

Homes Fit for the Future – Public Consultation Report

Background

Nottingham City Council launched a 6-week public consultation on the draft Housing Strategy to offer stakeholders an opportunity to provide feedback to help shape the final document.

Running from 16 July to 27 August 2024, the consultation was city wide and in particular sought comments and feedback from Nottingham City residents and partner organisations who will be impacted by the commitments made in the Strategy.

The Council had already undertaken a series of engagement events with key partners to understand Nottingham's housing market and the diverse needs, demands and aspirations of its citizens. This engagement activity began with a presentation of the detailed evidence base prepared and the emerging themes. This was followed by a series of workshops where key partners and stakeholders were invited to share their thoughts on the emerging themes and the challenges and opportunities within each to shape the priorities for the strategy and the strategic aims.

The Council undertook an ethnicity and housing event to uncover and understand the needs and barriers associated with housing experienced by minority ethnic groups.

The Strategy has been widely consulted on internally with key teams including Planning, Adult Social Care, Children's Integrated Services, Public Health, Carbon Reduction and Energy Projects and Safer Housing throughout its development. Key partnerships such as the Health and Wellbeing Board and The Place Based Partnership have also been consulted with.

Methodology

The consultation took place during a period of limited financial resources necessitating the avoidance of any non-essential spend.

An online survey was hosted on the council's Engage Nottingham Hub webpage provided both the public and stakeholders with the opportunity to feedback their views on the housing strategy. There were also hard copies available on request in libraries. The strategy covers all tenures, and consideration was given as to how to ensure people living in social housing, the private-rented sector and owner-occupied homes as well as the relevant organisations could be reached.

The survey was promoted through all the relevant council online platforms including newsletters and social media utilising all the corporate and topic specific channels such as My Nottingham, The Leaders Update, our housing information bulletin 'NOUSE', Nottingham Renters and Growing Nottingham. We also leveraged tenant communication channels, sharing the consultation with tenants through our network of community groups and engaged residents. Partners were engaged with directly and through council led networks including relevant committees and our specialist

housing partnerships and networks. Partners were also asked to promote the public consultation through their network to further amplify the engagement and to help reach a wider audience. Partners could also request a presentation on the strategy tailored to their organisation.

There was a hybrid launch event in the Ground Floor Committee room the event included a presentation of the strategy, followed by a question-and-answer session.

Participation and responses

The following sections give an overview of the feedback received over the public consultation period. The sections cover:

- Launch Event
- Online Survey
- Internal Feedback
- Feedback from key organisations

➤ Launch event

Around thirty people attend the consultation event, with the majority attending in person and around 10 people attended on online. Attendees were representing Regeneration and Development companies, Private Sector Landlords, Education, The Fire Authority, The East Midlands Combined County Authority, third sector and not-for-profit organisations.

The consultation launch event included an overview of the strategy and a question-and-answer session.

Attendees talked about the most pressing housing issues for their organisations and asked questions to ascertain if the strategy captured these issues and how it proposed to tackle them.

Themes covered were:

Adult Social care

- Important to include Severe Multiple Disadvantage and Care Leavers in the strategy and for housing to be part of the partnership working
- Lack of move on accommodation and support

Getting the housing offer right

- Despite the housing shortage there are buildings / accommodation types in low demand, look at reclassifying buildings
- Set a standard for safer communities (homes), do more than meet minimum safety requirements
- Over-occupying, how can the housing offer encourage downsizing
- Alternate construction / development methods can help deliver additional accommodation as short/medium term solutions to homelessness
- Competition for land for competing housing needs

Partnerships

- Various attendees welcomed emphasis on the partnership approach and asked for early dialogue.
- The increase in size of the PRS was noted and the need to support tenants and landlords with their responsibilities.

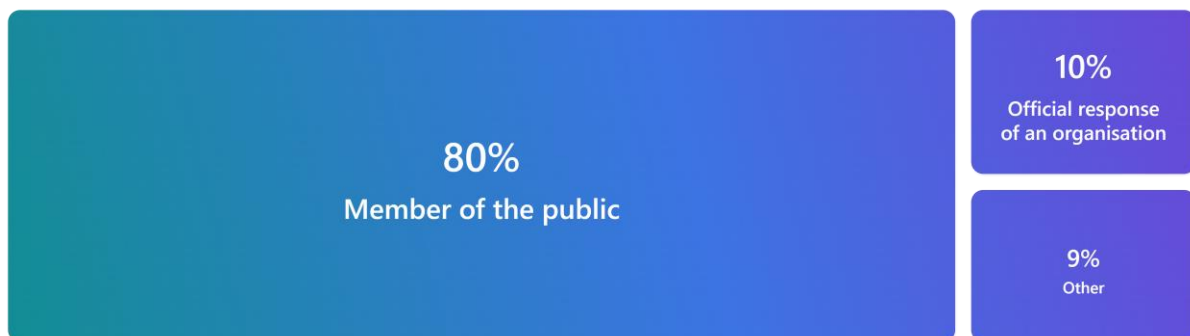
External factors

- Right-to-Buy and the loss of council homes
- Maximise the opportunity to work with the new East Midlands Combined County Authority, how does the strategy sit with the wider context including brownfield sites

➤ **Survey questions and responses**

Number of responses - 145

In what capacity are you completing this survey?

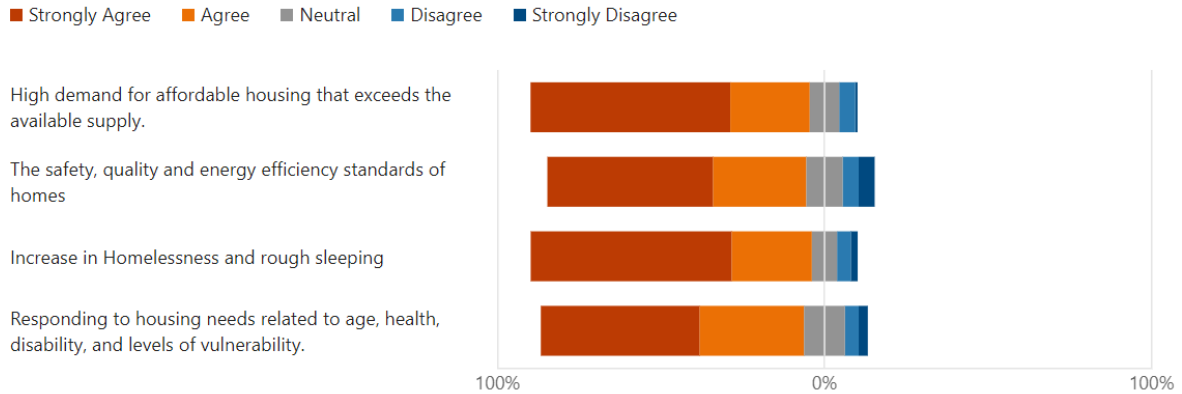


Organisation types that responded included – Regeneration and Development companies, Registered and Specialists Providers, Private Sector Landlords, Education, third sector and not-for-profit organisations.

Please tell us the first half of your home postcode

86% of respondents had a postcode that indicated they live within the council's administration boundary.

Do you agree that the following are the most pressing housing issues in the city?



All four housing issues identified were recognised as the top concerns, with over 80% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that these were the most important issues.

Is there anything else that you think should also be considered as one of the city's most pressing housing issues?

There were 98 responses, with most providing additional information in support of one or more of the pressures listed.

Housing pressure: High demand for affordable housing that exceeds the available supply

85% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this was a correctly identified pressure. Additionally, 36 respondents provided further details on this pressure, including:

- *Affordable should mean affordable. £199,000 is not affordable to buy and £795/£1,000 is not affordable rent.*
- *It is almost impossible for young people to find anywhere to live either to buy or rent.*
- *Affordable housing - Many citizens struggle to pay high rent cost due to low income*
- *We just need more affordable housing especially for those who are struggling*
- *Use of Section 106 in robust manner to boost contribution to social housing needs*
- *Unemployed and low-income people find it very hard almost impossible to get accommodation.*

Housing pressure: The safety, quality and energy efficiency standards of homes

80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this was a correctly identified pressure. Additionally, 16 respondents gave further details on this pressure, including:

- *Private rented properties that aren't up to standard but are very over priced*
- *Carbon neutral developments. Why are houses still being built with gas central heating and no solar panels.*
- *Supporting everyone to have a warm home, regardless of what income.*
- *Educate tenants better on how to use a home i.e. having the heating on and ventilating*
- *Related to the first two issues, we would like to stress the prevalence of poor-quality housing and those with low energy-efficiency,*

Housing pressure: Increase in homelessness and rough sleeping

86% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this was a correctly identified pressure. Additionally, 7 respondents gave further details on this pressure, including:

- *The most pressing housing issue in this city is the homelessness which is at an all time high.*
- *Early prevention work with young people before they move into their first home*

Housing pressure: Responding to housing needs related to age, health, disability, and levels of vulnerability

81% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this was a correctly identified pressure. Additionally, 11 respondents gave further details on this pressure, including:

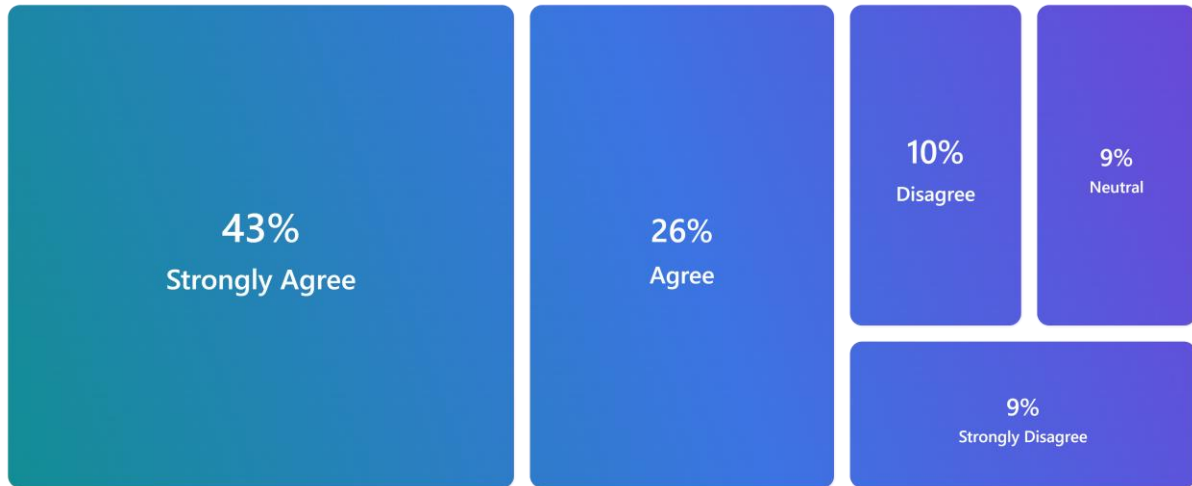
- *Perhaps dedicating some accommodation to help with care in the community. Age related in particular.*
- *An increase in safe accommodation and related support services for survivors of domestic abuse*
- *People released from prison are often discriminated against when it comes to housing*
- *How more level access accommodation can be generated, particularly in the owner occupied sector.*

Several themes emerged that respondents felt weren't fully covered by the four pressures identified. The figure in brackets shows the number of responses which included this theme

- Too much focus on student accommodation (21)
- Cost of private sector rents and tenancy security (10)
- Suitability of housing developments in terms of size, green space, accessibility and connectivity (17)
- Empty homes (5)
- Cross boundary collaboration needed to meet the city's housing need (2)
- Pressure on private rented sector landlords (6)
- How social housing is allocated (3)

To what extent do you agree with this vision statement?

Homes in Nottingham meet the aspirations and needs of our current and future residents. People live in safe, warm homes that they can afford, in vibrant local neighbourhoods where everyone can thrive.



69% of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the vision statement.

If you'd like to comment on the vision statement please do so in the box below

60 responses made a comment on the vision statement

Agreed and Strongly Agreed responses commented along the following themes

- More engagement with citizens on development in their area
- Utilising unused buildings and space in the city centre and densification
- Decarbonising homes and protecting green spaces
- Suitability and types of homes to be built
- Creating and sustaining communities
- Some responses questioned how achievable the vision is.

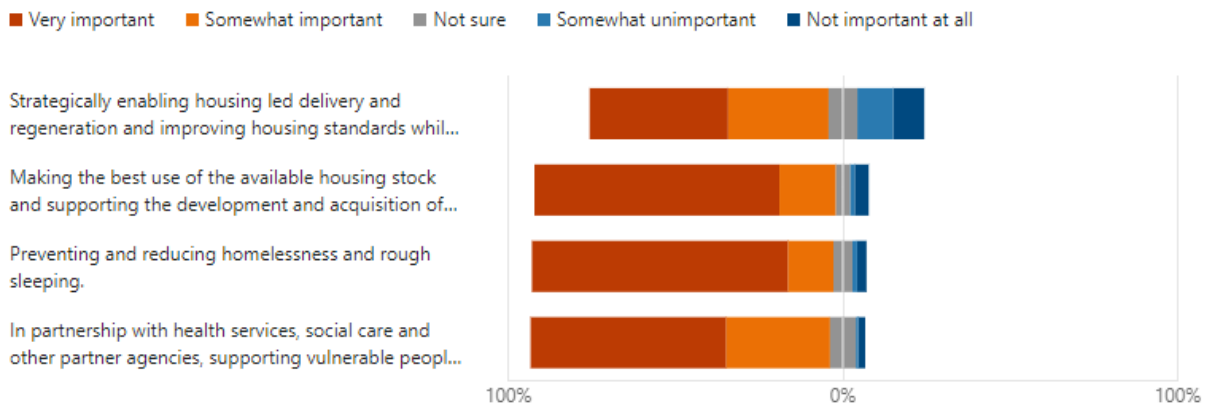
Neutral responses mainly queried how achievable the vision is.

Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed responses had the following themes

- Queried how realistic achieving 'warm homes' was
- More help for homeowners to achieve higher property standards is needed
- Some felt the city already overcrowded

How important do you think each of the four priorities will be in achieving our vision?

- Enabling the building of new homes and regeneration and, improving housing standards while continuing the progress towards a carbon net zero future
- Making the best use of the available housing stock and supporting the development and acquisition of more affordable homes
- Preventing and reducing homelessness and rough sleeping
- Supporting people to live independently, in partnership with health services, social care and other partner agencies.



The first priority had the lowest number of Agree or Strongly Agree responses at 71%. All the other three priorities had over 90% of responses recorded as Agree or Strongly Agree.

Please tell us below if you would change any of the priorities and how.

There were 55 responses here, most responses gave further detail as why they felt the proposed priorities were important.

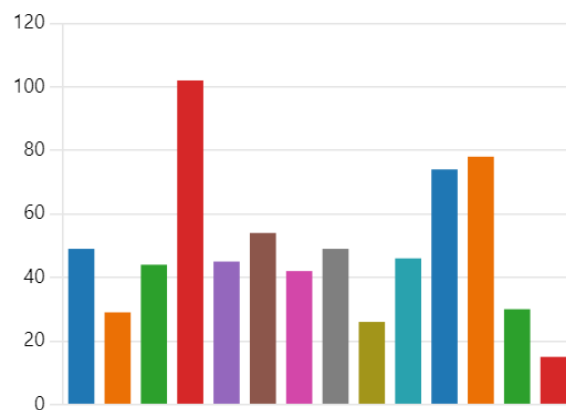
There was an emerging theme that some respondents felt that the strategy focused on specific 'groups' of citizens rather than all citizens, '*Housing is a problem for everyone*'.

The intention to 'continuing the progress towards a carbon net zero future' had a mix of comments ranging from those who thought it was a key priority for the city to those who did not think it should be a priority at all.

Of our 14 key actions which five do you think will have the most impact on achieving the vision?

- Supporting regeneration and economic growth
- Encouraging age-friendly and health-promoting homes and neighbourhoods
- Building homes and neighbourhoods for a greener Nottingham
- Bringing empty homes back into use
- Achieving the right balance of student housing

- Improving neighbourhoods, homes, and services for our tenants
- Ensuring social housing landlords invest in their homes and in neighbourhoods in Nottingham
- Ensuring that homes in the private rented sector are high quality, sustainable, and secure
- Supporting owner occupiers with low incomes to maintain their homes
- Making best use of affordable housing
- Supporting the development of affordable homes
- Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping
- In partnership with health, social care and other partner agencies, supporting vulnerable people to live independently.
- Meeting the needs and aspirations of minority community groups



The top 5 are

- 1) Bringing empty homes back into use (102)
- 2) Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping (78)
- 3) Supporting the development of affordable homes (74)
- 4) Improving neighbourhoods, homes, and services for our tenants (54)
- 5) Ensuring that homes in the private rented sector are high quality, sustainable, and secure (49) AND Supporting regeneration and economic growth (49)

Do you think there are any other key actions that would help achieve the vision?

There were 56 responses here, most of them were giving additional information in support of one or more of the key actions put forward and ideas as to how to achieve them.

A few respondents thought that the title of the action 'Achieving the Right Balance of Student Housing' was quite negative toward students and queried if more positive language could be used.

Additional actions suggested had the following themes

- Influencing central government policy
- Supporting the development of suitable new build and reducing the barriers to housing delivery
- Explore alternative construction technologies
- Improving neighbourhood cohesion (including for students) and cleanliness
- Regulating and supporting the private rented sector
- Reducing regulations for the private rented sector
- Repurpose low demand and empty properties

If you are answering on behalf of an organisation, what might your organisation's role be in delivering these actions?

There were 17 responses that gave further detail of the organisations and their potential role in delivering the actions. Responses were received from Regeneration and Development companies, Registered and Specialist housing providers, Private Sector Landlords, Education providers, third sector and not-for-profit organisations.

These responses have been included with an overview of responses received from organisations.

➤ Internal Feedback

- Request for the strategy to include more detail on the council's private rented sector statutory duties.
- Update strategy to respond to Government announcements since the launch of the housing strategy.
 - Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and local housing delivery targets.
 - Change to rules on the spending of Right to Buy Replacement Receipts
 - Renters' Rights Bill Announcement

➤ Feedback from Organisations

Organisations outlined their potential contributions to Key Actions and identified the barriers they face in delivering new housing and managing housing and related services. These insights will inform the relevant aspects of the Implementation Plan.

They welcome the focus on partnership working and expressed their commitment to working with the council. Areas outlined for partnership working to deliver the Key Actions are:

- Support alternative delivery models and smaller organisations
- Support the wellbeing of students and residents
- Ensuring safety in homes, particularly for those who are most vulnerable
- Learning from other cities and organisations
- Promoting and encourage high property standards and management practices in privately rented housing
- Addressing the cause of homelessness
- Integrating net zero goals

It was also notes that the development and implementation of strategy gives the council an opportunity to review its own systems, processes and policies to aid partnership working.

Barriers to delivering the Key Actions included:

- Housing delivery – all tenures
 - Availability of land
 - Cost of land
 - Planning timescales
 - Uncertainty of national grants
 - Confidence in future projections to meet anticipated demand
- Private rented sector provision
 - Cost of regulations
 - Cost and time of meeting regulations
 - Not being kept informed
 - Rogue landlords make it harder for other landlords
 - Availability of housing for landlords to grow their operations
- Restricted commissioning budgets
- Difficult for small organisations to compete

Partners also inquired about the council's capacity to support broader stakeholders and its effectiveness as a strategic partner in the light of Section 114 Notice.

Responses received that fell outside the remit of this consultation

The Housing Strategy is broad and covers many operational areas, but its remit is strategic and not operational. Several initiatives included in the Strategy document are subject to their own reviews including public consultations such as the management of the council's owned housing stock. All responses related to operational issues that can help operational teams in shaping service delivery will be forwarded to them. Some responses also picked up on issues related to national policies that are outside of the remit of the Housing Strategy to alter.

Many of the responses covered detail as to how specific actions could be delivered although the responses did not require a change the strategic document they will be further analysed and used to support the further development of the Strategy Implementation Plan.

Conclusion and amendments made

Overall, the feedback from the consultation is that the vision statement, strategic priorities and key actions are the right ones to proceed with for the final document. Amendments made since the consultation are:

- Changed the title of the key action 'Achieving the right balance of student housing' to 'Achieving the right mix of student housing'.
- Amendments to the private rented sector section to include more about the council's statutory duties.
- Some additions and amendments made to the commitments that sit below each key action (in the Strategy document these are captured in the sections titled 'Over the term of this strategy, we will:' for each key action).

Many comments made were essentially operational in nature and will be fed into the Implementation Plan rather than the strategy document.

The Strategy document has also been amended to reflect the latest Government position on housing policy to ensure it is up to date on publication.