16,616	10,674	3,504	53,634
0	3,899	3,990	5,704	3,586	1,082	18,261
-1 or less	392	416	528	360	107	1,803

Source: Somerset Intelligence

Based on this measure, 53.7% of all households in South Somerset were highly under-occupied (a rating of +2 or more) while 1.1% are overcrowded (-1 or less).

Somerset households were more likely to be highly under-occupied than is the case regionally (South West: 38.7%) or nationally (England: 34.3%). There was very little variation across the five districts.

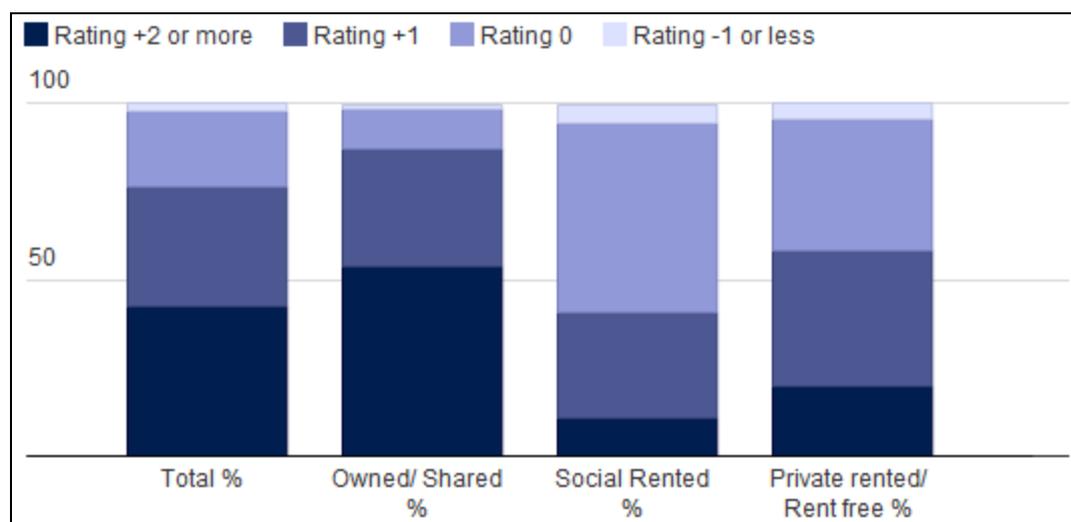
Graph 11 shows that this trend is most pronounced in the owner occupied sector (although the data source includes shared ownership properties) and clearly shows that the social rented sector has the greatest proportion of 'fit' between household and property size.

⁴⁴ From Somerset Intelligence:

“**Occupancy rating** provides a measure of whether a household's accommodation is overcrowded or under occupied. There are two measures of occupancy rating, one based on the number of rooms in a household's accommodation, and one based on the number of bedrooms. The ages of the household members and their relationships to each other are used to derive the number of rooms/bedrooms they require, based on a standard formula.

“The number of rooms/bedrooms required is subtracted from the number of rooms/bedrooms in the household's accommodation to obtain the occupancy rating. An occupancy rating of -1 implies that a household has one **fewer** room/bedroom than required, whereas +1 implies that they have one **more** room/bedroom than the standard requirement.”

Graph 11 – occupancy rating profile by tenure



Source: Office for National Statistics table DC4105EW1A via Somerset Intelligence

Homelessness

Table 16 – trends in homelessness acceptances per thousand households by area

Area	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Mendip	2.09	2.41	2.74	2.27
Sedgemoor	1.15	0.96	1.52	1.06
South Somerset	3.57	4.06	3.59	3.90
Taunton Deane	2.89	3.28	3.70	2.73
West Somerset	2.13	1.94	1.94	1.65
SOMERSET	2.51	2.75	2.88	2.56
South West	1.35	1.46	1.67	1.52
England	1.86	2.03	2.31	2.37

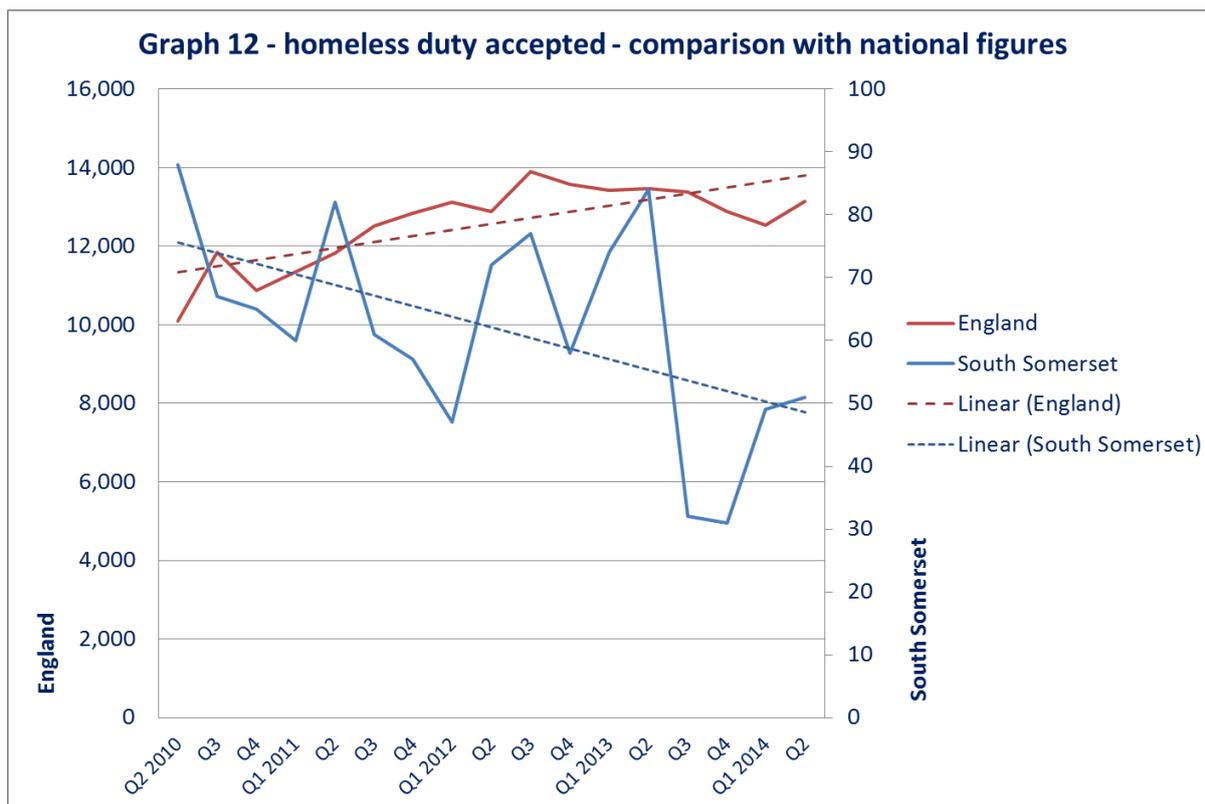
Source: Somerset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Graph 12, on the following page, demonstrates that our long term trend in acceptance of a duty under homelessness legislation is downwards, against the national trend.

Graph 13 shows this trend in the context of the overall number of approaches and formal decisions being made. All of these are downward, possibly reflecting a greater level of prevention prior to the point of homeless crisis being reached.

Graph 14 then shows the number of households in temporary accommodation which has also continued on a downward trend over the past four years. As with the previous graphs, more so as this graph depicts monthly snapshots, the line does jump up and down a lot from one reporting point to the next, but the long term trend is very clear (as shown by the dotted line). This trend is also against the national trend where most housing authorities are finding themselves increasingly more reliant on temporary accommodation.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014



Source for national figures: Department for Communities and Local Government

Map 4 shows the number of households towards whom a duty was accepted as expressed per thousand population (in order to give a pro rata comparison).

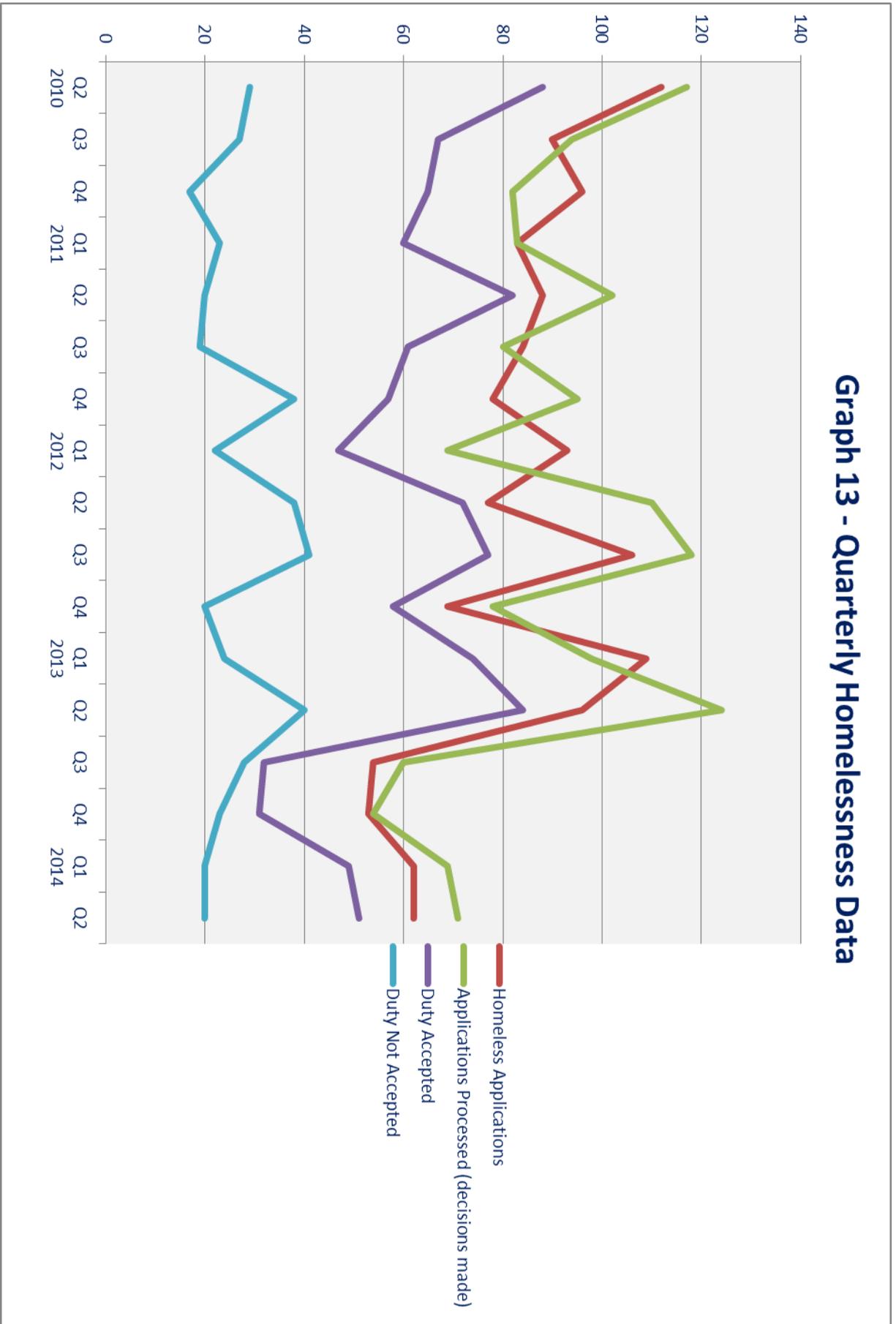
Map 5 depicts the number of households in temporary accommodation on the same pro rata basis (per thousand population)

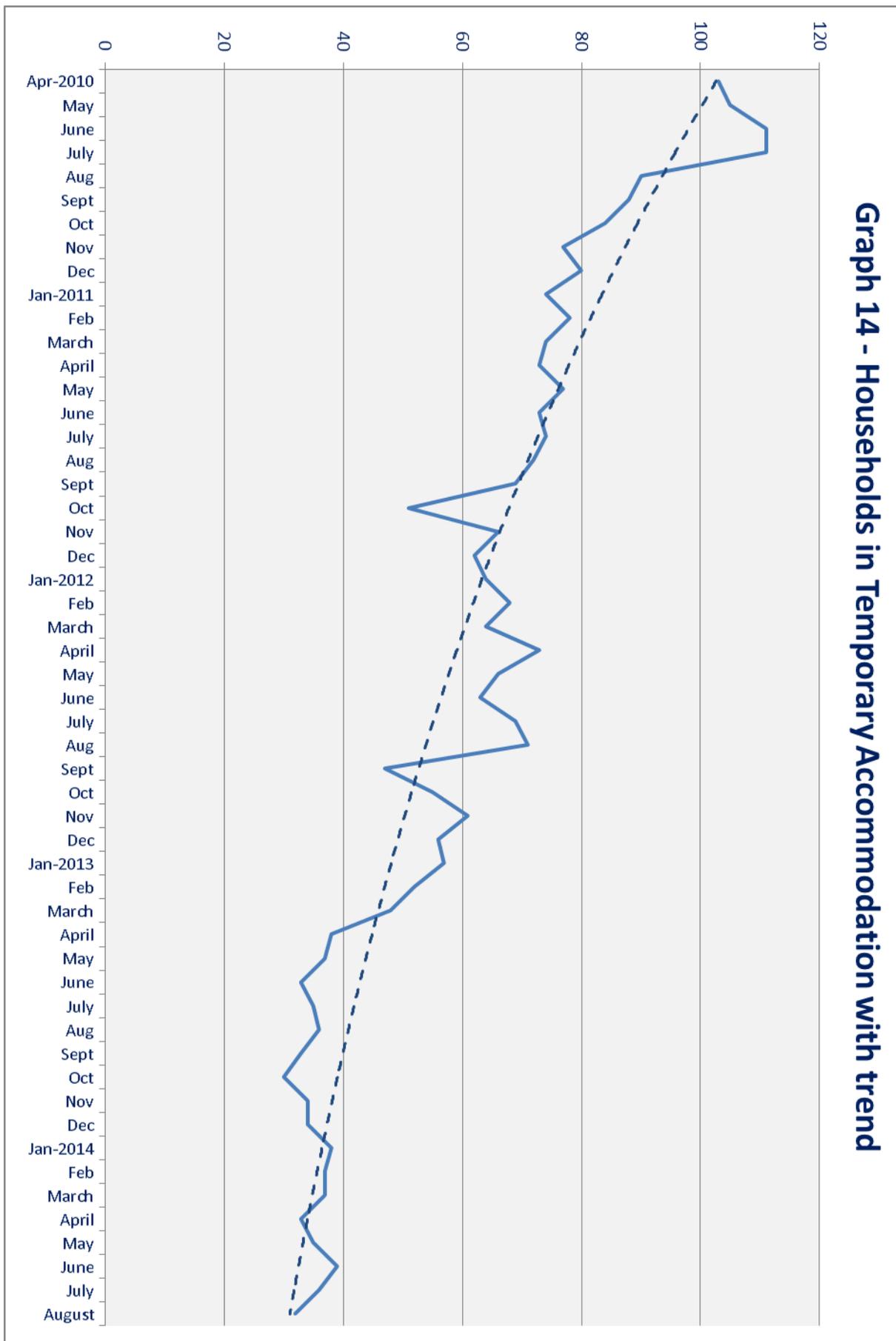
These two maps show that South Somerset is now in one of the lowest concentrations on both counts, whereas four years previously we were in one of the highest. We have improved in both absolute and relative terms.

Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs

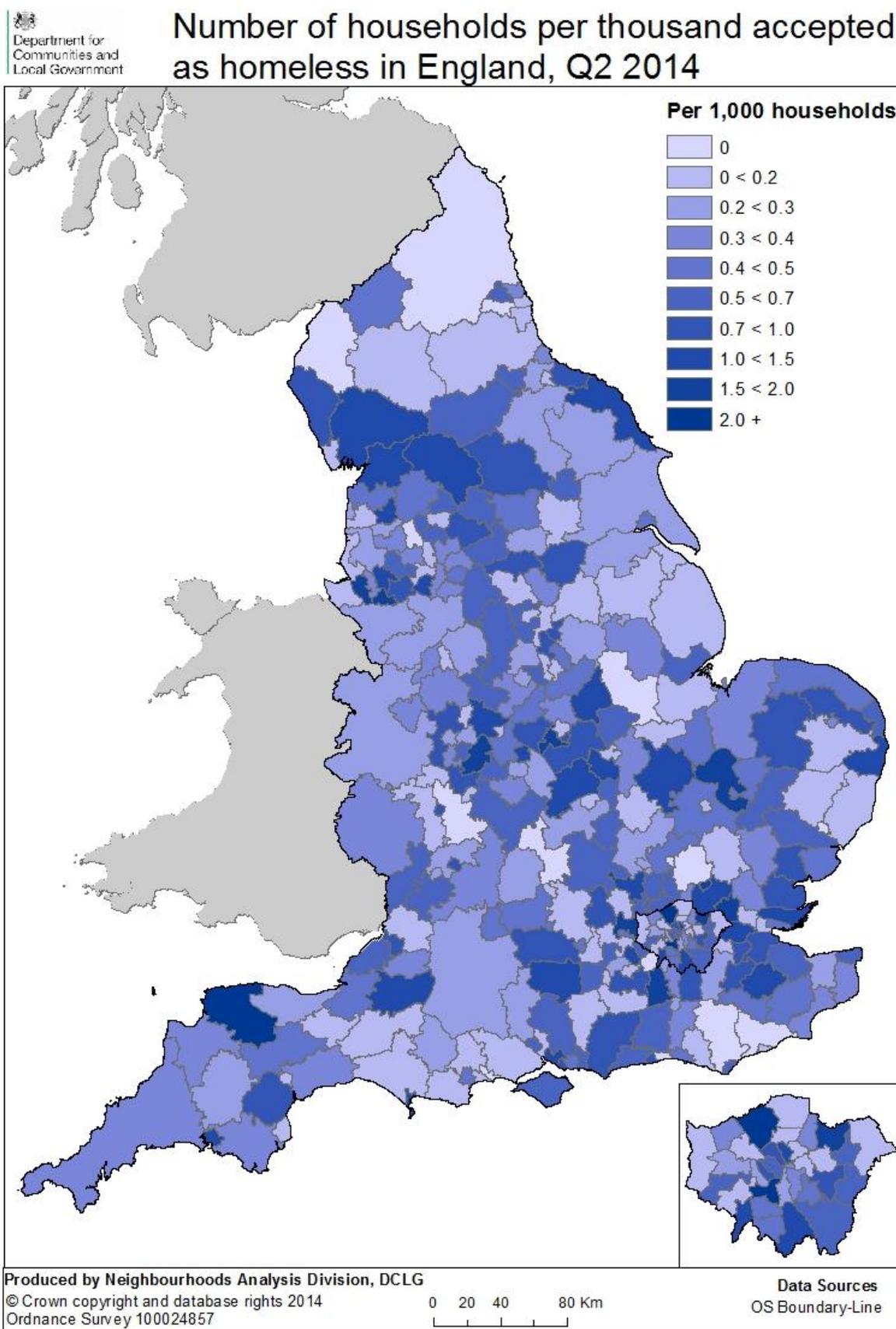
Tables 17 and 18 (page 68) summarise the findings of the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). Table 17 shows that in South Somerset we have already made adequate provision for residential pitches up until the end of the 2010-2015 period (whilst shortfalls remain in the rest of the County). Table 18 predicts the further shortfalls that will occur during the period 2016-2020.

Graph 13 - Quarterly Homelessness Data

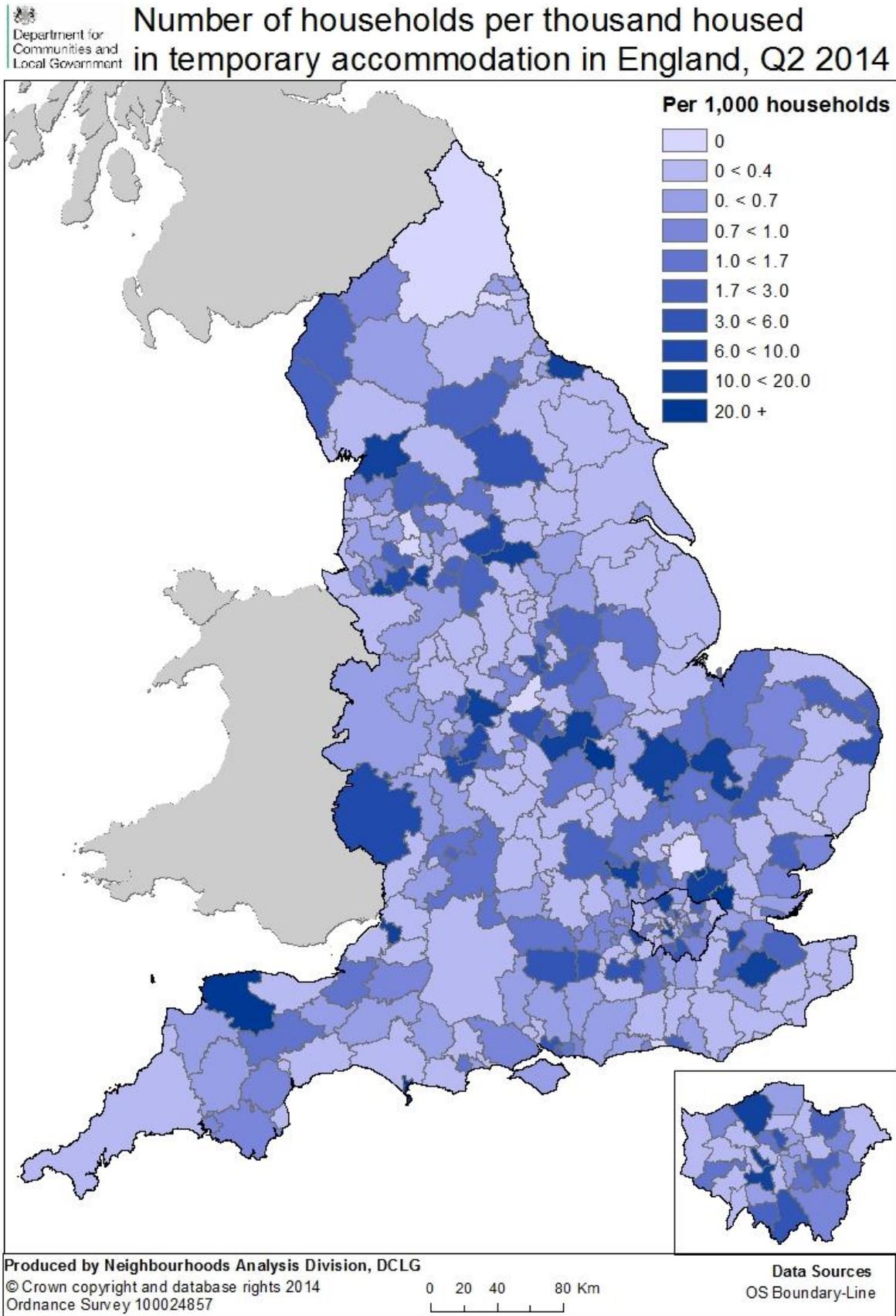




Map 4 – households per thousand accepted as homeless



Map 5 – households per thousand in temporary accommodation



Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2014

Table 17 – comparison of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) requirement 2010-2015 and delivery to 29/07/2013

Local authority	GTAA requirement	Provision to date	Difference
Mendip	69	2	-67
Sedgemoor	24	10	-14
South Somerset	10	12	+2
Taunton Deane	25	11	-14
West Somerset	2	0	-2
All	130	35	-95

Source: De Montfort University

Table 18 – additional residential pitch requirements 2016-2020

Baseline	Study area	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset
Housed 2010 estimate	189	67	42	41	23	16
Pitches 2013 estimate	279	93	49	37	85	15
Recommended 2010-2015	130	69	24	10	25	2
Further additional pitches	0	0	0	2	0	0
Assumed total pitches 2015	409	162	73	49	110	17
Plus additional households formed						
From housed families	25	9	5	5	3	2
From families on sites	50	21	8	6	14	1
Giving additional pitch requirement						
From housed families (50%)	11	4	3	2	1	1
From families on sites	50	21	8	6	14	1
Requirement 2016-2020	61	25	11	8	15	2

Source: De Montfort University

Appendices

Appendix A: Relevant Action Plans & Strategies

Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Strategy (2006 -2009)

This Strategy Implementation Plan follows up all the outstanding actions from our original Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Strategy and we therefore no longer need a separate strategy.

Private Sector Housing Strategy (2007 – 2012)

The Private Sector Housing Strategy has become out of date. We have not attempted to replenish it through this document but will be creating a new Private Sector Housing Strategy shortly.

Empty Property Strategy (Jointly with Mendip) (2010)

This Strategy is also becoming out of date. We shall not attempt to replenish it through the new Private Sector Housing Strategy, keeping it as a distinct separate document, but we shall set out our plans to revise it.

Temporary Accommodation Strategy (2011)

This Strategy Implementation Plan follows up some of the outstanding actions from our original Temporary Accommodation Strategy and we will be creating a new Temporary Accommodation Plan shortly.

Council Plan (2012-2015)

The Council Plan is fundamental to everything we undertake as a district council. This document effectively expands on the housing issues cited in the Council Plan and reflects on more detail.

Somerset Tenancy Strategy (2012)

The Tenancy Strategy is a statutory requirement and we developed the first version in collaboration with the other housing authorities and many social landlords in the county. The Tenancy Strategy needs to be updated and a county wide project group has already begun work on this.

Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2012-2015)

The Health & Wellbeing Strategy is a document adopted by the County Council arising from its role in public health and related services.

Youth Housing Strategy (2012-2015)

The Youth Housing Strategy was a collaborative document drawn up by housing authorities and the county council. A county-wide project group has been set up to begin work on revising the Youth Housing Strategy.

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Rural Housing Action Plan (2013)

This document has updated the information produced in last year's Rural Housing Action Plan and brought forward the major policy change to rural lettings overall. We will produce a revised Rural Housing Action Plan next year.

Somerset Homelessness Strategy (2013 – 2016)

The Homelessness Strategy is a statutory requirement and the document produced last year was the second county-wide collaboration agreed by all the housing authorities in Somerset.

Asset Management Strategy (2014)

The Asset Management Strategy has recently been adopted and has a bearing on those properties which we retain ownership of but are used for housing purposes.

Appendix B: Sources of Evidence

Affordable Housing Supply April 2012 to March 2013, England:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/259999/Affordable_Housing_Supply_2012-13.pdf

The Decent Homes standard:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-decent-home-definition-and-guidance>

Greater London Authority Draft Housing Strategy April 2014 and Housing in London 2014 (evidence base):

<http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/housing-land/consultations/draft-london-housing-strategy>

HECA Further Report for South Somerset:

http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/471147/heca_further_report_south_somersetpdf.pdf

Heating and housing 2011 census data

<http://www.cse.org.uk/resources/open-data/output-area-level-census-data>

Homefinder Somerset:

<http://www.homefindersomerset.co.uk/Data/ASPPages/1/33.aspx>

JSNA Housing Summary:

<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/housing-issues-for-2013-14-jsna-summary.pdf>

Lifetime Homes standard:

<http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/pages/revised-design-criteria.html>

Localism Act 2011 Tenancy Strategy:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/part/7/chapter/2/enacted>

National Planning Practice Guidance:

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

New Homes Bonus:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/increasing-the-number-of-available-homes/supporting-pages/new-homes-bonus>

P2i – Pathway to Independence:

<http://www.p2i.org.uk/>

Secured by Design:

<http://www.securedbydesign.com/professionals/guides.aspx>

Self-build and custom-build:

<http://www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/>

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Somerset Intelligence housing information:

<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/housing.html>

State of the Somerset Economy:

<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/state-of-the-somerset-economy-2013-full-report.pdf>

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment:

https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/633128/shlaa_2012_report_updated_23-10-13.pdf

Strategic Housing Market Assessment South Somerset:

https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/321411/south_somerset_hns_report.pdf

Supporting People (Housing Executive):

http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/advice/supporting_people.htm

Appendix C: Consultation Process

Consultation began on 9th July 2014 and ran for ten weeks, closing on 17th September. Copies of the consultation draft were distributed to all county, district and parish councillors in South Somerset and to all major local stakeholders, including housing associations, community land trusts, relevant charities and organisations, architects and developers. An online survey was created and opened to the public and a press release was also published on South Somerset District Council's website⁴⁵.

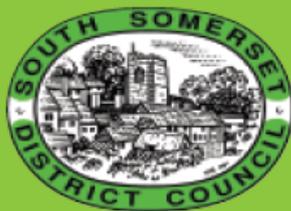
The following nine consultation questions were set out in the draft:

1. What future approach do you think we should take to the degree of pepper-potting or clustering?
2. Should we continue to apply the stated minimum space standards, both in respect of affordable housing achieved through planning obligations and that achieved through grant of our own capital funding? Under what circumstances should we agree to a compromise?
3. Do you agree that these should be the only features of Lifetime Homes that we continue to seek for all newly built affordable housing?
4. Should we consider a design code for affordable housing covering internal storage space, waste storage facilities, water butts, circulation space, garden sheds and other aspects? If so, are there any specific measures you would wish to see incorporated (please tell us why)?
5. How should we approach Secure By Design in future?
6. What other ways could we use to create more affordable homes? Should we create a joint venture vehicle through which we can channel new investment? Should we investigate other forms of construction?
7. Do you agree that we should implement a rural lettings policy? If so, would you support a single cut-off point (e.g. 20 dwellings) or a tiered approach (e.g. all vacancies below 11 dwellings and half of those up to 25 dwellings)?
8. Should we change our Empty Property Grant regime so that there is an additional option of paying a higher level of grant in return for the outcome rent being kept at an affordable level (i.e. below market rent)?
9. Is there anything else that you wish to specifically comment on in the draft? Is there anything else that we haven't mentioned but you feel we ought to?

Whilst inviting feedback on these questions, the consultation draft also encouraged respondents to give any relevant views they might have, not only those covered by the above questions.

On 5th September 2014 there was also a Portfolio Holder briefing, in which councillors discussed each question and provided their own feedback. Finally, the draft was considered by the Equalities Steering Group on 21st October 2014.

⁴⁵ <http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/latest-news/july-2014/have-your-say-on-the-future-of-social-housing-and-housing-needs-in-south-somerset/>



More information is available from:

Strategic Housing

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