South Norfolk Housing Strategy 2027 - 2030

1. Introduction

Housing plays a central role in shaping the quality of life for South Norfolk residents, affecting their health, wellbeing, stability, and access to economic opportunities. Through this strategy, the Council will increase the supply of appropriate homes, improve the quality of existing housing, and ensure that more residents can live safely, remain independent, and sustain their tenancies.

2. Why South Norfolk needs a Housing Strategy now

South Norfolk's housing system is facing growing pressure, and the evidence shows that these challenges are not short-term but structural, long-standing, and becoming more significant. The mix of homes in the district is heavily skewed towards larger properties, particularly three- and four-bedroom houses, bungalows, and detached homes. While this may reflect demand for larger homes, it also highlights a lack of smaller and more affordable options. These challenges are further intensified by the district's rural nature, where less housing choice and limited infrastructure can make it harder to meet local needs, particularly for smaller and more affordable homes.

This is especially evident in one-bedroom homes. Over a three-year period, they accounted for 34% of new social rent homes. Although this delivered 260 new social rent properties, it still falls short of demand, with an estimated 600 households on the housing register needing this type of home. Single people account for 92% of that demand, reflecting a longer-term shift towards smaller household sizes across the housing market.

As a result, many single adults, now the fastest growing group approaching the Council for housing support are struggling to find homes that are both suitable and affordable. Last year 75 (34%) of one-bedroom social rent homes were let to households in Temporary Accommodation.

At the same time, housing pressures are being intensified by rising homelessness. Presentations have increased by 67% over the past three years, with domestic abuse and the ending of private tenancies identified as the main reasons for people losing their homes in 2025/26. Access to the private rented sector is also becoming more difficult. Since 2015, private rents have risen by around 63%, while Local Housing Allowance rates have not kept pace and now cover significantly less than actual market rents. This has created a widening affordability gap, particularly for lower-income households.

Alongside this, South Norfolk's population is ageing more quickly than the national average. Nearly 15% of households are made up of single older people, many of whom are living in homes that are either under-occupied or expensive to heat. This shift has important implications for health and independence, as well as increasing the need for homes that are accessible and can be adapted as people's needs change.

Issues with existing housing stock are adding to these pressures. Around half of homes have energy performance ratings below EPC C, meaning they do not meet expected energy efficiency standards. In the private rented sector, it is estimated that between 20- 24% of homes are non-decent. In addition, while long-term empty homes make up a relatively small proportion of the overall stock, they still represent a missed opportunity at a time when housing need and homelessness are rising.

Provision of supported housing is also becoming more uncertain, due to changes in legislation and funding, despite clear evidence that demand for this type of accommodation is increasing.

Taken together, this evidence presents a clear picture: the current housing system is not keeping pace with the changing needs of South Norfolk's residents. Without intervention, pressures on affordability, homelessness, health, and independence are likely to continue to grow.

This strategy aims to make a meaningful and lasting difference for people living in South Norfolk, both now and in the future. It will provide a strong and considered framework that future local authorities can build on with clarity and confidence.

3. Vision and Purpose

The South Norfolk Council Plan 2024 - 2028 aims to enhance quality of life by supporting strong communities, growing a prosperous economy, protecting the environment, and ensuring the district has the infrastructure, services and homes needed to meet current and future needs. It recognises the importance of ensuring the district has the homes needed to support residents, communities and sustainable growth. This Housing Strategy supports those aims by identifying the priorities and actions needed to help achieve it.

Our vision is to enable residents to have access to a home which is safe, affordable, and energy efficient. Leading to thriving, inclusive communities that promote overall wellbeing.

To deliver this vision, we will focus on three strategic themes, creating a housing system that is responsive, fair, sustainable and resilient, and guided by the following five core strategic priorities:

1) Establishing strong evidence-driven policy foundations.
2) Provide a clear response to the major pressures in South Norfolk's housing system, including affordability, homelessness, ageing population and housing quality.
3) Actively seek and capitalise on funding opportunities that address the challenges of the mismatch of housing need and demand.
4) Set out a coherent and prioritised programme of actions that deliver measurable improvement.
5) Ensure that planning, housing, community services, and health work in alignment.

4. National Policy and Regulatory Drivers

This strategy has been developed in a period of significant national reform, with major policy shifts that will reshape how local authorities deliver housing, prevention and place-based services. The following emerging and confirmed government policies are key drivers:

- Devolution – involves the proposed creation of Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral Combined Authority. Granting powers and funding across strategic housing, economic development, environment, health, and public safety.

- Renters Rights Act – abolished Section 21 no fault evictions, strengthens enforcement duties and requirements on councils to protect renters. Includes a revised and strengthened Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

- Planning and Infrastructure Act – reforms planning processes, emphasises faster delivery, clean energy infrastructure, and significant increases in national housing supply.

- National Plan to End Homelessness – sets out new prevention expectations, a legal Duty to Collaborate, increased accountability, and national goals including halving long-term rough sleeping by 2029/30.

- Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act – introduces local authority duties to undertake Supported Housing Needs Assessments, implement licensing, and produce a Supported Housing Strategy.

- Consultation on National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Reforms – changes to calculating housing need, requirements for accessible homes, and updated expectations for affordable housing delivery.

- Roadmap for Section 106 Delivery in England – clarifies national expectations for negotiations and strengthens the emphasis on securing affordable homes.

- Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Policy Direction – continued focus on early intervention, independence and alignment with health and care outcomes.

Together, these policy drivers shape South Norfolk's approach and ensure the strategy is grounded in statutory change and aligned with national direction.

5. The Priority Themes

The strategy is built around three clear areas of focus:

- Theme One: Enabling the right homes in the right places,
- Theme Two: Improving the quality, standard, and sustainability of existing homes

- Theme Three: Residents live safe, healthy, and independent lives in homes that meet their needs.

Why these themes matter

Together, these themes take a practical and balanced approach to tackling housing challenges by looking at how homes are planned, built, and lived in.

They aim to improve people's quality of life, ease pressure on public services, and deliver better housing outcomes, through higher quality homes, reduced inequality, improved health and independence, and stronger, more sustainable communities, while also supporting wider priorities such as economic growth.

Priority Theme One

Enabling the Right Homes in the Right Places

This theme is centred on delivering a housing supply that reflects the real needs of communities, supports sustainable growth, and contributes to high-quality place-making.

In South Norfolk the existing housing stock is largely made up of larger properties, such as detached houses and bungalows, many of which are occupied by older households who may be less likely to downsize. At the same time, first-time buyers are increasingly purchasing larger homes.

Affordability pressures across the private rented sector, home ownership, and social housing limit people's ability to move, particularly for single person households, placing additional strain on households and contributing to rising levels of homelessness.

Through this theme, actions will focus on increasing the supply of high-quality homes across a range of sizes, tenures, and price points. This will help to tackle housing inequality and improve people's everyday lives. There will be a particular emphasis on meeting affordable housing needs in rural areas. Overall, new housing will support the development of balanced, inclusive communities where people of all ages and backgrounds feel settled, supported, and able to thrive.

Key Strategic Actions

We will:

1. **Tackle Housing Supply and Affordability**
   Address housing supply pressures by supporting the delivery of homes that meet identified needs, with a particular focus on increasing the availability of affordable housing.

2. **Enable Housing Delivery Through Partnership**
   Act as a facilitator and convenor, working proactively with registered providers, private developers, and other partners to unlock housing delivery and maximise outcomes.

3. **Expand Housing Choice and Tenure Mix**
   Promote a diverse range of tenures and housing types to meet different affordability levels, household sizes, and aspirations, including supporting rural housing supply.

4. **Shaping Future Communities**
   Continue to explore and plan for a potential new settlement in Greater Norwich to help deliver homes, infrastructure, and thriving communities for future generations.

These actions directly respond to the evidenced need to **align supply and demand in the market**.

Measuring success

- Local Outcomes Framework – *Housing Supply* – (metrics to be confirmed).
- Affordable homes delivered by tenure type (social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership, etc.)
- % of identified housing need met (e.g. against Local Plan / Housing Needs Assessment/Neighbourhood Plans)
- Proportion of new homes meeting different household sizes as per locally identified need
- Number of rural housing schemes delivered
- Evidence of unmet need reduced for specific household groups

Priority Theme Two

Improving the quality, standard and sustainability of existing homes

This theme recognises that existing homes represent the largest and most important resource for meeting the needs of residents and communities.

In South Norfolk, a significant number of homes are not performing well in terms of energy efficiency or overall condition. Poor-quality housing can have serious consequences for residents, contributing to ill health, fuel poverty, and avoidable safety risks. It also places additional and unnecessary pressure on health services, social care, and other public services.

Current housing stock condition analysis highlights several key challenges:

- Homes in the private rented sector are generally of the poorest quality, with higher levels of non-decency and damp.
- Around half of all homes (50%) are rated EPC D–G, meaning higher energy use and increased running costs for residents.
- Fuel poverty affects 9.9% of households, predominantly in rural areas impacting affordability and wellbeing.
- As of June 2026, there were 177 homes classed as very long-term empty.

Key Strategic Actions

We will:

1. **Raise Housing Quality Across All Tenures**
   Improve the condition and quality of homes across social, privately rented, and owner-occupied sectors to reduce health risks and improve living standards.

2. **Strengthen Standards and Regulatory Compliance**
   Drive up housing standards by supporting and enforcing requirements such as the Renters' Rights Act and Awaab's Law.

3. **Promote Sustainable, Energy Efficient Homes**
   Support sustainability through energy efficiency, low carbon design, and bringing empty homes back into use, reducing environmental impact and running costs.

4. **Ensure the effective use of existing affordable housing**
   Working with Registered Providers to ensure that existing affordable housing is effectively meeting the needs of existing tenants and those in housing need

Improving the quality and sustainability of existing homes will lead to **better health outcomes, lower household costs, and greater independence for residents**. Ensuring that current housing stock is safe, efficient, and fit for purpose is therefore essential to achieving these outcomes. Without this, more residents, particularly older and vulnerable people are likely to struggle to live safely and independently, and inequalities between households and communities will continue to widen.

Measuring success

- Local Outcomes Framework – Housing Quality and Safety metrics
  i. Percentage of rental housing in the local authority area deemed decent
  ii. Percentage of local authority-owned social housing deemed decent
  iii. Percentage of homes rated EPC C and above
  iv. Private rental sector enforcement (placeholder metric)
- % of homes meeting the Decent Homes Standard
- Number of homes improved through interventions
- Number of homes improved through energy efficiency measures
- Number of empty homes brought back into use
- Estimated carbon emissions reduction from housing interventions
- Average household energy cost savings achieved through interventions

Priority Theme Three

Residents live safe, healthy, and independent lives in homes that meet their needs.

This theme recognises that a suitable home is about more than just housing, it underpins good health, personal independence, and a strong sense of community connection.

South Norfolk has an older-than-average population, with many residents requiring support to live independently or move between different types of accommodation. At the same time, support needs are increasing across all age groups. However, supported

housing provision remains fragmented, and not all needs are currently being met. The delivery of supported housing is also being affected by rising costs for providers and reductions in funding for support providers. South Norfolk will take a corporate approach to supported accommodation, recognising its important role in preventing homelessness, enabling independence and reducing demand on public services, while also acknowledging the funding challenges facing the sector. The Council will work closely with providers and partners to support sustainable, high-quality provision, ensuring transparent and appropriate funding arrangements, service charges and support models that remain financially sustainable in the long term.

Evidence shows that South Norfolk is facing a number of key challenges:

- A rapidly ageing population, above national averages
- Growing numbers of adults with complex needs and support requirements to sustain their homes
- Gaps in the supply and type of supported housing
- A projected requirement for 3,406 adapted homes and 1,078 wheelchair-accessible homes by 2036

Together, these factors highlight a shortage of suitable, accessible, specialist, and transitional housing across the district.

Through this theme, actions will focus on increasing the availability of fit-for-purpose homes, strengthening support for residents with additional needs, and enabling more people to live safely and independently for longer. This will help to reduce inequalities and ease pressure on health, care, and other public services.

Key Strategic Actions

We will:

1. **Promote Homes that Support Health and Independence**
   Recognise housing as the foundation for good health, independence, and community connection. Working in partnership to embed housing as a core part of the health and care system. Ensuring a coordinated, preventative and person-centered approach. Create opportunities for older residents to access housing that better suits their current and future needs.

2. **Deliver Accessible and Adaptable Housing**
   Homes are accessible, adaptable, and responsive to people's changing needs, supporting residents at different stages of life.

3. **Provide Targeted Housing Support for People with Specific Needs**
   Ensuring appropriate housing solutions and support for older people, people with disabilities, and vulnerable or marginalised groups through supported housing, Disabled Facilities Grants, and Sanctuary Schemes. Work with partners to support the sustainability and availability of supported housing.

4. **Enable Long Term Independence and Reduce Pressure on Services**
   Support people to live safely and independently in their own homes for longer, improving outcomes for individuals and families while reducing demand on public services.

These actions will help to meet evidenced **need for accessible and supported homes**. This will improve housing options for households, ensure they can live well independently and reduce homelessness, hospital discharge pressures, and costs across social care, health and housing.

Measuring success

- Proportion of planning approvals comprising homes to be built to Building Regulation M4(2) and M4(3) standards.
- Number of new homes built to national optional Building Regulation standard for adaptable homes (M4(2)).
- Number of new homes built to Building Regulation M4(3) standard.
- Number of supported housing units available and occupied
- Disabled Facilities Grants completed and average delivery time
- Number of households supported through sanctuary schemes
- Local Outcomes Framework – Multiple Disadvantage Metrics
  i. Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved for households experiencing multiple disadvantage (placeholder metric)

6. Guiding Our Approach

A Modern, Evidence-Led Housing System

Effective planning and decision-making will be underpinned by strong, real-time intelligence through the Housing Intelligence Hub. This will enable the Council and its partners to respond quickly to changing needs.

Through the Housing Intelligence Hub, South Norfolk will move from fragmented data to a single, consistent evidence base that supports better outcomes. This will enable the Council to:

- Respond more effectively to rapidly changing housing needs, including increasing single-person households and affordability pressures
- Align housing supply more closely with demand by size, type, and location
- Actively monitor and improve standards in the Private Rented Sector
- Provide transparent, system-wide insight to support decision-making

While the Housing Strategy Evidence Base provides a strong foundation, the key outcome of this approach is a shift from static evidence to continuous, real-time insight. This will allow housing need, delivery, stock condition, homelessness, and market trends to be actively monitored and responded to as they evolve.

The Housing Intelligence Hub will bring together data from planning, housing delivery, homelessness, environmental health, and benefits to:

- Enable earlier intervention and prevention
- Target resources and commissioning more effectively
- Strengthen negotiation and delivery through the planning system
- Provide clear, measurable progress against the Action Plan

Overall, this approach will support more informed decisions, faster responses, and improved housing outcomes for residents.

Monitoring and Review

A structured monitoring and review framework will ensure the strategy remains responsive, effective, and focused on delivering measurable outcomes.

Success will be clearly defined through the Action Plan, with progress tracked using live data from across housing, planning, benefits, housing standards, and supported housing services. This will ensure that delivery remains on track and responsive to emerging pressures.

Annual review

The Action Plan and performance indicators will be reviewed annually, supported by Power BI dashboards providing up-to-date intelligence. This will enable timely adjustments to priorities and interventions, ensuring continued progress toward intended outcomes.

Transparent reporting

Regular reporting to senior leaders, members and key partners will ensure accountability, promote shared ownership, and support early identification and resolution of issues.

This approach will ensure the strategy remains a living, adaptive framework, capable of responding to change and consistently driving improved outcomes.

7. Conclusion

This strategy provides a strengthened framework for improving housing outcomes across South Norfolk. Its delivery will result in a housing system that is more responsive, better aligned to need, and more effective in supporting residents.

By combining robust evidence, targeted action, and strong partnerships, the Council will:

- Improve access to suitable, high-quality housing
- Reduce inequalities across communities
- Ease pressure on health, care, and public services
- Support residents to live healthy, independent, and stable lives

Together, these outcomes will contribute to more resilient communities and a housing system that meets both current and future needs.