



South Hams & West Devon

# *Better Homes, Better Lives*

## **Housing Strategy 2021-2026**

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South Hams  
District Council



West Devon  
Borough Council





Contents	Page
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>A Housing Strategy for South Hams and West Devon</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
People	8
Place	9
<b>Policy &amp; Context</b>	<b>11</b>
National Housing Context	11
Local Priorities	12
Adopted Local Plans	12
Corporate Strategy	13
Climate Emergency	14
Other related policies and strategies	14
<b>The Evidence Base</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Better Homes, Better Lives</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Theme 1 - Housing for Place</b>	<b>20</b>
Place Priority 1	21
Place Priority 2	22
<b>Theme 2 - Housing for People</b>	<b>23</b>
People Priority 1	24
People Priority 2	24
<b>Resources</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>How the Strategy was developed</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Monitoring of this housing strategy</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Annual Delivery Plan</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>28</b>

# Foreword

We are pleased to introduce the Joint Housing Strategy of South Hams and West Devon Councils, which sets out our housing priorities for the next five years.

This strategy comes at a time of great uncertainty for our Country following a year of restrictions and lockdowns as a result of the Global Coronavirus pandemic. A time when "home" has taken on a stronger meaning.

As our areas start to emerge and recover from the pandemic, it is important that we "build back better", revisit our priorities and make commitments to change. That's why we have called our strategy **Better Homes, Better Lives**.

Under our themes of Housing for Place and Housing for People we have listed our key priorities for the next five years. These are:

## Housing for Place

- Promote balanced and sustainable communities
- Ensuring that homes support the health and wellbeing of the area

## Housing for People

- Homes that support the Health & wellbeing of our residents
- Make the best use and improve quality of existing housing

We want to deliver on these key commitments to ensure all our residents, current and future benefit from a strategy that makes the best of our beautiful natural environment, but also delivers for those who need it the most.

Both our Councils have declared a climate emergency and are committed to supporting



Cllr Hilary Bastone



Cllr Debo Sellis

initiatives that deliver on carbon reduction and green energy. Improving homes in a sustainable way is a key aspect of this strategy and we are committed to delivering this to our residents and communities.

It goes without saying that the objectives of this strategy would not begin to be met without working in partnership with a great number of statutory and voluntary agencies. So we would like to extend our thanks to our partners for the part they play in the outcomes for our area.

We believe that through this strategy and the annual delivery plans we have made clear our ambition for the next five years and how we will meet our future challenges, to ensure that both South Hams and West Devon continue to be great places to live.

**Cllr Hilary Bastone, South Hams District Council,  
Cllr Debo Sellis, West Devon Borough Council,  
Lead Members for Homes**

# A Housing Strategy for South Hams & West Devon

In recent years the issue of housing has become the subject of election promises and central government statistics.

In the race to meet national targets for housing supply, it is easy to forget that each house should be a home first, and a statistic second. The South Hams and West Devon Housing Strategy seeks to identify how quality can be added to quantity to ensure that the houses, new and old, in our area are homes to be proud of, homes to be healthy in, and homes that combine to make communities that we want to live in.

The Housing Strategy identifies the challenges we know that we need to address in order to make access to housing more equitable, to make our homes healthier and our communities happier. The Housing Strategy identifies actions that we can seek to achieve, that will help address some of these challenges. Some of the challenges cannot be met on our own; many require support from our partners and some require changes to national policy and strategy.

**In order to appreciate the purpose of this document, it is important to understand that there are a few things that the Housing Strategy cannot be:**

- ◆ **Identify land for development:** This is not a planning document. The Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan (JLP) is the adopted development plan for the area, and both identifies land, and sets standards for new homes and communities.
- ◆ **Require higher building standards than those required by Building Regulations:** Although, the basic standard of new homes is set to increase in 2021 as part of the Future Homes Standard. The JLP also has an adopted policy that already requires new homes to perform to a level that exceeds building regulations by an equivalent of 20%.





- ◆ **Restrict second home ownership and holiday lets:** Neighbourhood Plans (NPs) can do this, under the right circumstances, and many NPs have adopted principle residence policies for new homes. There is no mechanism for controlling who can purchase an existing home within South Hams and West Devon.

We also continue to lobby the Government to close the current business rates tax loophole which allows second homeowners to avoid paying any council tax or business rates on their properties. Currently, owners of second homes can apply to the Valuation Office to register their domestic properties for business rates if their property is available to let for a minimum of 140 days per year. If registered for business rates, a large proportion of these properties qualify for small business rates relief and are eligible for 100% relief and this in turn means they have neither

council tax nor business rates to pay. The Government consulted on tightening the rules in November 2018 but no action has yet been taken on this. The Council believe the Government consultation could go further and that domestic properties should be treated as council tax payers and pay council tax, irrespective of whether they are let for part of the year or not, unless it can be shown that the property is genuinely operating as a business. We are asking the Government to address this in their Business Rates Reform due later in 2021

- ◆ **Require infrastructure to be built before any new homes:** The infrastructure needs of South Hams and West Devon were considered as part of the Examination in Public of the JLP, and the appointed Inspectors were content that the level of new infrastructure proposed as part of the JLP was proportionate and consistent with the amount of new housing proposed.

- ◆ **Demand that brownfield land is built on before greenfield land:** The Housing Strategy, and the Councils, have little control over independent landowners bring their land forward for development. The JLP and National Planning Policy Framework have policies that support the development of brownfield land, but we cannot make owners of brownfield sites submit planning applications, in the same way that we cannot stop owners of greenfield sites submitting planning applications. The spatial strategy of the JLP already directs the vast majority of new development towards named sustainable settlements.

# Introduction

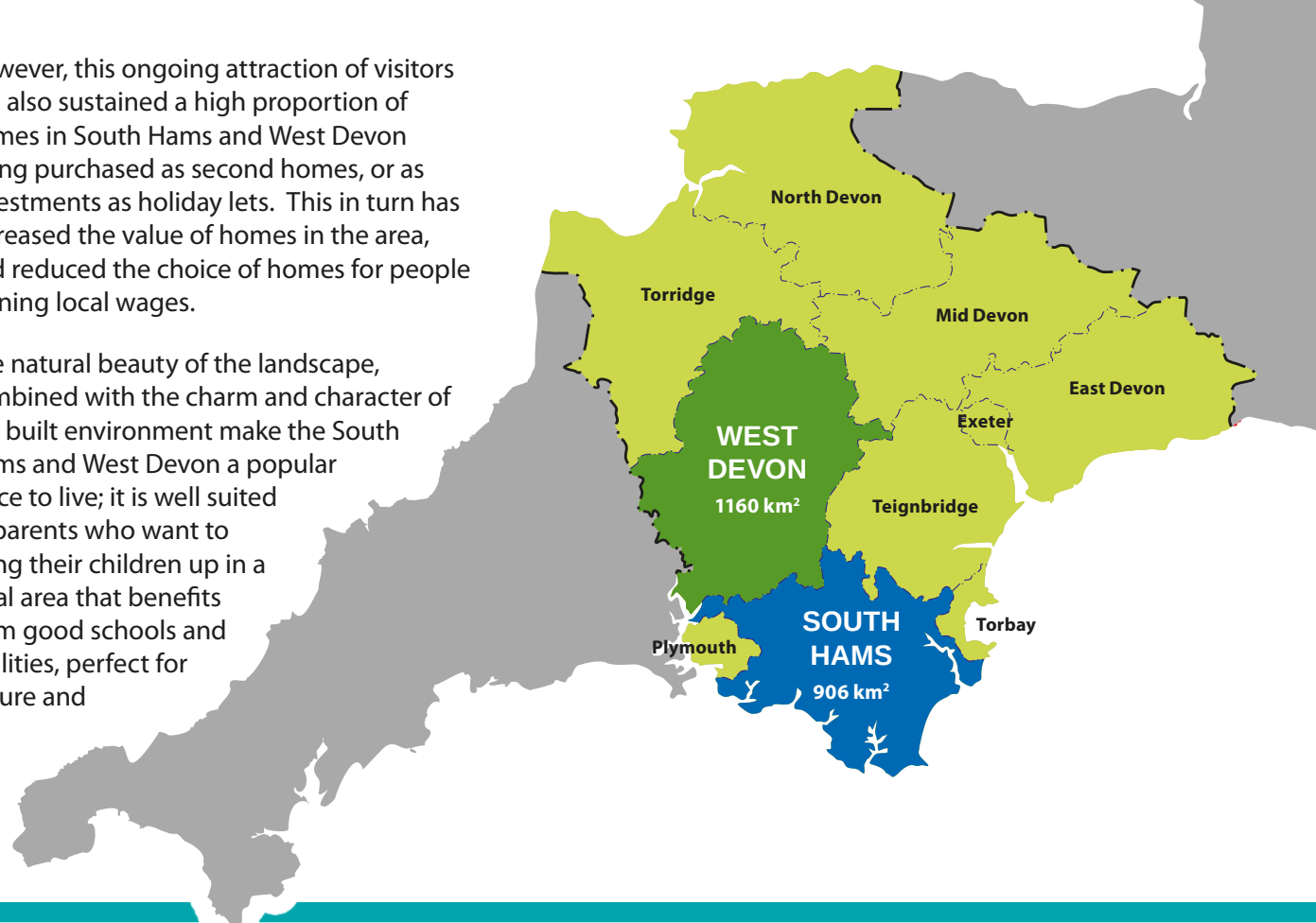


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South Hams and West Devon occupy the south west corner of Devon and comprise a mix of traditional rural settlements and rolling agricultural landscapes. Between them the two local authority areas boast two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a National Park and a World Heritage Site. It is little surprise that both South Hams and West Devon boast enduring appeal for visitors, and the tourism industry remains an important element of the local economy.

However, this ongoing attraction of visitors has also sustained a high proportion of homes in South Hams and West Devon being purchased as second homes, or as investments as holiday lets. This in turn has increased the value of homes in the area, and reduced the choice of homes for people earning local wages.

The natural beauty of the landscape, combined with the charm and character of the built environment make the South Hams and West Devon a popular place to live; it is well suited to parents who want to bring their children up in a rural area that benefits from good schools and facilities, perfect for leisure and

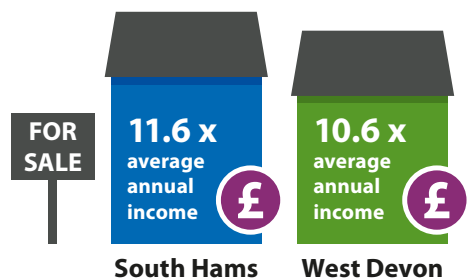






recreation, well connected to larger urban areas both in Devon and the wider South west region and in more recent times, a marvellous place to work from home and stay safe whilst benefiting from access to local countryside.

This popularity has over a number of years had an impact on the affordability levels of housing for local people. Average house prices have continued to rise well beyond the rise in the average local wage, making home ownership currently an unrealistic aspiration for many people living and working the area today. Most recent estimates show the average house costing 11.6 times the average wage in South Hams, and 10.6 times in West Devon.



The sensitive natural landscape present challenges in terms of building large numbers of new homes, and most of the towns and villages are ill-equipped to adapt to the addition of large scale housing development, with local infrastructure, particularly transport networks in town centres, unable to be adapted to accommodate significantly greater usage.

South Hams and West Devon are non-stock holding authorities, having transferred their housing stock in 1999 to Tor Homes and West Devon Homes (now LiveWest). The Councils have retained their strategic housing responsibilities and continue to act as the enabler of affordable housing. We also deliver a range of vital services including housing allocations and homelessness support, aids and adaptations and ensuring decent housing standards.

Understanding the key characteristics of a place can help to devise plans for the future that will deliver healthy and well-balanced communities that are resilient to change. In order to create a housing strategy for South Hams and West Devon, it was important to know what issues needed to be addressed. Whilst the affordability challenges are well understood, the implications of this are less well known, for both the built environment and the people that live in South Hams and West Devon.







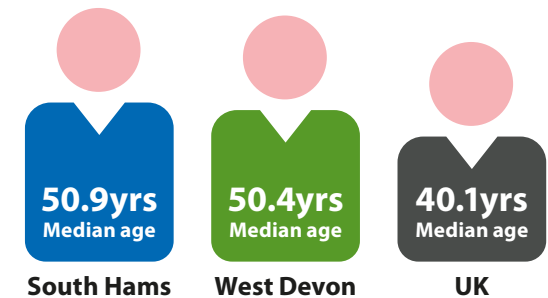
## People

Local people continue to feel that both home ownership, and to a lesser extent the rental market, is out of reach for many of them because of ever increasing house prices. These are felt most strongly in rural and coastal areas where local house prices extend far beyond local wages. Both South Hams & West Devon have an older than average median age demographic which in turn can put pressure on local services such as health and social care, whilst undermining the viability of other services required by younger age groups like schools and further education facilities. We are yet to fully understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and what this means for people settling in less urban areas, as challenges around commutes and the ability to work remotely cease to exist. No doubt this will only add to the difficulties we face with second homes and holiday lets as well as the lack of properties available, particularly for first time buyers and young people.

We often have examples about local people being priced out of the housing market and having to move away from their family and friends, who provide help for childcare and social support. This is across all types of housing. It is essential that we provide a mix of house types from rentals to home ownership whether this is buying on the open market, at a discounted market rate or through shared ownership and to ensure we work with our communities to help to deliver what is right for them.

To maintain the 'local' element, in so far as legally possible, we can restrict the occupation of our affordable housing stock through legal agreements and local lettings plans. We have our Local Allocations Policy which is applied to our existing housing association stock. These tools help us to maintain housing for some of the more vulnerable people in our communities.

This strategy will focus not just on plans for new housing, but perhaps more importantly how we make the best use of our existing housing – after all this is the majority of our homes. It is essential that people are supported to remain in a home that can be adapted for their needs or helped to move somewhere more appropriate and of their choosing, whilst still being able to access their network of support. It is imperative that we work with our colleagues at Devon County Council to ensure vulnerable people are given access to a good range of housing options and control over their housing choices in areas they wish to live and that care can be provided locally because their carers are able to afford to live nearby.





In looking after our stock, together with our Registered Provider partners and supporting our private landlords with advice and access to funding we can help to address the health inequalities that come from living in poor housing. We can also have a positive impact on our climate change agenda as the homes we live in become greener and more energy efficient.

The longer term effects of the pandemic, both in terms of peoples health and with regards the economic challenges collectively and individually we may face are not yet apparent. The recovery process no doubt will see people having to make difficult decisions about their housing and what it means to them. It may mean that people need a different type of housing to enable them to continue working from home as there is no longer an office base. It may mean that people have to downsize to more affordable alternatives. As council's, through the life of this strategy, we will seek to develop further options that offer a safety net to people within our communities, ensure where possible we minimise negative impacts and continue to meet their needs and aspirations.

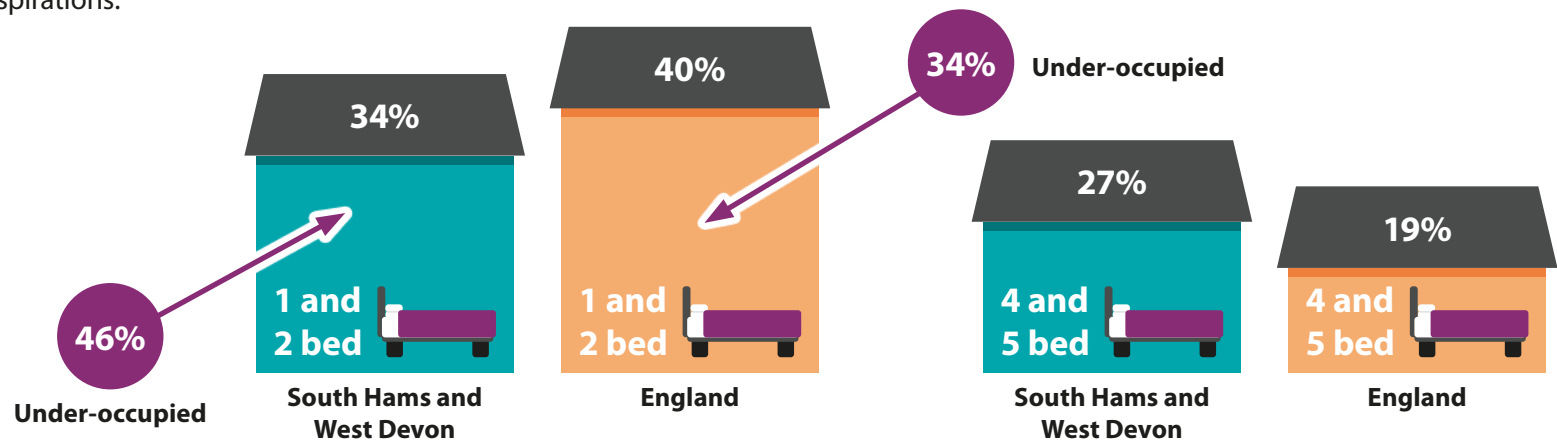
## Place

The way we live our lives, and the places that we visit on a regular basis, have changed over a number of years. It is no longer assumed that we will work in the same place that we live, and we have more freedom to visit an ever widening range of destinations for leisure and recreation than any generation before us.

Towns and cities used to be crammed full of small homes accommodating the working population, whilst the countryside was the preserve of larger homes, agricultural activity and a more sedate way of life. But what happens to these places when our behaviours change? What happens when the majority of our homes have been built for large families when our average household size is getting smaller by the year? What happens when we no longer need to live in a city to benefit

from the well-paid city job? What happens when people who have grown up in quiet coastal communities find that the average house price has tripled in the last 20 years, but their income has remained the same?

The most recent census data shows that the mix of homes in South Hams and West Devon is distinctly different from the national average. Both areas have far fewer one and two bed homes, (34%) than the national average for England (40%). The same is true at the other end of the spectrum, with both South Hams and West Devon having many more four and five bed homes (27%) compared to the national average (19%). This may not be as big a problem if it weren't for the inflated house prices, meaning that bigger houses cost even more than they would elsewhere, which makes them more attractive for developers to build than the small homes that are needed.





Household sizes, the number of people per home, have been getting smaller for years, and this is forecast to continue well into the medium term, for both rural and urban areas.

The difficulty this creates is that with every passing year the existing houses of South Hams and West Devon are becoming less suited to the housing needs of the people that live in these areas. Of course most people would like to under-occupy their homes; have a spare room, or a home office, but extra space costs extra money, and that is not something that local incomes can stretch to.

The number of homes that are 'significantly under-occupied' (at least two empty bedrooms) in South Hams and West Devon (46%) however is also well above the national average (34%). It may be that the home owners do not wish to live in smaller accommodation, but the evidence suggests that many of these homes are occupied by older people, who simply cannot move to more suitable accommodation in the same area, because there are so few suitable smaller homes - and developers don't want to build small homes because they sell for less than bigger homes.

Our adopted planning policies are seeking to correct some of this imbalance, but it will take time to re-adjust. We are also developing some mechanisms that give priority access to new homes to local people - and not just for traditional 'affordable housing' homes, but open market homes too. This is not something that many planning authorities have tried to do, and we intend to make the policies stronger over time, once they have been tested. This will create an

'intermediate' open market housing product that bridges the gap between affordable housing and the unrestricted open market homes that are beyond anyone earning local wages.

There are also pockets of poor quality housing located in South Hams and West Devon that feature both disrepair and overcrowding. The quality of housing has a direct impact upon the health and wellbeing of its occupants. Housing conditions can influence our physical health; for example a warm and dry house can improve general health outcomes and specifically reduce respiratory conditions. Housing also has a huge influence on our mental health and wellbeing – for example children living in crowded homes are more likely to be stressed, anxious and depressed, have poorer physical health, and attain less well at school. (Reference; The Health Foundation 2017)

Equality of opportunity is an ambition that both South Hams and West Devon Councils aspire to deliver for our communities. South Hams and West Devon Councils have created a housing strategy that responds to the challenges faced by certain sectors of our community, by:

- ◆ Driving the delivery of new homes that people can afford and meeting the different needs of our communities
- ◆ Ensure the best use and improved quality of existing housing

Success for the South Hams and West Devon Housing Strategy will be measured in how we respond to these priorities and deliver **“Better homes, Better lives”**.



# Policy & Context



The South Hams & West Devon Housing Strategy 2021-2026 has been developed against a backdrop of Covid-19 and also the UK leaving the European Union. Both of these are likely to have consequences for the local housing market in relation to the economy and health & wellbeing. The strategy has been designed with flexibility for us to continue to strive to meet our priorities.

This strategy in its development has had regard to both local and national policy and a number of complex legal duties and powers. For it to be successful it must integrate across the Council, its corporate plan and priorities and should be read within the context of all the Council's strategies.

## National Housing Context

Housing remains a key element of political debate, with interdependencies on a number of other areas including health, wellbeing, welfare reform and economics. It is likely to remain this way for some considerable time.

Some of the national priorities include:

- Building more housing to meet demand
- Delivering more affordable housing
- Welfare Reform
- The Planning white paper Planning for the Future: Planning Policy changes in England in 2020
- Preventing Homelessness
- A Government commitment to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it by 2027.
- Improving standards in the Private Rented Sector

- Health & Safety in the social housing sector (Following the Grenfell Tower disaster)
- Support for first time buyers

Furthermore Homes England – the Government sponsored national agency for housing acceleration has 6 key objectives to assist in housing delivery through grant funding and expertise assistance which have been published in their Strategic Plan 2018/19-2022/23. South Hams District Council has secured Investment Partner status with Homes England in order to directly draw down grant funding.



# Local Priorities

## Adopted Local Plans

The local authority areas of South Hams and West Devon include large parts of Dartmoor National Park, where Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) is the local planning authority, with an adopted Local Plan, and an emerging new Local Plan for the National Park. Outside Dartmoor, South Hams and West Devon, together with Plymouth published their Joint Local Plan (JLP) in 2019 which sets out the shared direction of travel for the area up to 2034, bringing together the vision for the growth and transformation of Plymouth with the approach of fostering sustainable thriving towns and villages in the surrounding rural areas.

### Vision for Plymouth and South West Devon

Plymouth and South West Devon will be a highly successful sub-region, whose people and businesses benefit greatly from having both a

major city and a network of high quality market towns and sustainable rural settlements, set within beautiful and natural environments. It will have made the most of its economic, social, cultural, heritage and natural assets, and its settlements will play complementary and mutually beneficial roles for the urban and rural economy.

Development will be delivered proactively, meeting the needs of its people for new homes, jobs and services, and will recognise the diversity in characteristics between our urban, sub-urban and rural areas. We will be a good neighbour to neighbouring areas and play a key economic and social role both in the region and beyond.

South West Devon's Thriving Towns and Villages will be thriving rural communities where the following outcomes have been met:

- Residents are empowered to create strong communities.
- Places are created for enterprise to thrive and business to grow.
- Homes have been built to meet local needs.
- The services and facilities which meet the needs of our communities have been secured.
- The built and natural environment has been protected, conserved and enhanced.
- The past is celebrated and our heritage for the future is protected.





## Dartmoor National Park

Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) is in the process of adopting a new Local Plan. The Local Plan for Dartmoor reflects that National Parks were created with two purposes. These shape what the National Parks are, the reason for their designation and how they should be managed. There is also a socio-economic duty upon the Authorities themselves.

- **First Purpose:** To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.
- **Second Purpose:** To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the Special Qualities of the National Park by the public.
- **Duty:** To seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of the local communities within the National Park.

All relevant authorities, including South Hams and West Devon Councils, are required by law to have regard to National Park purposes.

Dartmoor National Park has a strong focus upon sustainable development, with affordable housing to meet local needs a key priority. Its Vision includes:

- **Decent Homes:** There is access to well-designed, energy efficient and affordable housing for those who contribute to Dartmoor's thriving communities.
- **A place to do business:** Businesses which respect, value and contribute to Dartmoor's Special Qualities have the opportunity to thrive and innovate.
- **Prosperous and vibrant communities:** Dartmoor's towns and villages provide opportunities for communities to thrive.
- **Exemplars for outstanding development:** All new development has a character which respects local distinctiveness, vernacular and materials, and leads the way on sustainable building.

## Corporate Strategy

Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic has caused both Councils to consider its priorities and is in the developmental stages of introducing a new corporate plan with a new set of priorities. This may adjust the delivery plan of the Housing Strategy but it is not anticipated it will change the priorities. Indeed the existing priority for Homes is "enabling the homes that meet the needs of all" through the Covid 19 recovery planning it was clear that Members wished to be more ambitious with their aim which has been changed to "**Better Homes, Better Lives**".



## Climate Emergency

Both South Hams & West Devon declared a climate emergency in 2019 and adopted a climate change and biodiversity strategy in December 2020.

The following commitments have been made:

- That the Councils aim to reduce its organisational carbon emissions to net-zero by 2030;
- That the Councils commit to working with partners through the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group to aim to reduce both councils carbon emissions to net zero by 2050 at the latest;
- That the Councils aim for a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain in the habitat value of its green and wooded public open space by 2025;

Dartmoor National Park Authority declared a climate emergency in July 2019, and have adopted an action plan that is intended to ensure the organisation is net zero carbon by 2025. DNPA are also active participants in the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group.

The aims of the Housing Strategy must wherever possible, contribute positively to these commitments, and in doing so also seek to address fuel poverty, the cost of home ownership and other key housing outcomes.

## Other related policies and strategies

This is a list of policies that have been used in the formation of this strategy which can all be found on our websites [www.westdevon.gov.uk](http://www.westdevon.gov.uk) and [www.southhams.gov.uk](http://www.southhams.gov.uk). Whilst they all have their own set of priorities, it is our intention to revisit them and ensure they help to deliver the priorities set by this strategy:

- Devon Carbon Plan
- Community Housing Strategy
- South Hams & West Devon Investment Strategies
- Asset Management Strategy
- Homeless Strategy 2017 - 2022
- Rough Sleeper Strategy
- Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy
- Tenancy Strategy
- Devon Home Choice Policy
- South Hams & West Devon Allocation Policies
- Safeguarding Policy
- The Tenants Incentive Scheme
- Devon County Councils Housing and Accommodation Strategy
- Local letting policies
- Neighbourhood Plans

The Housing Strategy 2021-2026 will rely on a number of key partnership arrangements to deliver the priorities, which in turn will deliver positive outcomes for a range of different organisations and their priorities. It is both Councils ambitions to strengthen partnership relationships. Working together is key to make a success of this strategy and to deliver **“Better Homes, Better Lives”**.



## Reducing our Carbon Footprint and increasing Biodiversity



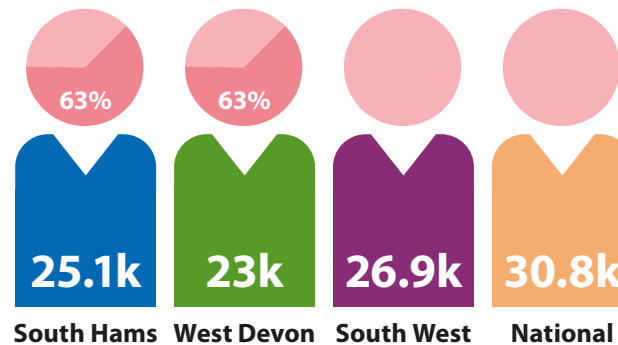
# The Evidence Base



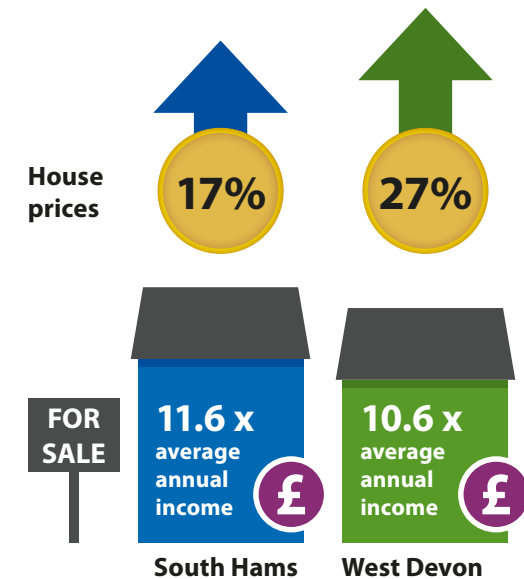
The Council has gathered evidence from a number of different sources to inform the Housing Strategy. The key headlines arising include:



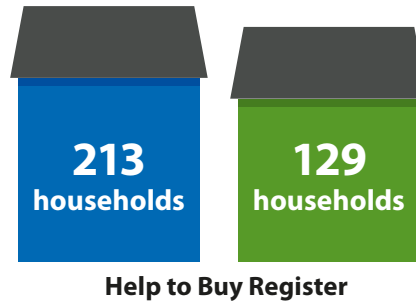
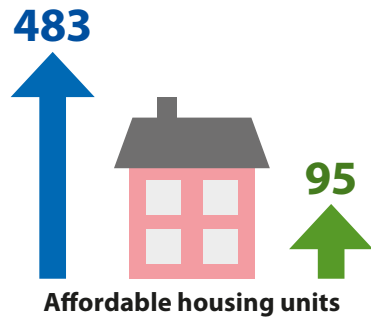
Demographic projections suggest a 5% increase in population in the next 5 years in the South Hams and 4% increase in West Devon. 20% of the current population in South Hams and West Devon are aged 70 plus and this is set to increase over the next 20 years. (Census 2011 & NOMIS).



63% of residents in South Hams and West Devon are economically active with median earnings of £25,104 and £23,083 respectively. This represents a lower level than the South West regional average of £26,946 and the national median of £30,800. (ONS).



House prices have been increasing in the area with a 27% increase in house prices in West Devon in the last 5 years and a 17% increase in the average house price in South Hams. The ratio of lower quartile house price to lower quartile gross earnings has correspondingly increased such that it is now 11 times the average earnings in South Hams and 10.42 in West Devon. (ONS).

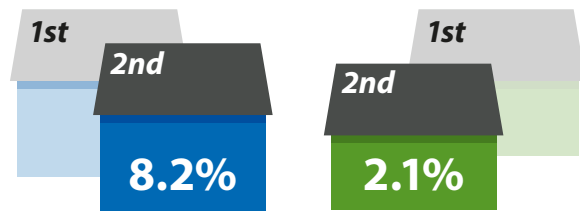


Waiting list Need by property	South Hams	West Devon
1 bed	57%	50%
2 bed	28%	28%
3 bed	12%	16%
4+ bed	4%	6%

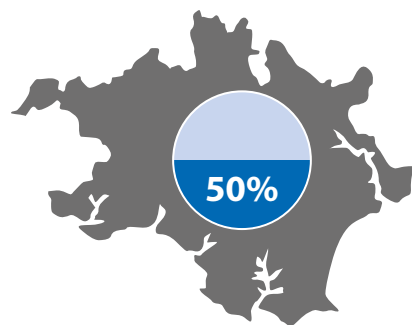
Since 2016/17, South Hams has enabled 483 units of new affordable housing and West Devon 95 units.

There are 213 households on the Help to Buy Register in the South Hams and 129 households in West Devon. (*Help to Buy South*).

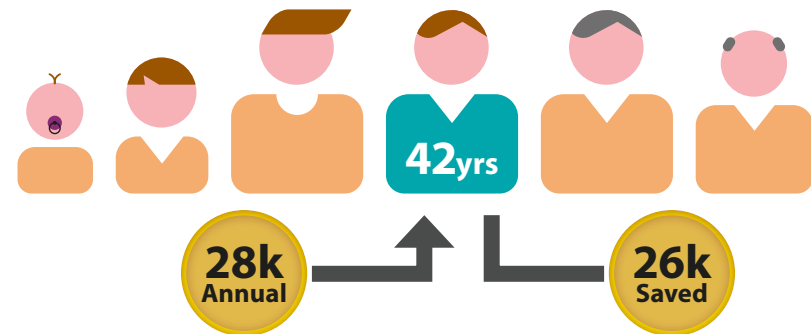
The Council's Housing Register has approximately 2,000 households registered, and 70% of those earn less than £20,000 per annum. (*Devon Home Choice*).



8.2% of the total dwellings in the South Hams are second homes with up to 50% in some areas. In West Devon the figure is 2.1%. The availability of housing is further restricted by many otherwise available homes being registered as a holiday homes business.

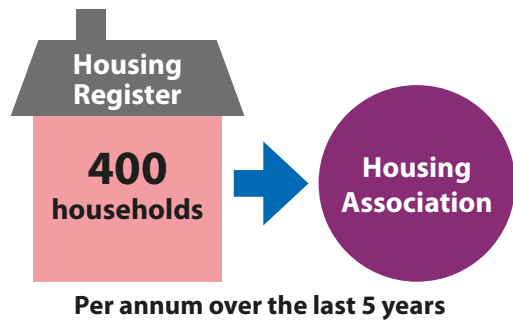


The average customer seeking shared ownership in South Hams and West Devon is 42 years old, earns £27,891, and has savings of £25,818. (*Help to Buy South*).

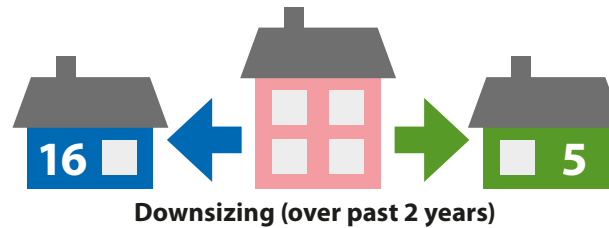


The Council's Housing Register	South Hams	West Devon
Active applications	1261	810
% of households with income < £25,000 (includes '0' answers)	83%	79%
No. of active applications where at least one household member is under 65	1038	699
% of above households where main applicant is in work	45%	40%
% of above households where at least one household member is in work	49%	47%

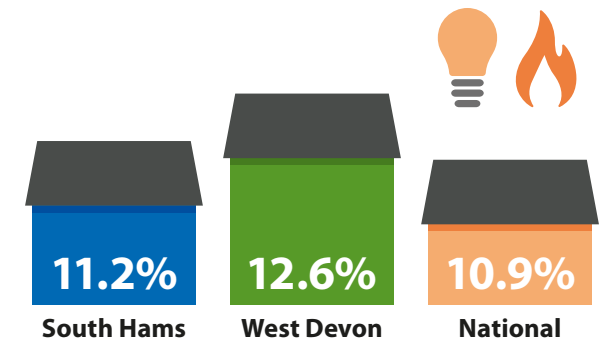




On average, over the last 5 years, South Hams and West Devon nominated 400 households from the Housing Register to housing association homes per annum. (*Devon Home Choice*).



Over the past 2 years, The tenants Incentive scheme has supported 16 households in South Hams and 5 households in West Devon to downsize to smaller accommodation. This has resulted in those larger size social housing properties becoming available for use by families who need them, via the housing register.



Levels of fuel poverty in the District and Borough are above the national average, affecting occupants of existing housing stock. The national average proportion of households in fuel poverty in 2017 was 10.9% compared to West Devon 12.6% and South Hams 11.2%.

Private Rentals	Average Rental Per Month	Max Local Housing Allowance - renting from a private landlord	Average Rental Per Month	Max Local Housing Allowance - renting from a private landlord
1 bed	£538	£449	£468	£449
2 bed	£650	£599	£595	£585
3 bed	£825	£730	£750	£695
4+ bed	£1,120	£899	£995	£850

The local rented housing market has become increasingly expensive, including the social housing sector, and the proportion of net income required to cover housing costs for low income households has increased.



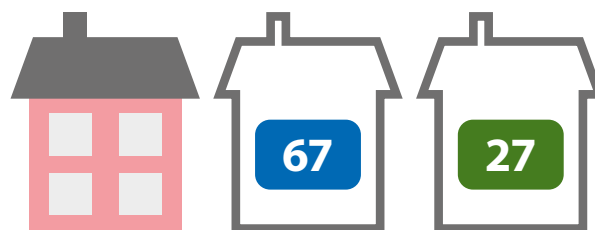
To reduce fuel poverty the Council has been active in ECO funding and Warm Front funding as part of the Central government's Energy Company Obligation scheme. It successfully brought in over £1.2 million in SH and WD in 2019/20.



◆ The ability of a person to remain healthy in their own home is greatly improved by the provision of a disabled facilities grant (DFG). 75 DFGs were made in West Devon and 104 in SHDC in 2019/20.



◆ In 2019/20 228 Households in West Devon saw their homelessness prevented following an intervention from the Council. This was 348 households in South Hams.



◆ In 2019 there were 67 properties identified as being long term empty properties in South Hams and 27 in West Devon. This is 0.14% of the total housing stock in South Hams and 0.10% of the total housing stock in West Devon.



◆ The Councils are reimbursed for their Housing Benefit expenditure by central Government. This figure for 2019/20 includes all tenure types i.e. social housing, supported housing and private rented sector housing.



# Better Homes, Better Lives

## Our Themes



### Housing for Place

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



### Housing for People

Ensure the best use and improved quality of existing housing



Reducing our Carbon Footprint and increasing Biodiversity



Working with partners



Easy access to advice and assistance



Making best use of the evidence



## Theme 1



# Housing for Place

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

Under this theme we have three headline priorities:

### Place Priority 1

Promote balanced and sustainable communities

### Place Priority 2

Ensuring that homes support the health and wellbeing of the area



## Place Priority 1: Promote Balanced and Sustainable communities

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

### How we will deliver

- Use strategic planning policy to ensure sustainable housing growth.
  - ➔ Through the JLP deliver 7,000 high quality, sustainable and affordable housing during the lifetime of the plan across South Hams and West Devon.
  - ➔ Continue to drive the JLP affordable homes agenda.
  - ➔ Support the application of DNPA sustainable development policies that require new housing to meet identified local housing needs.
- Explore the concepts of the Council as a developer and landlord of new housing.
- Purchase land directly from landowners to support strategic housing delivery
- Support alternative ways to deliver affordable housing and manage local housing needs, such as co-operatives and community land trusts.
- Encourage provision of a wide range of housing options including social housing, managed shared accommodation and managed intermediate assured short hold private rental, part ownership and market sale.
- Work creatively with Devon County Council to provide quality specialist adapted housing and housing for people requiring support to live independently, to be managed by SeaMoor Lettings.
- Redevelop existing homeless provision in West Devon to ensure good quality accommodation for people when they need it the most.
- Build genuinely affordable high quality housing for our communities through a cost efficient standardised model.
- Achieve high quality environmental standards (for affordable housing at the right price) - utilising modern energy efficient methods of construction (modular construction, using recycled materials where possible to reduce the embodied carbon in their construction and securing new tree planting to aid carbon sequestration where possible.
- Encourage opportunities for people interested in custom build / self-build development, both within community housing schemes and wider housing delivery.
- Work creatively with RPs and Homes England and other joint venture partners to draw down investment to deliver more affordable housing including more social rented homes.
- Utilise Section 106 Affordable Housing Contributions and other funding available to the Council's in the most effective way.
- Work collaboratively with communities in the formation of Neighbourhood Plans to deliver the right development available to meet local needs.
- Actively encourage housing developments that reduce carbon footprint, fuel poverty and will be resilient to future changes in our climate.
- Ensure developments contribute to biodiversity net gain wherever possible.
- Innovate the delivery of key worker housing to meet localised need.
- Promote effective partnership working to meet the needs of Gypsy and Travellers.

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

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

### How we will deliver

- ◆ Plan for future health needs.
- ◆ Work collaboratively with providers to respond to a need for an extra care facility in West Devon.
- ◆ Ensure new affordable housing for older people adequately meets future needs (including mobility needs and issues such as dementia), in locations close to local amenities and of a design and type that is attractive to older people.
- ◆ Encourage the development of energy efficient affordable homes to reduce carbon emissions and reduce household heating costs.
- ◆ Enable wheelchair standard accommodation on new housing developments in line with adopted planning policy requirements to actively increase the stock of this type of affordable housing.
- ◆ Promote housing development to include adequate natural spaces and tree planting



## Theme 2

# Housing for People

Ensure the best use and improved quality of existing housing

Under this theme we have three headline priorities:

### Priority 1

Homes that support the Health and Wellbeing of our residents

### Priority 2

Make the best use and improve the quality of existing housing



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

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

### How we will deliver

- Promote and support energy efficiency in homes.
- Ensure the Private rented sector meets the requirements of The Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) Regulations.
- Proactively support independent living and also support people with disabilities to remain in their homes through disabled facility grants and make effective use of the better care fund.
- Optimise matching of adapted housing stock to those most in need through a Disabled Adapted Needs Panel.
- Develop a Fuel Poverty Action Plan; that will incorporate closer working with partner organisations, that Pool knowledge and resources to ensure that fuel poor residents receive support; Target wards which have higher fuel poverty rates than the regional average. Target all F & G energy performance rated properties.
- Assist self-funders of disabled adaptations to make informed choices and support them with trusted contractors at a fair price.

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

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

### How we will deliver

- Seek to expand our own in-house private lettings service Seamoor Lettings.
- Encourage long-term empty homes back into use.
- Develop proactive relationships and work collaboratively with Registered Providers for mutual benefit and to improve standards in Registered Provider housing stock.
- Embed and implement a new Tenancy Strategy to supersede the current out of date version.
- Address under occupation & overcrowding within social housing stock and by doing so reduce length of time on the housing register.
- Promote the Tenants Incentive Scheme to encourage and incentivise tenants in social housing to downsize.
- Work with our partners to seek re-development opportunities to enhance the current housing stock and to meet the needs of residents.
- Work with our Registered Provider partners to identify and improve issues in their stock.
- Work with Registered Providers to deliver low cost aids and adaptations in their housing stock to support their tenants and develop improvements in the recording and identification of adapted units within the existing affordable housing stock.

- ◆ Develop and promote an intermediate housing register specifically for key workers with supply from the private rented sector through Seamoor and property developed by the Councils.
- ◆ Monitor and actively promote high standards in the rented sector and take appropriate action where standards are not being met, to tackle disrepair, poor housing conditions and criminal landlords.
- ◆ Support and encourage new, high quality and well managed, Houses in Multiple Occupation in the local area, including offering a management service ourselves, whilst licensing all HMOs that are subject to mandatory licensing.
- ◆ Deliver Private Rented Sector Landlords' & Letting Agents' Forums and other networking opportunities for private landlords; promoting the events widely and using them to consult the Private Rented Sector on the issues that are affecting them.
- ◆ Meet the priorities of our standalone Homeless Strategy and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- ◆ Promote, deliver and review the Council's private sector renewal policy and home adaptation policy to ensure it makes a positive difference to people's lives and meeting locally identified need.
- ◆ Support Tenants and stand firm in situations where Landlords attempt retaliatory evictions.
- ◆ Work with partners to reduce anti-social behaviour in our neighbourhoods.
- ◆ Interrogate new Census data to predict future housing trends and needs.
- ◆ Regularly communicate with residents, agencies, partners and our Communities to ensure an up to date, two way, understanding of current needs and services.
- ◆ Achieve Dementia Friendly Status as a Council and work towards becoming a dementia friendly district and borough.
- ◆ Work proactively with the data available in the DHC register to identify trends and potential solution on a local and individual level.





# Resources

The Councils has had its resources severely tested during the response to Covid-19 and the downturn in income from core finance streams such as car parking and licensing.

By operating as a shared workforce on behalf of West Devon & South Hams, each Council saves around £3.9m in South Hams & £2.2m in West Devon in staffing costs. We have also reduced our workspace significantly in the last 5 years operating from a fraction of our existing offices, renting the majority of the building to tenants both in the private and public sector. Nevertheless the Council's resources are limited.

This strategy is dependent on a partnership approach to deliver outcomes for our Residents. Our priorities are not ours alone and are shared by a great number of other services such as Health, Social Care, Criminal Justice, Community Safety Partnership as well as Registered Providers, house builders and developers.

Both South Hams & West Devon have declared a climate emergency. Therefore this strategy cannot be at odds with our priorities around reducing our carbon footprint and priorities for biodiversity This will prove challenging, particularly in relation to for example fuel poverty.

In terms of delivering on the priorities of this strategy, the Housing functions for the Council are funded through a mix of council tax, Government grant funding and a rebate from the Department of Work & Pensions for Housing Benefit and additional funding for both Councils discretionary housing payment fund.

The Council maintains a Capital Programme, a community housing programme and receives developer contributions in lieu of onsite affordable housing contributions. In South Hams there is also capital receipts from former Council Property (Which was transferred to Tor Homes, now Livewest in 1999) sold through the Right to Buy to tenants who were formally tenants of the Council. Whilst this still provides income at the moment this will decrease gradually over the next few years such is the length of time since the stock transfer and number of original tenants from that time. In West Devon the agreement was different and the minimum number of properties has not yet triggered any income to the Council.

Both Councils deliver a Disabled Facility Grant (DFG) programme using allocated Better Care Funding from Devon County Council. Devon County also provide a grant to assist with the homeless prevention of 16 & 17 year olds and children leaving care.

Whilst the current funding arrangements at the moment ensures we continue to receive a flexible homeless support grant, which was the replacement funding for replaced temporary accommodation subsidy in and additional homeless prevention grant to use on measures and activity to prevent people.

The Council continues to submit bids and access funding where possible from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Homes England.

Staffing and budgetary resources required to deliver the ambitions in the Strategy will be set out in detail in the Operational Delivery Plan.

# How the Strategy was developed

This strategy was developed jointly by elected members of both South Hams and West Devon Councils, officers, local partners and stakeholders.

A draft strategy was presented for public and partner consultation in December 2020, concluding on the 1st of February 2021. The Council received 267 responses from the public and 35 from partner

organisations and changes to the strategy have been made following comments made through this process.

# Monitoring of this housing strategy

The Housing Strategy has a lifespan of 5 years.



Producing it during the covid-19 pandemic, which no doubt will have far reaching consequences into the future both economically and for health & wellbeing has proved to be challenging. New priorities may emerge and legislation may fundamentally change. However, it is likely that both Councils will want to continue the themes they seek to deliver through this strategy.

The Housing Strategy will be subject to an annual review, which seeks endorsement of our partners and our Elected Members. It is anticipated that we will make our updated delivery plan available annually in the spring with a progress report setting out our key challenges for the forthcoming year and achievements of the last.

# Annual Delivery Plan



This strategy document highlights the priorities for both Councils and high level plans to deliver them.

An operational delivery plan will be developed annually with SMART (Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely) actions which will be regularly monitored and reviewed.

It is anticipated that there will be a requirement to be flexible because of the current unprecedented times and the strategy, as a live document will be subject to change over its lifespan.

## Glossary

Term	Description
<b>Affordable Housing</b>	<p>Affordable housing includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing (including Low Cost Home Ownership options), provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Affordable rented housing - Rented housing let by Registered Providers to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent.</li> <li>◆ Intermediate rented housing - Housing at prices and rents above those of social rent but below market price or rents.</li> </ul>

Term	Description
<b>Affordable Housing - continued</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Social rented housing - Rented housing owned and managed by Local Authorities and Registered Providers for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime.</li> </ul>
<b>Allocations policy</b>	<p>The way in which homes owned by the local authority and registered providers are let. The scheme sets out who will be prioritised for these homes and how they will be allocated.</p>
<b>Balanced community</b>	<p>A community in which the mix of housing types and tenures is appropriate to the size, character and function of the area and will therefore be different depending on the community in question.</p>



Term	Description
<b>Category 1 Hazard</b>	Housing Standards - A category 1 hazard is a hazard that poses a serious threat to the health or safety of people living in or visiting a home. Examples can include a leaking roof, mould on the walls / ceilings, excess cold, exposed wiring or overloaded electrical sockets, a dangerous or broken boiler etc. There is a scoring system to assess whether any hazard is 'Category 1'. Councils must take action to remove or reduce Category 1 hazards.
<b>Community Land Trust</b>	Community Land Trusts are a form of community-led housing, set up and run by ordinary people to develop and manage homes as well as other assets. CLTs act as long-term stewards of housing, ensuring that it remains genuinely affordable, based on what people actually earn in their area, not just for now but for every future occupier (National Community Land Trust Network).
<b>Custom build</b>	Custom build homes are where an individual or a group works with a developer to help deliver a home. The developer may help to find a plot, manage the construction and arrange the finance for the new home. This is more of a hands-off approach compared to self-build but the home will be tailored to match the individuals/groups requirements.
<b>Devon Homechoice</b>	The Council's Allocations Scheme
<b>Decent Homes Standard</b>	Quality standard for public sector housing designed to ensure minimum Standards for kitchens, bathrooms, heating and general repair.
<b>Empty Home (long term)</b>	A home that has been unoccupied for more than six months.

Term	Description
<b>Fixed term and flexible tenancies</b>	New types of tenancies for social or affordable housing which were introduced from April 2012 and which landlords have the option to use instead of the secure tenancies which have traditionally been used in the sector. Where a secure tenancy lasts indefinitely, a fixed term or flexible tenancy will be reviewed after a set period of time and may not be renewed.
<b>Fuel poverty</b>	Fuel poverty in England is measured using the Low Income High Costs (LIHC) indicator. Under the LIHC indicator, a household is considered to be fuel poor if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ They have required fuel costs that are above the average (the national median level), and</li> <li>◆ Were they to spend that amount they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line</li> </ul>
<b>Help to Buy</b>	A government scheme offering mortgage guarantees or equity loans for people who want to buy a home.
<b>Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)</b>	A government agency with responsibility for housing and regeneration including providing investment for new housing development and acting as the regulator for social housing providers in England.
<b>Homes England</b>	Homes England is the non-departmental public body that funds new affordable housing in England. It was founded on 1 January 2018 to replace the Homes and Communities Agency.
<b>Joint Ventures</b>	Councils may partner with other stakeholders to work together both financially and strategically in a project. This could result in the scheme being owned and managed with an ongoing interest in the final project. Joint ventures, allow local authorities to have a higher input into the end result for our communities.

Term	Description
<b>Local Housing Allowance</b>	The type of Housing Benefit paid to people who rent their home from a private landlord. The rate is calculated based on how many bedrooms the household needs. It does not apply to people renting from a registered provider.
<b>Local Plan</b>	The key document setting out the strategic policies upon which local planning decisions will be based with regard to new housing, community facilities, shops and employment.
<b>New Homes Bonus</b>	A grant paid to councils by the government for increasing the number of homes in their areas, including new builds, conversions and long-term empty properties which have been brought back into use.
<b>Registered Provider</b>	A term used to refer to any Registered Provider of Social Housing, previously known as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). The local authority, housing associations and
<b>Rough sleepers</b>	Homeless people who do not have anywhere to spend the night and end up sleeping rough. This could include urban streets, car parks etc., but in Devon also includes more remote and rural areas where people are less likely to be disturbed.
<b>SHMNA – Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment</b>	The Government’s National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) requires each Local Authority to undertake a SHMNA as part of the evidence base required to inform Local Plans. A SHMNA seeks to assess the long term need and affordability of housing in the area, and is based on demographic and economic trends. The latest SHMA for South Hams and West was published in 2017.
<b>SHWD</b>	South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council

Term	Description
<b>Single-room rate entitlement</b>	The rate of Local Housing Allowance for single people with no dependents under the age of 35 who live in the private rented sector. It is based on the cost of renting a room in a shared house.
<b>Social housing</b>	A general term used to refer to any housing that is rented from the local authority, a housing association or other registered provider at a social or affordable rent.
<b>Universal Credit</b>	A new benefit being introduced to replace Jobseeker’s Allowance; Employment and Support Allowance; Income Support; Housing Benefit and Tax Credits.
<b>Welfare reform</b>	A term used to refer to a series of changes to the benefit system introduced by the government since 2012 including high profile changes such as the ‘bedroom tax’ and Universal Credit among many others.





***Better Homes,  
Better Lives***



South Hams  
District Council

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



West Devon  
Borough Council

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