

Arun District Council: Draft Housing Strategy
Public consultation findings

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Introduction

This report summarises the findings from public consultation on the draft Housing Strategy for Arun District Council. The consultation period ran between July 10th and August 4th, 2024, and included a survey alongside a briefing for members as well as two public drop-in sessions.

Both public drop-in sessions were poorly attended, with only one individual present at each session. This attendee shared concerns and feedback on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping services in the district and supported the need for new affordable housing in their local area.

This report presents the overall findings of a survey conducted to gauge the level of agreement among residents and local stakeholders with the priorities and visions outlined in the draft Housing Strategy 2024-29. The survey aimed to understand community and stakeholder perspectives on the goals and steps the council will take to manage and improve the supply and quality of housing in the district.

By capturing a wide range of opinions and suggestions, this report aims to inform and refine the strategic approach, ensuring it aligns with the needs and expectations of the community and stakeholders in the district.

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Survey findings:

The survey received a total of 47 responses from 38 residents and 9 stakeholder representatives. Stakeholder organisations included:

- Chichester District Council
- Aldingbourne, Barnham & Eastergate (ABE) Community Land Trust
- Arun District Council
- Angmering Community Land Trust
- Arun & Chichester Citizens Advice
- Southern Housing
- Vistry Group
- West Sussex County Council
- Action in Rural Sussex

The survey findings underscore broad support for the draft Housing Strategy and agree with the actions attributed to the priorities, however, some actions may need greater clarification. Key points arising from the survey include:

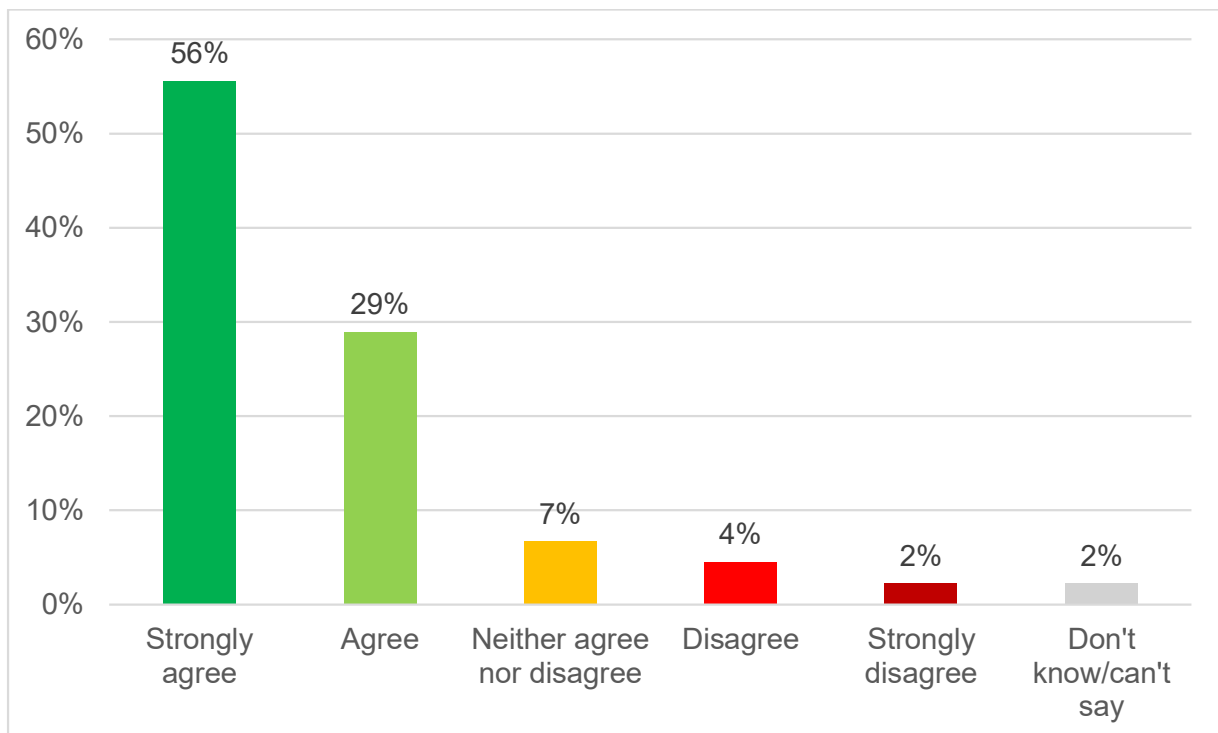
- Greater need for diverse housing options catering to various demographics.
- Concerns about inadequate infrastructure to support new developments.
- Make best use of existing homes including decreasing the number of empty homes.
- Development to limit the impact on green spaces and agricultural land.
- Planning policies are key to providing support to Community Land Trusts.
- An increased supply of affordable homes.
- Areas within the district have encountered problems related to flooding, sewers, and water management.
- Accessible housing for people with disabilities is required.
- Concerns about costs, quality, and security in the private rental sector.

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A. Our Vision

“Our vision is for Arun’s residents to have access to the right homes in the right places which enable them to live a fulfilling life and contribute to the future growth and sustainability of the district.”

To what extent do you agree with this vision for Arun?



The vision received substantial support, with 85% of respondents either strongly agreeing (56%) or agreeing (29%). A minority expressed dissent, with 4% disagreeing and 2% strongly disagreeing. The remaining respondents were neutral (7%) or unsure (2%). This indicates broad approval but highlights the need for addressing concerns and uncertainties.

Explanatory comments:

Respondents to the survey made a range of other comments in their feedback to the vision statement, most of which are addressed in the priority areas of the strategy.

This included comments about increasing the availability of affordable housing options locally, especially council homes; providing housing options which enable younger people to

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remain living close to families and the benefits this has for care networks; the crucial role of key infrastructure (i.e. doctors, dentists, nurseries, schools) in supporting new housing development; the importance of protecting green spaces and agricultural land from development; the prospect of bringing empty homes/buildings back into use; and Council support for Community Land Trusts.

There were several comments specifically about the wording of the vision. This included one respondent who was uncomfortable with the word 'growth', one respondent suggesting the term 'sustainability' should be considered in terms of social, economic and environmental aspects, and another respondent suggesting 'environmental quality' be explicitly referenced as part of the vision. Several respondents also expressed strong support for the vision as drafted.

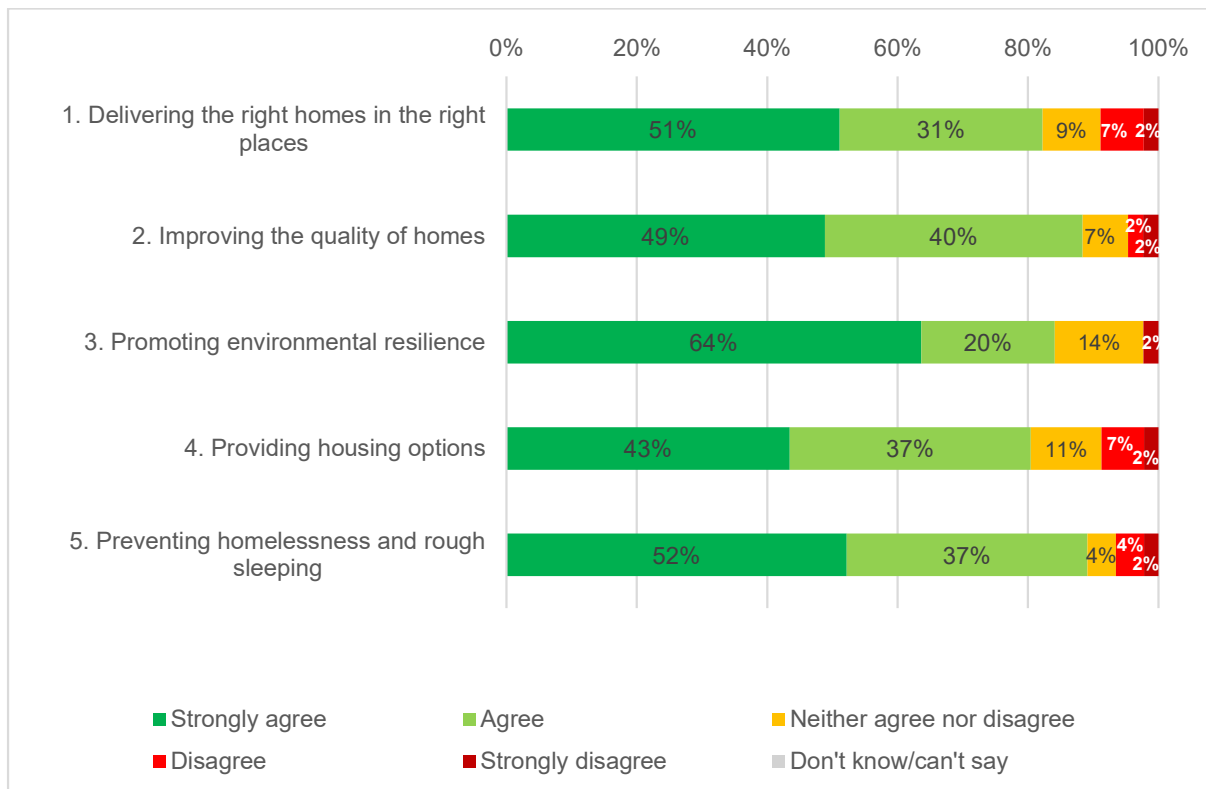
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B. Housing priorities

The following five priorities were identified for the housing strategy:

- to deliver the right homes in the right places.
- to improve the quality of homes.
- to promote environmental resilience.
- to provide housing options.
- to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.

To what extent do you agree that these are the right priorities for Arun?



Most respondents support all five strategic priorities, with the highest strong agreement for promoting environmental resilience (64% strongly agree), followed by preventing homelessness and rough sleeping (52% strongly agree). Disagreement remains low across all priorities, indicating an overall positive reception.

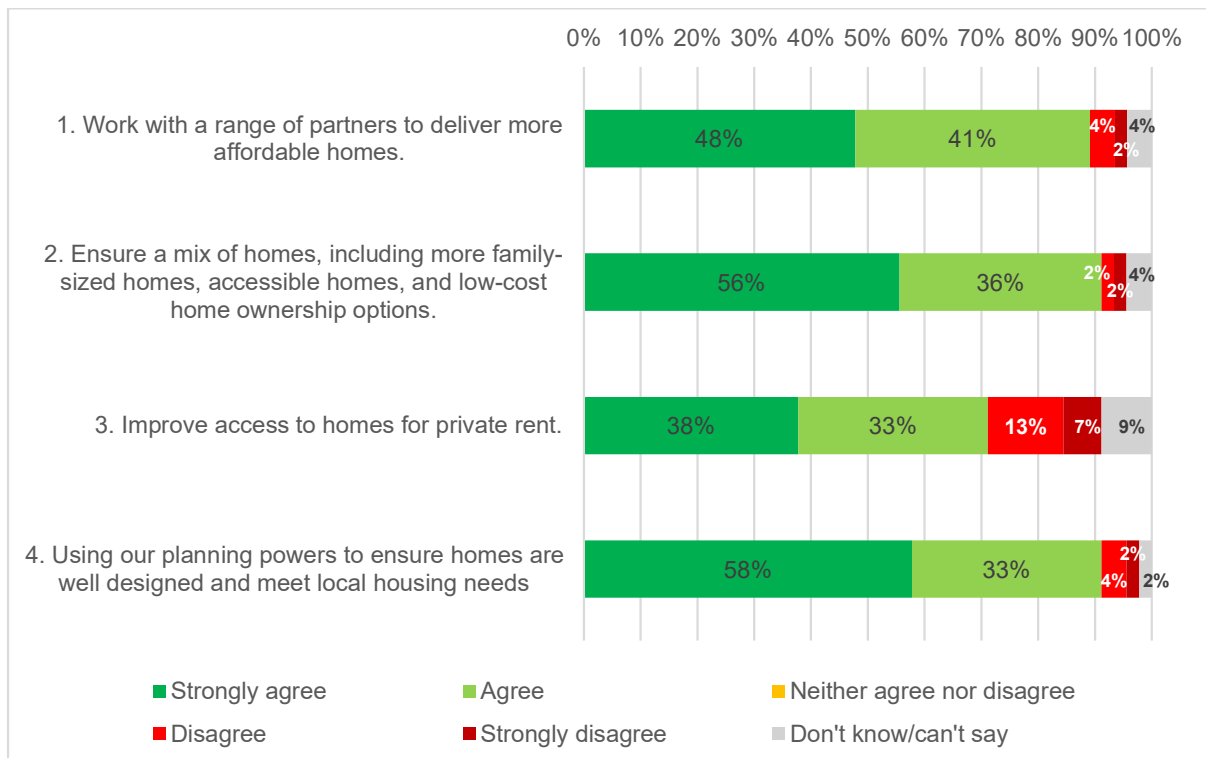
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C. Actions

As part of their commitment to the five priorities, a series of possible actions the council might wish to take to achieve their goals has been set out. Respondents were asked to indicate how far they agree with each of these actions to be in relation to the priorities in the strategy.

i. Delivering the right homes in the right places

Most respondents “strongly agree” or “agree” with the proposed actions relating to delivering the right homes in the right places, showing broad support for the proposed actions. The highest level of agreement is for the council to use its planning powers to ensure homes are well designed and meet local housing needs followed closely by the need to ensure a mix of homes. The action receiving the lowest agreement related to improving access to homes for private rent.



Explanatory comments

Respondents raised several issues in their feedback on this priority, most of which related to the affordability and type of homes, use of land and suitability of new developments.

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Several commentators expressed the need to protect agricultural land and green spaces, with suggestions that it only be built on as a last resort. There were also several remarks about the need to ensure adequate infrastructure and concerns about the supposedly unsustainable density of development in particular areas (e.g. Barnham).

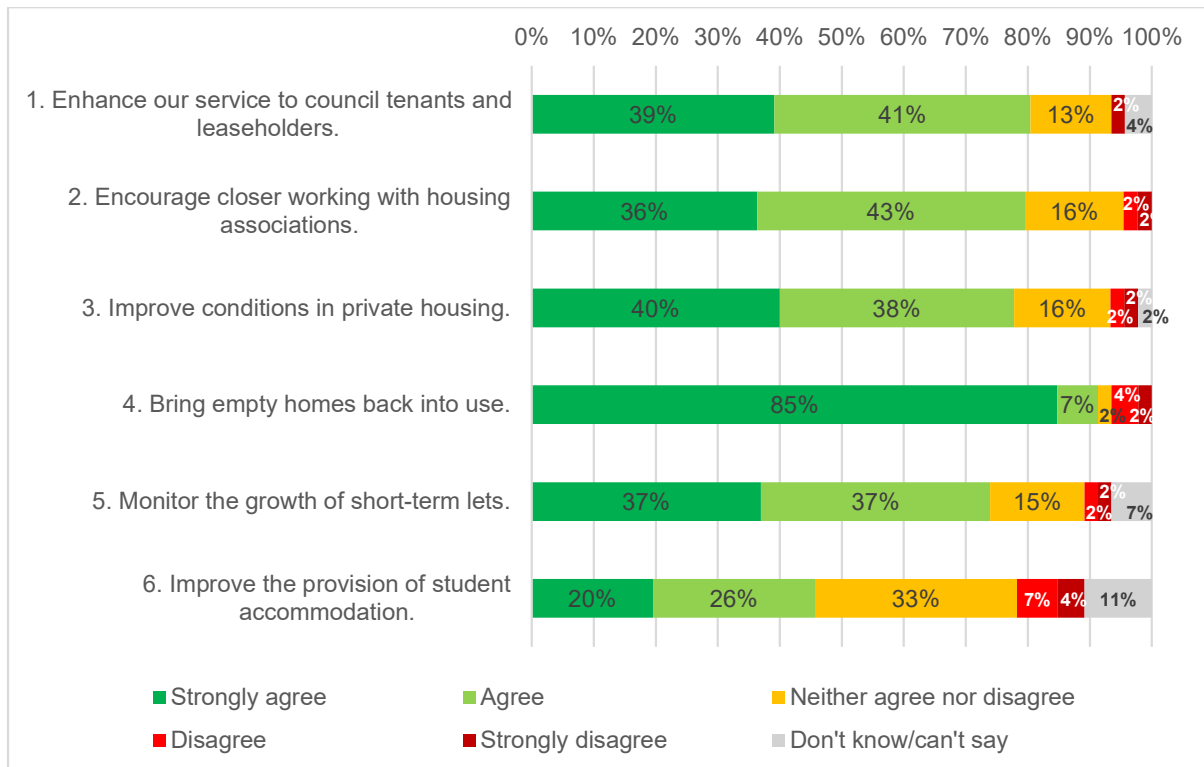
The affordability and type of housing being built were raised as an issue. The expense of new homes was raised as an issue as well as the need for more social housing options, highlighting the public perception that current affordable homes are not truly affordable. Comments also suggested that there were sites in Arun where developers have apparently avoided delivering affordable homes. There is a call for the council to take more control over developments to prevent “profit-driven decisions” by private developers and to ensure supporting services and infrastructure are developed alongside housing. Additionally, there is a strong call for more one or two-bedroom homes to accommodate single people and those looking to downsize, particularly in social housing.

Overall, the comments highlight a strong desire for balanced, well-planned housing development that meets local needs while protecting the environment and ensuring adequate infrastructure.

ii. Improving the quality of homes

Overall, there is strong agreement across all proposed actions. The highest support is for bringing empty homes back into use. The priority which received the lowest levels of support was improving the provision of student accommodation. Disagreement with this priority was nonetheless still low, at 11% (7% disagree and 4% strongly disagree), whilst neutral (33%) and unsure (11%) responses accounted for 44% of the overall responses. This indicates that while there is a sufficient amount of uncertainty among respondents, however, they are not opposed to the idea. This may also be due to the lack of responses from those who fit into this demographic (see Survey Demographics for more information).

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Explanatory comments

Comments on this priority emphasise the importance of using better quality materials for repairs to prevent recurring issues and reduce long-term costs, such as replacing door handles with higher quality options, which ultimately would save the council money.

Other comments suggest enforcing higher standards for both private and social housing. A specific concern raised is the alleged lack of meaningful inspections for privately rented houses of multiple occupancy (specifically mentioned on Bayford Road), which the respondent understands to often have issues such as damp and unhealthy living conditions. Similar comments also note that tenants are sometimes reluctant to complain due to fear of eviction.

Respondents make links between other priority actions such as “promoting environmental resilience” and “using our planning powers to ensure homes are well designed and meet local housing needs” which are relevant to the quality of homes. Other comments propose expanding the wording of the action “improve the conditions of private housing” to include local authority and housing association housing.

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Once again, adequately supportive infrastructure is mentioned. This is in relation to the need for adequate waste systems especially in areas with new developments to maintain the quality of housing.

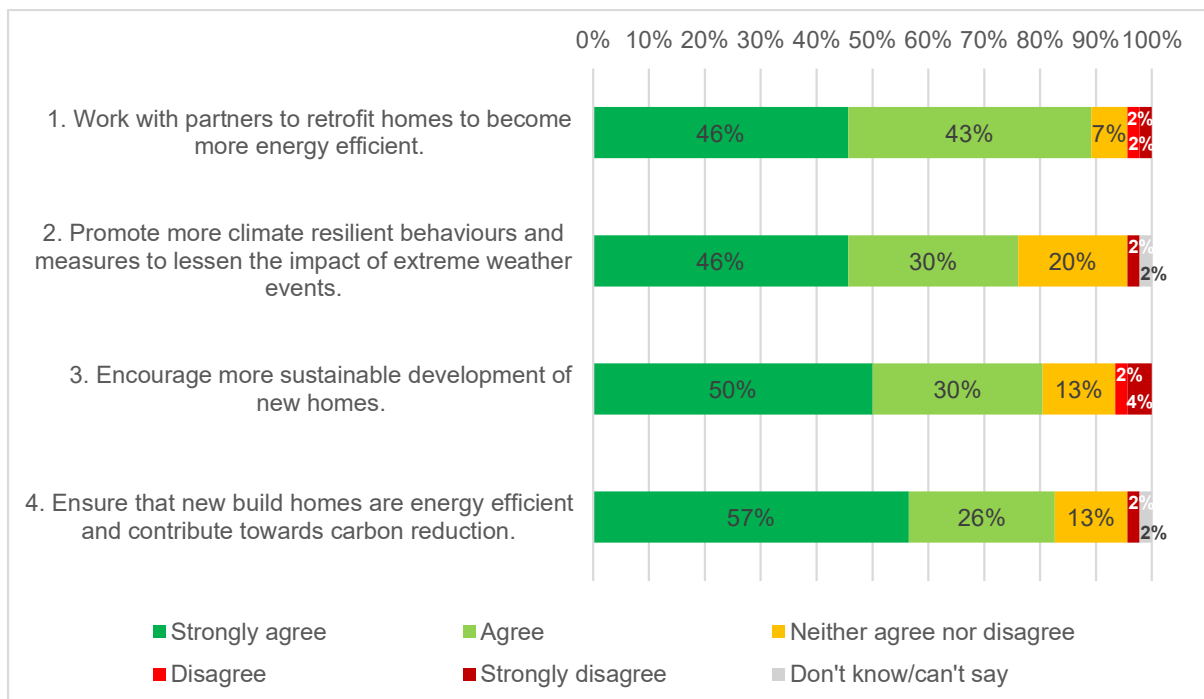
Respondents shared ideas including capping income limits for social housing; house-sharing options for older people to combat loneliness and alleviate isolation, which is detrimental to their health and well-being; and better use of existing housing stock.

Additionally, respondents raised concerns about the impact of short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb on local communities.

Overall, respondents largely agree with the priority of improving the quality of homes and the proposed actions.

iii. Promoting environmental resilience

All proposed actions related to promoting environmental resilience received strong support, with most respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing. Ensuring newly built homes are energy efficient and contribute towards carbon reduction was seen as a key action, receiving 83% overall agreement as well as working with partners to retrofit homes to become more energy efficient, which received 89% agreement overall.



Explanatory comments

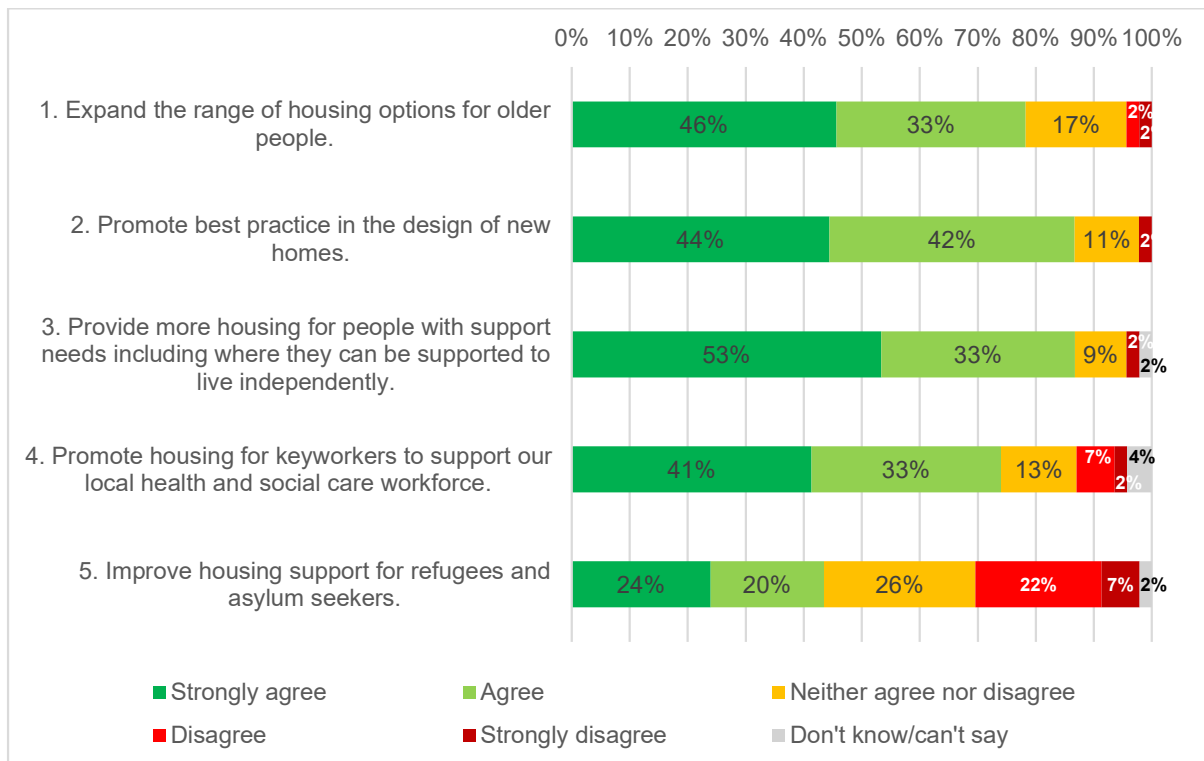
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Several comments agree with the priority to promote environmental resilience with suggestions to integrate existing trees into developments and use swift bricks in new builds to support bird population.

Effective water management and drainage solutions, particularly in flood-prone areas. Littlehampton and Clymping and the A259 were given as examples. Similarly, suggestions were made that construction should be avoided on agricultural land and flood plains to prevent flooding issues, ensuring that new developments are mindful of the changing climate during the planning process. There was mention of including specific actions for this priority regarding water and waste provision. This is a big concern for local residents who suggested collaboration with planning officers to ensure policies help achieve environmental resilience.

iv. Providing housing options

Providing more housing for people with support needs including where they can be supported to live independently received the highest level of agreement of all actions related to providing housing options. Levels of disagreement were fairly low among the proposed priorities. The action which received the most disagreement was the improvement of housing support for refugees and asylum seekers (29%).



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Explanatory comments

The comments place a strong emphasis on the need for more disabled-friendly and elderly-friendly homes that include outdoor spaces with mentions to make allowance for pets which provide a source of comfort for many individuals.

There is mention of the utilisation of empty properties to address housing shortages and a call for prioritising housing for local people and increasing affordable housing. Disability-compliant housing is raised with the suggestion that the council should prioritise increasing the volume and range of all types of dwellings.

Comments suggest that the action to “promote best practices in the design of new homes” required further clarity as many factors need consideration such as the internal and external design of new homes. One suggestion was a shift in design ethos to facilitate sustainable and fast-paced house building.

Links to previous priorities were made in comments which called for enforcing minimum acceptable standards of accommodation, particularly in the private rented sector to increase the availability of suitable accommodation for vulnerable groups.

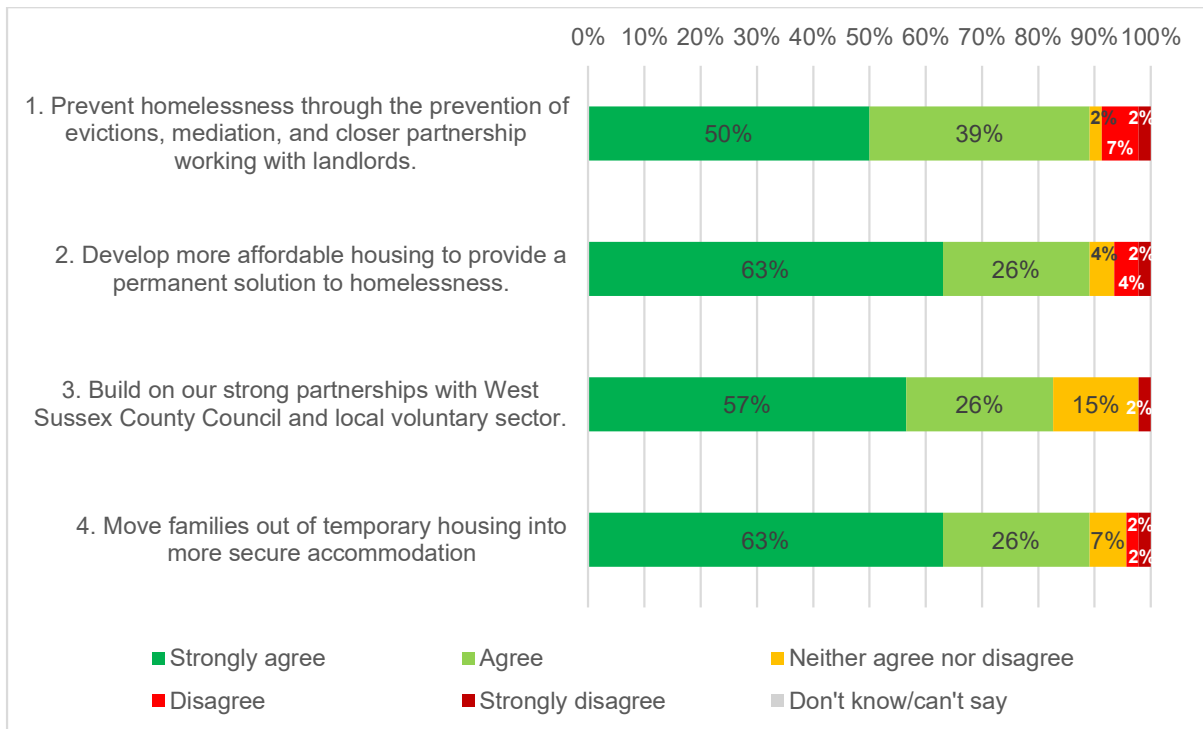
There was large agreement with the action to provide housing stock that allows people to live independently, this would include provision for older people, those with special needs, first-time buyers, and younger people.

v. Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping

Actions relating to preventing homelessness and rough sleeping received high levels of agreement from respondents. Preventing evictions, mediation and closer partnerships with landlords, developing more affordable housing and moving families out of temporary accommodation were widely supported actions, all receiving 89% overall agreement.

Additional information on actions to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping and the community and stakeholder reaction to them can be found in the public consultation report for the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

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Explanatory comments

Many comments agree with the priority to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping. Key points include providing safe shelters for those experiencing rough sleeping, offering hygiene facilities, and creating hubs that focus on well-being and welfare advice. These hubs could provide essential services such as clothing and bedding exchanges, and facilities for washing clothing.

There is a strong agreement for ensuring adequate support for homeless households to improve their well-being, reduce the duration of homelessness, and help prevent homelessness from occurring. It was mentioned that the support offered should be a fundamental part of any homelessness prevention strategy and should be included in the relevant aims.

There was agreement to develop more affordable housing. Respondents felt there should be a focus on reducing the council's reliance on private landlords for temporary accommodation which would help decrease public spending on poor quality, overpriced emergency accommodations provided by private landlords. Other comments suggested that the council set a ceiling price on rented accommodation to prevent exploitation and ensure affordability.

The importance of involving mental health teams is also highlighted, as mental health support can be crucial for some individuals in preventing and alleviating homelessness.

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Furthermore, prioritising the use of empty homes is suggested as a means to provide immediate housing solutions. Brief commentary is also made on hidden homelessness which often exists in rural areas, indicating agreement with the need for targeted strategies.

Overall, the comments show high levels of agreement with the actions emphasising the importance of a comprehensive approach that includes immediate support measures, and long-term housing solutions to effectively prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.

More information on public perception of the council's actions to alleviate and prevent homelessness and rough sleeping can be found in the public consultation report for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

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D. Additional comments

Respondents were asked whether they thought there was anything else we should consider as part of the development of the housing strategy.

Many responses repeated previous comments. Specific actions and topics to consider within the housing strategy included:

- **Community:** prioritise community need by ensuring provision for more community and play areas in new developments.
- **Service delivery:** mandate consistent service delivery by housing associations.
- **Partnerships:** improve partnerships with voluntary organisations; collaboration with housebuilders; and clear methods to measure and report performance against housing targets.
- **High Streets:** adapt and change high street uses such as converting empty shops into housing.

Other comments gathered the following four topics which are covered in the Housing Strategy:

- **Affordable Housing:** Emphasis on the need for more low-cost housing and ensuring private sector rents are affordable.
- **Infrastructure:** Importance of having infrastructure, such as roads, public transport, schools, and medical facilities, in place before or alongside housing developments.
- **Green Spaces and Environment:** Protection of green spaces, agricultural land, and biodiversity; incorporation of green spaces within developments.
- **Support for Vulnerable Groups:** Improved support for people struggling with private rentals, quicker allocation of council housing, and attention to specific housing needs for different demographics.

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E. Survey Demographics

Respondents who completed the survey as a resident of Arun were asked to complete optional demographic questions. This section includes a summary of these responses. Please note the below percentages were calculated using the total number of resident responses received (38), however, overall percentages may not add up to 100% as some residents declined to answer these questions.

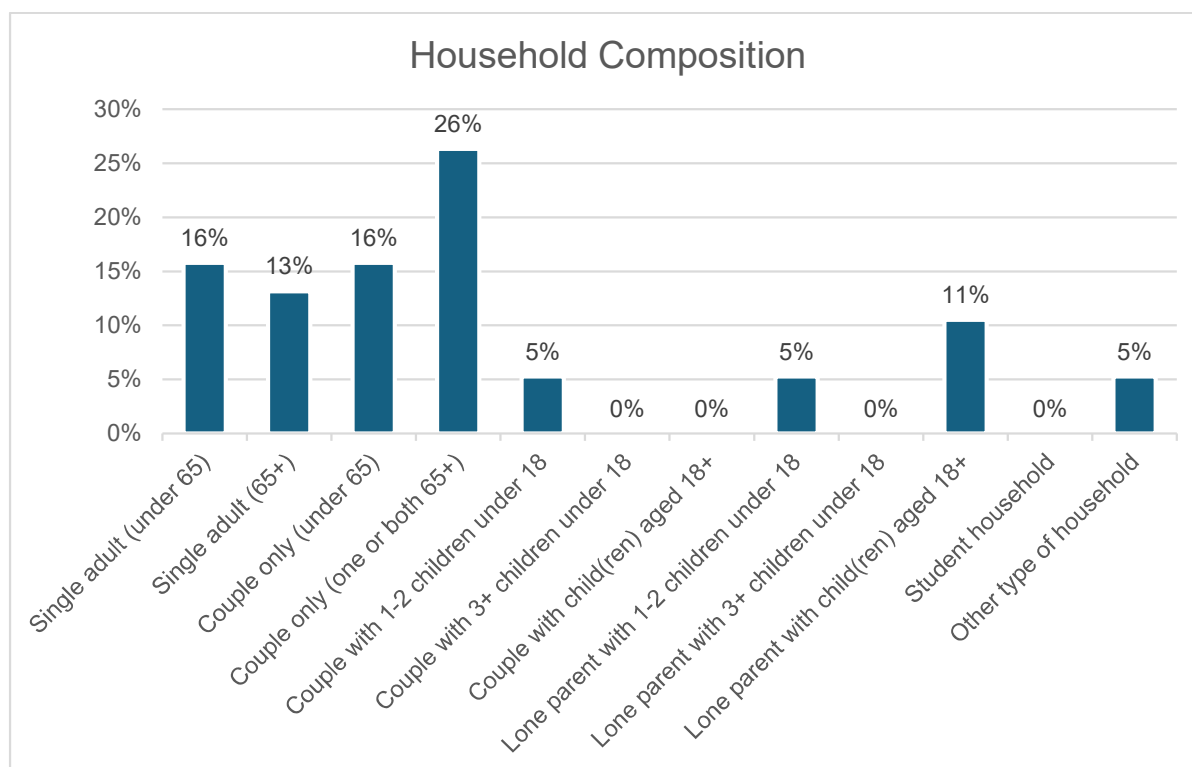
i. Tenure

55% of respondents were homeowners, either owning their house or owning part of their home (shared ownership). 13% of respondents lived in private rented accommodation, and another 8% lived in social housing. 3% of respondents live in specialist housing and 8% of respondents to the survey could be classed as homeless or at risk of homelessness.

According to the census, 72.4% of dwellings in Arun are owner-occupied. Though this indicates homeowners are underrepresented in the survey responses in comparison to Arun census data, the response level from homeowners in comparison to other tenure types is as expected. Private renters are underrepresented in the survey, showing a 4% lower participation rate from this group compared to their actual representation in the housing market (18%). This is likely due to the low response rate for the survey.

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ii. Household type



The largest sub-group of respondents according to household type were older couples with one or both over the age of 65, at 26%. This was followed by couples under 65 and single adults under 65 (16%).

According to the census, the spread of household types amongst respondents is not representative of the wider population. The census data shows that one-person households aged 66 and over make up a substantial 22.5% of the total, however, this group is represented by 13% of the survey sample.

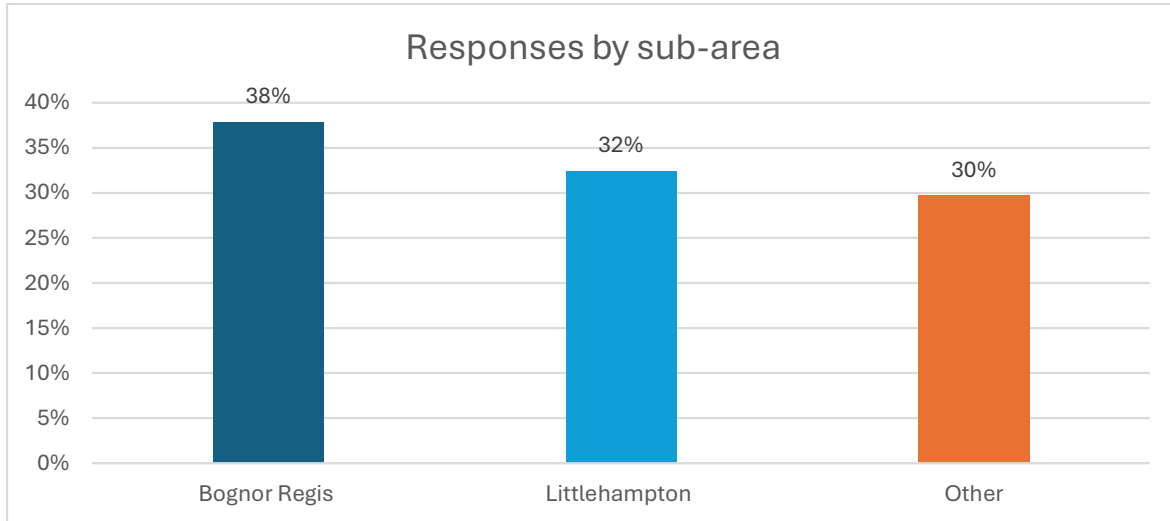
The lone parent households with dependent children, which make up about 7.6% of the census data, were represented by 2 responses in the survey (5%).

The survey received no responses from student households.

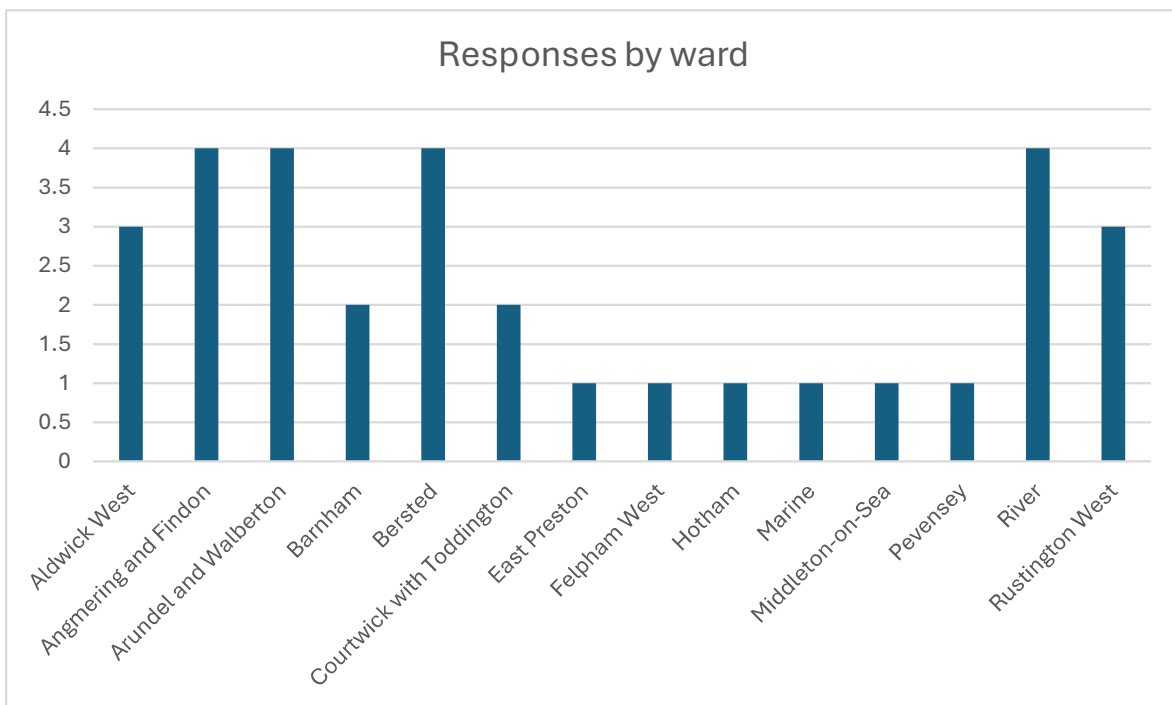
These discrepancies indicate that the survey results may not adequately reflect the proportions of household types found in the area's census data.

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iii. Geographic spread



Responses to the survey were fairly evenly distributed between Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and other sub-areas; Rural and National Park (as identified in the Baseline Housing Report which accompanies the Housing Strategy). Bognor Regis received the highest number of responses (14), followed by Littlehampton (12), and other areas (11).



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While there is a wide geographical spread of responses, indicating engagement from various parts of the district, certain wards were not represented in the survey responses. These include Beach, Brookfield, Felpham East, Ferring, Aldwick East, Orchard, Pagham, Rustington East, and Yapton. Five respondents to the survey selected “other” and when prompted provided alternative areas in which they live; four responded “Littlehampton” and one responded “Worthing”.

iv. Respondent characteristics

68% of respondents were female, 16% were male, and the remaining 13% chose not to disclose their gender. The majority of respondents were aged between 50 and 74 (50-64 years; 29%, 65-74 years; 29%). Only 3% of responses were from people under 25 years old. This indicates a gender and age imbalance, which may affect the representativity of the results.

79% of respondents were White, 3% were from a Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Group background and the remaining 18% of respondents chose not to disclose their ethnicity. According to the census, 95.8% of people in Arun identified their ethnic group within the “White”, suggesting the survey results are largely representative of the predominantly white population of Arun. However, the absence of any responses from under-represented groups is of concern as it limits the ability to address specific issues and challenges faced by these groups locally.

47% of respondents had no religion, and 37% were Christian, making up the largest religious group. 3% of respondents were Buddhist, whilst the remaining 8% preferred not to disclose this information. This is reasonably representative of the spread indicated by the census, in which 39.9% of Arun residents reported having “No religion”, and 52.1% of people described themselves as Christian.

37% of respondents stated that they consider themselves to have a disability. This is a significant over-representation of disabilities according to the census, in which 17.6% of Arun residents were identified as disabled. Of the respondents that had a disability 71% stated that their condition reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities by a lot, and a further 21% stated that their condition only affected them a little.

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Stakeholder feedback

A. Summary of stakeholder survey feedback:

Comments from stakeholders on the Draft Housing Strategy have been summarised below to reflect the broad range of perspectives and constructive feedback they offered through the consultation process highlighting both the strengths and areas for improvement in the strategy. Several key themes emerged:

Vision and Environmental Quality

Arun's vision, articulated in the strategy, was well-received for its balance between delivering new homes and ensuring sustainability. However, stakeholders suggested enhancing the vision to explicitly reference environmental quality, thus aligning it more closely with the Council's priorities on environmental resilience.

Affordable Housing and Private Sector Rents

Building more social and affordable homes was seen as essential to mitigate the council's expenditure on temporary accommodation. Stakeholders urged the Council to outline how it plans to make private sector rents more affordable for residents receiving benefits and to bridge the gap between the demand for affordable housing and the number of homes being completed.

Planning and Design Considerations

There was a consensus that planning policies should play a significant role in achieving environmental resilience. Stakeholders recommended that the strategy should explicitly reference the importance of well-designed, suitably located homes that meet local housing needs. Additionally, best practices in the design of new homes should consider both internal and external factors, with an emphasis on modern methods of construction (MMC) to facilitate sustainable and rapid house building.

Quality of Housing

Improving the quality of existing housing stock was identified as crucial for meeting environmental objectives and creating a sustainable future. Stakeholders stressed the need to focus on council and housing association properties, given the constraints associated with retrofitting existing homes. The integration of quality and environmental resilience was also highlighted as essential.

Support for Community Land Trusts (CLTs)

Stakeholders expressed strong support for the inclusion of Community Land Trusts (CLTs) in the strategy, noting the benefits for community cohesion and the practical support they provide. Specific suggestions included a statement of support for both existing and future CLTs and the Council's allocation rights to additional dwellings as part of phase 2 development.

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Homelessness and Support Services

Ensuring adequate support for homeless households and those at risk of homelessness was emphasised as a critical element of the strategy. Stakeholders suggested that support services should be a key component across all strategy aims to promote well-being and reduce the duration and incidence of homelessness.

Collaboration and Partnerships

The importance of partnering with experienced housebuilders and voluntary sector organisations was underscored. Stakeholders recommended that Arun develop and strengthen these partnerships to achieve the strategy's aims effectively. A long-term, planned approach spanning 5, 10, and 30 years was suggested to create a sustainable housing strategy.

Targets and Performance Monitoring

There were calls for clearer mechanisms to monitor and track progress towards key targets, such as achieving average EPC C ratings by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050. Stakeholders sought more detailed information on how the Council would measure performance against these targets, including the use of stock condition surveys as baselines and the potential for ongoing emission reporting.

Specific Actions and Timelines

Stakeholders requested additional details on several specific points, including:

- The impact of new legislation on housing issues.
- Development of partnerships with organisations like Arun and Chichester Citizens Advice.
- Ensuring private sector rents are affordable.
- Performance measurement against previous and new strategy targets.
- Reporting on updated stock condition surveys.
- Ensuring consistent service standards by housing associations.
- Production timelines for the Older People's Housing Strategy and needs assessment for people with support needs.
- Utilisation of Discretionary Housing Payment funds.

Overall, the strategy was praised for its comprehensive coverage and clear articulation of various issues. However, stakeholders noted areas for improvement, such as connecting more explicitly with the co-benefits of sustainability and addressing the need for behavioural change communication. They also highlighted the importance of a retrofit strategy and the continuation of services like the Home Energy Adviser, which are currently funded on a temporary basis.

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B. Arun District Council: Member's Briefing

During the briefing on the draft housing strategy, members provided valuable feedback, highlighting several key areas for consideration and action.

Economic growth was identified as a crucial driver for the housing strategy. Members stressed the importance of incorporating economic development into action plans, suggesting that a robust economy would create more job opportunities and increase housing affordability, thereby reducing homelessness rates.

Strengthening planning policy emerged as a key recommendation. Members called for more stringent measures to improve the delivery of social housing. They suggested a thorough investigation of developers' financial claims when they assert that social homes cannot be provided on certain sites, ensuring accountability and transparency in the planning process.

There was a general consensus on the need for a **significant increase in social housing**. Members expressed a desire for the strategy to prioritise the development of more social homes to meet growing demand and support vulnerable populations.

Holding poor private landlords accountable was another priority. Members advocated for the introduction of **licensing and standards** to ensure that private rental accommodations meet acceptable living conditions. This would protect tenants from substandard housing and promote better management practices among landlords.

There was a strong suggestion to explore a **potential role for Parish Councils in preventing homelessness**. Members believe that local councils could play a significant part in early intervention and support, leveraging their close community connections to identify at risk individuals and provide timely assistance.

The **integration of health sector partners** into homelessness prevention efforts was also emphasised. It was noted that collaboration with healthcare providers could ensure better support for individuals facing homelessness, particularly by addressing underlying health issues that may contribute to housing instability.

Lastly, there was a query regarding the specific **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** for the housing strategy. Members sought clarity on the targets, particularly the number of houses to be built annually. Clear KPIs are essential for tracking progress and ensuring that the strategy meets its goals.