



Draft Housing Strategy Consultation

Consultation Summary Report

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1. Summary

East Devon District Council sought stakeholder feedback on the current draft of the Housing Strategy 2025-2030. The consultation which has now closed, was undertaken to review a draft strategy developed which was developed using comments from an earlier consultation. The consultation received 140 contributions. The findings from this consultation will help shape and form the final draft strategy, ensuring it addresses the need for safe, affordable housing and supports community well-being. The strategy remains under development, with stakeholder comments guiding future revisions.

2. Survey goals and methodology

The primary goal of this consultation was to gather detailed input from stakeholders on the draft Housing Strategy. The feedback was intended to:

- Identify areas where the draft strategy could be improved.
- Ensure the strategy effectively addresses housing affordability, stability, and overall community welfare.
- Shape the final version of the strategy to better meet the needs of local residents, community groups, housing organisations, and other interested parties.

A broad range of stakeholders was targeted, including local residents, community groups, and housing organisations, in order to capture diverse perspectives and ideas to inform the strategy.

3. Survey process

The consultation was conducted using the Commonplace platform, allowing stakeholders to access comprehensive background information on the draft strategy and submit their comments online. The process involved:

- Publishing detailed information about the aims, timeline, and the team behind the Housing Strategy.
- Inviting stakeholders to provide their views and suggestions directly via the Commonplace interface.
- Distributing the consultation invitation through email, social media, and the council website to ensure broad engagement.

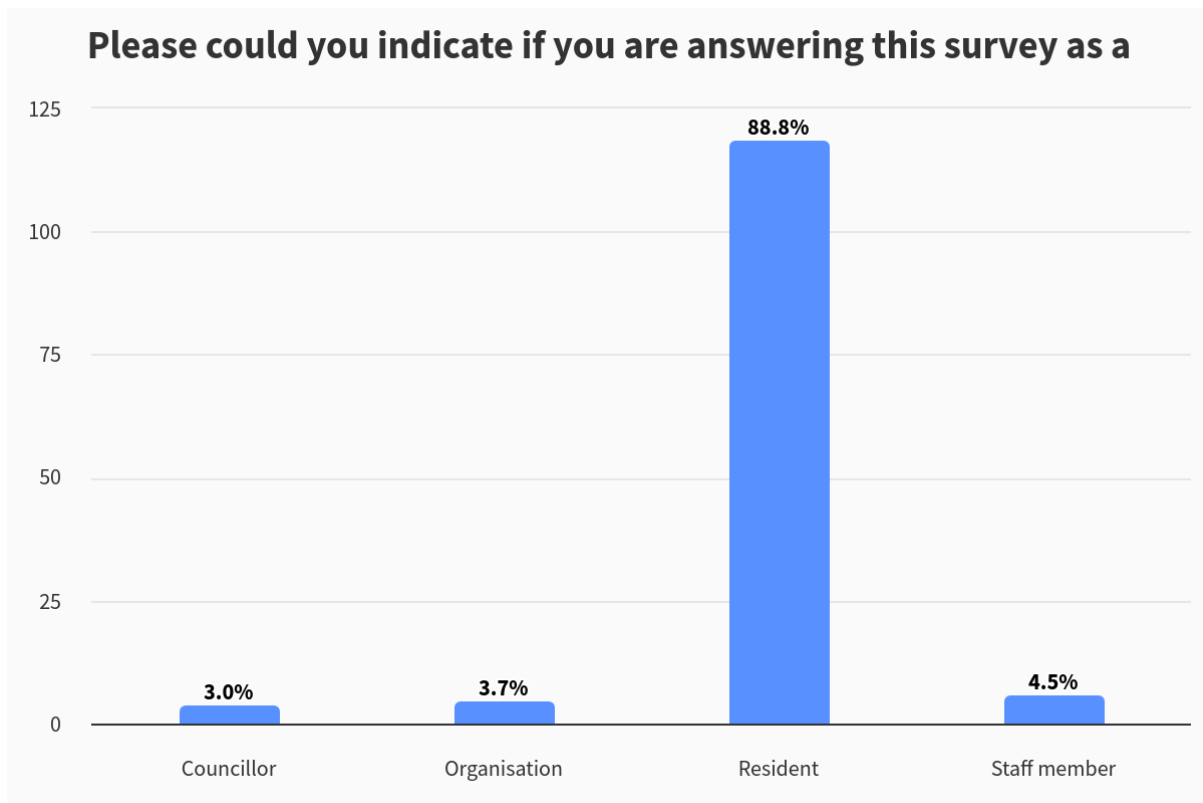
The consultation closed on the 31st of March at 4pm, and all responses were carefully reviewed to inform the further development of the final draft strategy. A update the final draft strategy will be sent over the coming months.

4. Data analysis

The following section presents each survey question, the corresponding results from respondents, and includes charts as well as summaries of the free text responses.

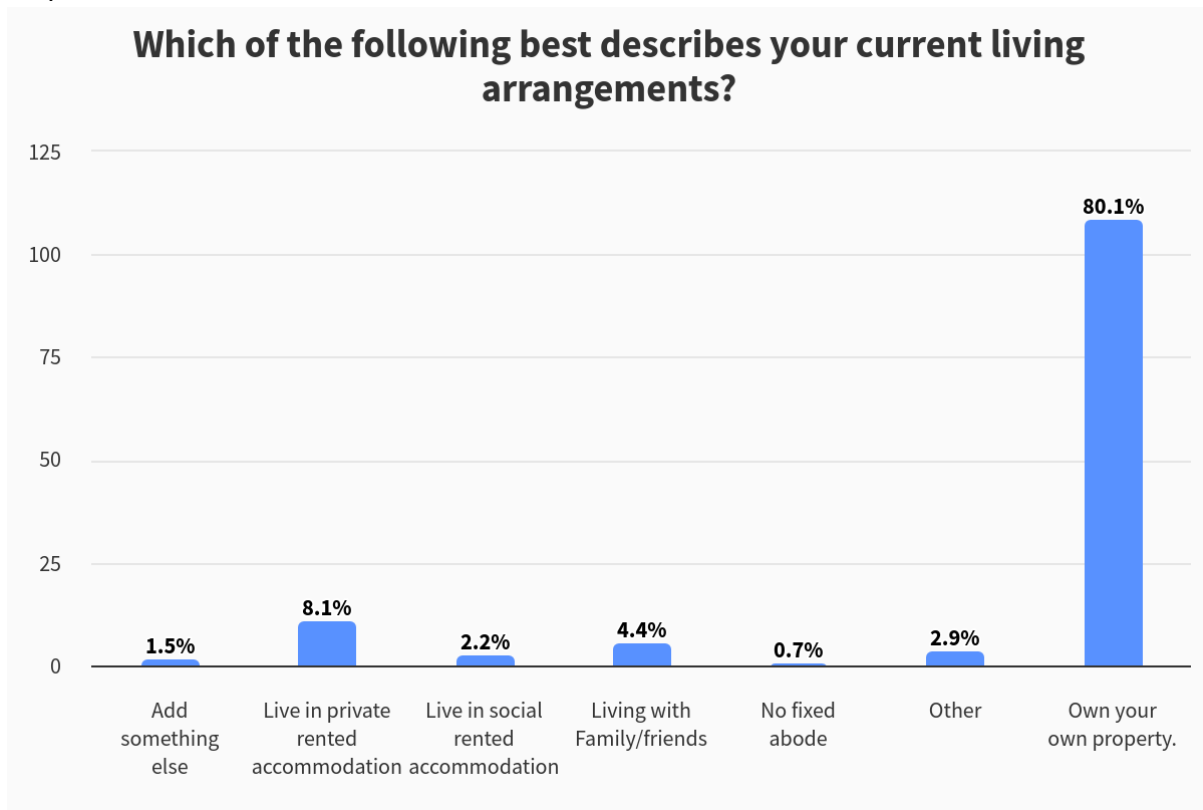
Please could you indicate if you are answering this survey as a

A large majority of the responses came from residents in the area with 88.8% of responses coming from residents. 4.5% of respondents were staff members, 3.7 of respondents were a organisation and 3.05 were councillors.



Which of the following best describes your current living arrangements?

The majority of responses came from people who own their own home with 80.1% of the respondents.



1a. Do you agree with the above priorities?

These were the priorities that the respondents were asked to feedback on

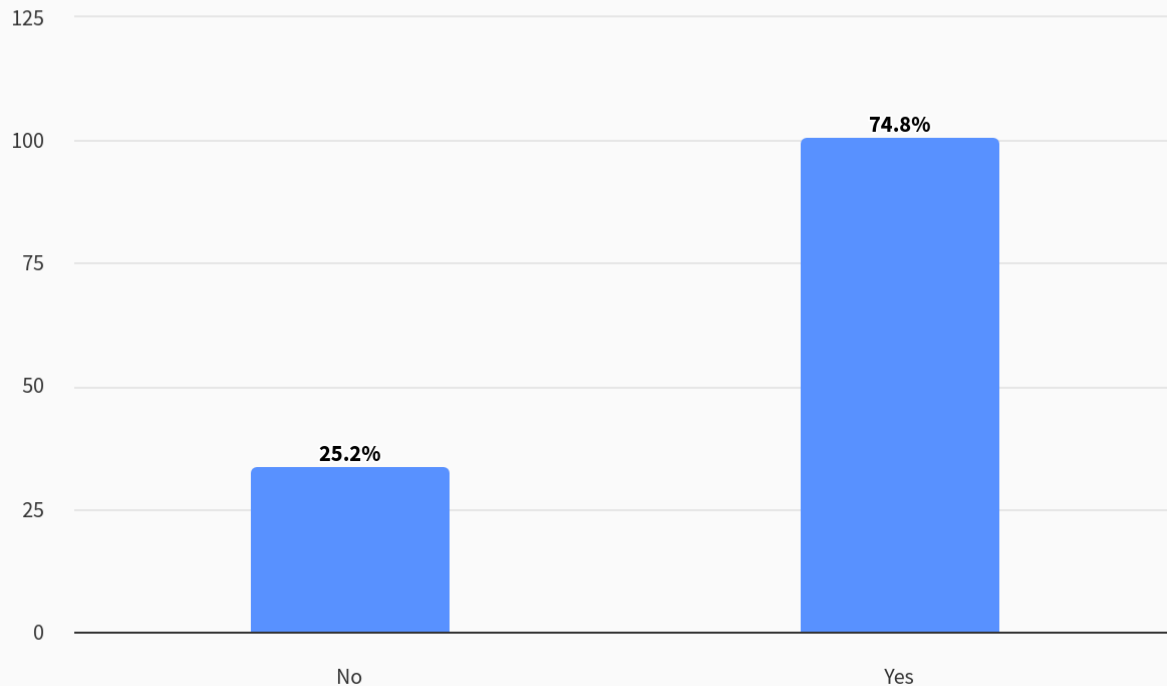
We've identified the following priorities for our Housing Strategy. These are:

- Delivering Person-centred housing services
- Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping
- Improving the standard of homes and communities
- Increasing the supply of homes

The public feedback was positive and large number of the respondents agreed with the priorities.

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1a. Do you agree with the above priorities?



1b. Are there any other areas you think we should be prioritising? If so, please provide details below?

Below are the main themes that emerged from the comments:

- **Affordable and Quality Housing:** The importance of delivering genuinely affordable homes and social housing, ensuring that new housing is of high design quality, well-maintained, and meets the needs of local residents rather than creating second homes for outsiders.
- **Community Impact and Local Priorities:** The need to respect existing community assets and neighbourhood plans, ensuring that developments do not threaten current residents through overcrowding, increased traffic, or environmental degradation, and that local priorities (such as preserving rural character) are upheld.
- **Developer Accountability and Enforcement:** Calls for stricter enforcement of planning and road traffic regulations, holding developers to account on aspects like affordable housing targets and contributions to local infrastructure improvements.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Emphasis on designing new housing that meets net zero aspirations, includes renewable energy features (like solar roofs and grey water facilities), and protects the natural environment and green wedges.
- **Infrastructure and Local Services:** A strong call for investment in local infrastructure—especially sewage systems, road networks, schools, and healthcare facilities—to support new developments without overburdening existing resources.

- **Vehicles, Traffic, and Highways:** Issues related to the increasing number of vehicles per household, inadequate parking, traffic congestion, and the need for better traffic management through speed limits, traffic calming measures, and enhanced public transport and cycling facilities.
- **Visual and Ecological Impact:** Concerns about the appearance and eco-friendliness of new developments, including the need to integrate Devon hedgerows, plant trees, and maintain green spaces to preserve local character.

2a. Are there any other actions we could take to meet objective 1, if so please add your suggestions below?

Objective 1: Delivering person-centred housing services

We want to talk and listen to our customers so we can make our services better. Our goal is to help people enjoy their homes and communities and feel happier and healthier. While we can't meet every need, we promise to treat everyone as an individual and work with them to plan support and improve our services together.

Below are the main themes that emerged from the comments:

- **Council Accountability and Service Efficiency:** Comments called for better enforcement of regulations (from property maintenance to traffic rules), increased staffing for property inspections, and a focus on delivering tangible improvements rather than merely setting out ambitious targets. There is also concern over financial management and efficiency in council services.
- **Design Quality and Environmental Sustainability:** Respondents stressed that new housing should be well designed and environmentally friendly. This includes using sustainable features (such as solar roofs, grey water systems, and green spaces), integrating natural elements like hedgerows and trees, and preserving local green wedges.
- **Domestic Abuse and Tenant Protection:** Support should extend to those experiencing domestic abuse or stalking at home, ensuring vulnerable tenants are safeguarded, with measures such as facilitating powers of attorney for tenants.
- **Housing Supply and Affordability:** Many comments emphasised increasing housing supply—especially affordable and social housing, including in rural areas—while resisting overdevelopment on green land and ensuring local residents have priority over second homes.
- **Infrastructure Improvements:** There is a strong call for significant upgrades to local infrastructure. This includes enhancing sewage systems, expanding school places, improving healthcare facilities (GP and dental services), upgrading road networks, and ensuring reliable fibre and mobile connectivity. Many respondents stressed that new developments should not overburden existing services.

- **Multi-Agency Collaboration and Community Support:** Stakeholders urged closer joint working between the council, NHS, and other local bodies to provide comprehensive support. This includes better integration of community-driven services, support for mental health issues, and mechanisms to help tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.
- **Neighbourhood and Community-Led Planning:** Stakeholders highlighted the importance of using neighbourhood plans and working with Parish Councils to reflect community priorities. They want local voices to shape development and ensure that housing strategies align with existing community needs.
- **Simplification and Prioritisation of Objectives:** Some respondents felt that the housing strategy should focus on a few measurable, high-priority objectives instead of an extensive list of idealistic goals, ensuring that targets are clear, achievable, and backed by proper financing.
- **Transport and Traffic Management:** There were concerns over vehicle numbers, inadequate parking, traffic congestion, and noise. Suggestions included creating larger car parks, implementing speed limits and traffic calming measures, and improving public transport and cycleways.

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2b. Are there any other actions we could take to meet objective 2, if so please add your suggestions below?

Objective 2: Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Safe and stable housing is important for good health and wellbeing. People who are homeless or sleeping rough often miss out on these benefits, through no fault of their own. Homelessness can affect anyone—both individuals and families.

Our plan to tackle homelessness focuses on ending rough sleeping, preventing homelessness, and providing more housing options for those in need.

The main themes in the comments are:

- **Alternative and Affordable Housing Solutions:** Emphasis on innovative housing models such as self-contained pods, prefabricated units, temporary accommodation, and using underutilised land. Calls for building more flats and engaging second-home owners to provide below-market rentals.

- **Community-Led Planning and Local Prioritisation:** Advocacy for neighbourhood plans and greater involvement of local councils to ensure that development meets the specific needs of the community. Resistance to overdevelopment on green land and emphasis on prioritising local residents over external demands.
- **Council Accountability, Service Efficiency, and Multi-Agency Collaboration:** Calls for transparent and efficient financial management, better enforcement of regulations, and improved service delivery. Encouragement for stronger collaboration between the council, local agencies, and charities to provide coordinated support for housing and homelessness issues.
- **Preventing Homelessness and Early Intervention:** Support for proactive measures to identify those at risk and implement structured, multi-stage support systems—from assessment and trial accommodation to long-term independent living. Utilisation of community resources like food banks and the Household Support Fund.
- **Infrastructure Improvements and Transport Management:** Demand for significant upgrades in local infrastructure, including sewage, schools, healthcare, road networks, and reliable connectivity. Calls for better traffic management, more parking, and enhanced public transport to prevent overburdening existing services.
- **Temporary Accommodation and Tenant Support:** Concerns over the quality and location of temporary housing, including the need for basic amenities and proximity to support networks. Calls for improved tenant support services, including addressing the needs of vulnerable groups.
- **Tenant Protection and Support for Vulnerable Groups:** Protection measures for tenants facing domestic abuse, stalking, or with special needs (e.g., learning difficulties or autism). Suggestions for legal and practical measures, such as facilitating powers of attorney, to safeguard vulnerable residents.

2c. Are there any other actions we could take to meet objective 3, if so please add your suggestions below?

Objective 3: Improving the standard of homes and communities

Homes

Many homes in our area, including private rentals, social housing, and even some owned homes, are not in good condition. Issues like poor heating, bad insulation, and damp or mould affect people's health quality of life so it's vital that we help to improve housing standards.

Communities

We want East Devon to have welcoming, safe, and clean communities where people feel supported. While anti-social behaviour (ASB) is less common here than in other areas, it still needs to be addressed. To improve our neighbourhoods, we plan to refresh our housing estates, create better community spaces, and encourage local activities and events. By working with residents and businesses, we aim to build pride in our communities.

The main themes in the comments are:

- **Community Engagement and Integration:** Many comments emphasise engaging with established local and church communities to integrate newcomers and foster a mutually supportive environment.
- **Enforcement, Accountability, and Collaborative Management:** There is a call for robust enforcement of planning and maintenance standards, clearer accountability with strict penalties, and better collaborative working across teams and agencies to ensure standards are met.

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- **Environmental Design and Aesthetic Impact:** There is a strong call to ensure new housing respects the local character by incorporating eco-friendly designs, hedgerows, tree planting, and green spaces, avoiding uniform, soulless blocks.
- **Housing Quality, Maintenance, and Energy Efficiency:** Respondents stress the importance of high build standards, proactive maintenance (including regular repairs, damp/mould prevention), and energy efficiency measures like solar panels and proper insulation, alongside improvements to existing homes.
- **Housing Supply and Policy Direction:** Comments debate the balance between boosting new housing supply and preserving existing community fabric, resisting overdevelopment, and supporting local building trades and apprenticeships.
- **Transport and Infrastructure:** Feedback highlights concerns over increased vehicle numbers, insufficient parking, road congestion and noise, and the need for improved public transport, traffic calming measures, and investment in local services such as schools and healthcare.
- **Safety, Health, and Social Support:** Feedback includes strong demands for improved safety measures against crime (such as swiftly dealing with drug dealers), enhanced tenant protection (including for victims of domestic abuse), and overall support for vulnerable residents.

2d. Are there any other actions we could take to meet objective 4, if so please add your suggestions below?

Objective 4: Increasing the supply of homes

There isn't enough housing in East Devon to meet everyone's needs. A recent study shows we need over 18,000 new homes by 2040, and nearly 6,000 people are already waiting for social housing, with 3,000 in urgent need. Devon is facing a serious housing crisis.

As well as building new homes in the right places for our community, we also need to make better use of the homes we already have, bringing empty homes back into use.

The main themes in the comments are:

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- **Alternative Housing Solutions and Efficiency:** Interest in alternative, energy-efficient solutions such as modular or tiny homes, which could serve refugees, the homeless, or provide transitional housing. Calls to eliminate redundant surveys (like housing need surveys) and instead make better use of funds and resources.
- **Enforcement and Quality of Affordable Housing:** Demand for developers to be held to the affordable housing percentages approved at planning stage, with no later adjustments on the grounds of financial viability. Calls for a clear definition of "affordable" and a focus on high-quality, well-designed housing (not just a numbers game), with standards guided by expert bodies.
- **Integrated Infrastructure and Economic Considerations:** A recurring theme is that housing development should be coordinated with broader economic infrastructure—ensuring there are enough schools, healthcare facilities, transport links, and other services to support growth. Some comments advocate for using funds from new developments to directly reinvest in local infrastructure improvements, ensuring developments are sustainable in the long term.
- **Local Need and Community Impact:** Emphasis on building for local need rather than catering to external demand or second-home buyers, to preserve community character and ensure local residents are prioritised. Criticism that new developments often favour older or retired populations, rather than addressing the needs of young families and local workers.
- **Planning Process and Developer Accountability:** Frustration with the slow and sometimes unreliable planning process, with requests to speed up approvals and enforce planning regulations more strictly. Demands for the council to take local plans and neighbourhood surveys seriously, ensuring that developments reflect the real needs and priorities of local communities.
- **Sustainable Land Use and Infrastructure:** Strong opposition to building on green land, with calls to complete partially built developments before initiating new projects. Concerns that new developments risk overburdening local infrastructure—leading to flooding, raw sewage issues, and restricted access—as existing systems (e.g. sewage, road networks) are already under pressure.

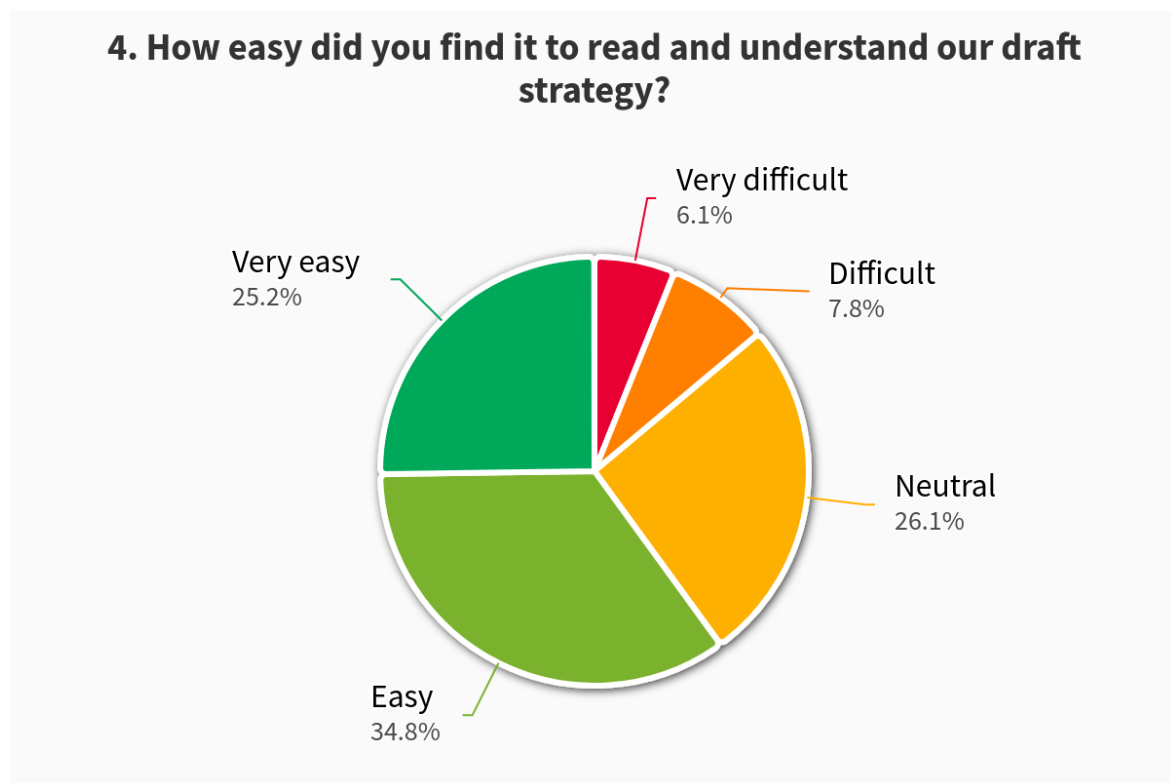
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3. Do you have any other thoughts on the draft strategy?

The main themes in the comments are:

- **Accountability in Affordable Housing:** Demands that developers adhere to the approved affordable housing percentages with clear definitions and high-quality standards, ensuring commitments are met without later reductions.
- **Alternative Housing Solutions and Efficiency:** Interest in exploring innovative housing models like modular or tiny homes and repurposing empty brownfield sites to create more efficient, energy-efficient, and adaptable housing options.
- **Community Engagement and Local Priorities:** A call for decision-makers to consult directly with local residents, consider community feedback and local needs, and address the impact of second homes and external buyers on housing availability.
- **Effective Planning, Transparency, and Measurable Targets:** Criticism of the current planning process for being slow and opaque, with a need for faster, evidence-based decision-making and the inclusion of specific, measurable targets and clear action plans.
- **Environmental Sustainability and Quality of Life:** Calls for the housing strategy to respect environmental legislation, preserve local natural assets, and focus on good design that enhances the overall quality of life for residents while mitigating climate impact.
- **Integrated Housing and Support Services:** A need for housing development to be coordinated with improvements in local services such as healthcare, schools, transport, and social care, ensuring new homes are supported by adequate infrastructure.
- **Sustainable Land Use and Infrastructure:** Strong opposition to building on green land and concerns that new developments will strain already inadequate infrastructure, including sewage systems, flood alleviation, and road networks.

4. How easy did you find it to read and understand our draft strategy?



Over half of respondents found the draft strategy easy to read (25.2% “Very easy” and 34.8% “Easy”), while just over a quarter (26.1%) were neutral. A smaller proportion reported difficulty, with 7.8% rating it “Difficult” and 6.1% rating it “Very difficult.”

5. Is there anything we could do to improve the presentation of our strategy?

- **Actionable and Specific Measures:** There is a clear call for the strategy to include measurable targets, definitive timelines, and concrete actions that directly address East Devon’s housing challenges rather than vague future intentions.
- **Clarity and Conciseness:** Many respondents feel the document is overly lengthy and wordy, filled with management jargon, and would benefit from a condensed overview that highlights the key points without unnecessary detail.

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- **Focus on Housing Priorities:** Respondents criticise the strategy for trying to cover too many sectors (private, council, charity) at once, and call for a sharper focus on social housing and meeting the specific needs of local residents.
- **Infrastructure and Planning Concerns:** Several comments highlight issues such as outdated maps of developments, inadequate infrastructure (especially sewage and

flood alleviation), and the need for a definitive timeline for addressing these problems.

- **Local Engagement and Communication:** Stakeholders stress the importance of engaging directly with local residents through face-to-face meetings and clear, easily accessible information, rather than relying solely on lengthy online documents.
- **Usability and Navigation:** Comments indicate that the draft strategy's online presentation is confusing, with non-clickable links, problematic drop-down boxes, and small font sizes that hinder accessibility.
- **Visuals and Presentation:** There is a strong desire for more visual elements—such as updated maps, infographics, and photographs—to clearly illustrate proposed developments and enhance overall understanding.

5. Key findings

- Consider whether the strategy as a whole should be more targeted, with reduced number of actions to maximise the opportunity to deliver on priorities.
- Current format is seen as overly wordy and not easy to digest by some – include an executive summary and look at ways to improve accessibility.
- A clear drive for more genuinely affordable housing for local people and key workers is sought from respondents.
- More emphasis on environmental factors, including renewable energy and greener neighbourhoods.
- A number of people suggested the use of innovative housing models such as pods and pre-fabs for temporary accommodation
- Expand joint working with community organisations and other agencies to achieve our goals.

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- Clearer understanding of energy efficiency goals in both new build and council properties.
- Need for clearer and measurable actions was called for: these will be included in final document as a live action plan that will be reported on regularly.

6. Recommendations

Further internal consultation will now take place as departments consider the feedback gained from this public consultation.

We hope to present a final strategy document to Cabinet by the end of 2025. However, we are expecting the publication of the National Housing Strategy by central government in the coming months. We will need to ensure that our strategy responds to the content of this

document, so our proposed publication date may be delayed until the new year should the national strategic approach impact on our own strategic intentions.