

SDS Scoping Engagement
Housing Discussion Paper

The housing question this engagement is asking you to help us with:

How should Gloucestershire plan for the amount, type and broad allocation of new homes to meet the future needs of its community, whilst improving affordability, supporting the economy coordinating infrastructure and creating sustainable healthy and resilient places?

Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

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This is a discussion paper to explore the housing matters of strategic importance that should be considered in drafting a future Spatial Development Strategy. It does not select growth locations or establish detailed policies.

We welcome your views on the strategic issues, evidence and outcomes for housing matters that should inform the future Spatial Development Strategy (SDS).

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Executive Summary

Gloucestershire is expected to accommodate significant housing growth over the coming decades. The county's population is growing and changing, with an ageing population, smaller household sizes, changing economic opportunities and continuing pressures on housing affordability. At the same time, there are important environmental, infrastructure and climate challenges that need to be addressed.

Housing is more than simply delivering new homes. The places where people live influence access to jobs, education, healthcare, transport, green spaces and community facilities. A successful housing strategy must therefore be closely aligned with economic growth, infrastructure delivery, environmental protection, climate resilience and health and wellbeing objectives.

Despite sustained housebuilding in recent years, many people in Gloucestershire continue to face challenges accessing suitable and affordable homes. House prices and rents have risen significantly relative to incomes in many parts of the county, making it difficult for younger people, families and key workers to remain within their communities. There is also a growing need for affordable housing, specialist accommodation, supported housing, homes for people with disabilities and a wider range of housing options that meet changing needs throughout people's lives.

The diversity of areas across the SDS area present different housing needs, opportunities and constraints. Some locations experience strong development pressure because they are close to employment centres and strategic transport corridors, while others are constrained by flood risk, infrastructure capacity or environmental considerations.

Providing the right infrastructure at the right time is to necessary support housing growth. New homes must be supported by improvements to transport connectivity, the provision of schools healthcare facilities, and utilities including water and wastewater infrastructure, energy networks and digital connectivity alongside good access to green infrastructure and nature for recreation and health. Coordinating housing growth with infrastructure investment can help create successful communities and ensure that developments contribute to a positive quality of life.

The transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient future is also a key consideration. Future housing growth will need to support reductions in carbon emissions, increase resilience to climate change, avoid increasing flood risk and contribute to nature recovery. Well-designed places can help reduce reliance on private cars, provide access to nature and support healthier and more sustainable lifestyles.

This discussion paper starts a conversation about Gloucestershire’s housing challenges and opportunities. It will inform an SDS that sets a long-term framework for sustainable and deliverable growth, helping to create thriving communities where people can live, work and access services while travelling less and leading healthier lives.

Housing Matters of Strategic Importance

- H1 Identifying a long-term strategic approach to the overall scale and sustainable, broad distribution of housing growth to meet identified needs and support sustainable communities.
- H2 Improving housing affordability and maximising the delivery of genuinely affordable homes, including council-built, specialist and social and affordable rented homes that respond to local incomes and acute housing needs, as well as a wide range of market housing.
- H3 Delivering the right mix of accessible, adaptable and specialist homes that respond to demographic change and meets the needs of older people, disabled people, families, younger households and people who need specialist or supported accommodation.
- H4 Aligning homes with jobs, infrastructure, services and sustainable transport so that development creates complete and well-connected places.
- H5 Ensuring housing growth creates healthy and inclusive places, responds to climate and environmental limits, and contributes positively to nature recovery and long-term resilience.
- H6 Securing a housing strategy that is capable of being delivered over the plan period through a diverse portfolio of locations, sites, tenures and delivery models supported by infrastructure, funding and effective monitoring.

Introduction

Housing is fundamental to Gloucestershire's future prosperity, wellbeing and sustainability. The homes built over the coming decades will influence not only where people live, but also how communities grow, how businesses attract workers, how people access services and opportunities, and how the county responds to climate change, demographic change and environmental pressures. Evidence from the Gloucestershire Housing & Economic Needs Assessment (August 2026) identifies a significant housing requirement across the county, alongside major challenges relating to affordability, demographic change, specialist housing needs and delivery capacity.

Gloucestershire's housing challenges are complex and interconnected. House prices and private rents remain beyond the reach of many households, homelessness and temporary accommodation pressures continue to affect communities, and an ageing population is increasing demand for accessible, adaptable and specialist housing. At the same time, housing growth must support economic development, infrastructure investment, thriving town centres and rural communities, while responding to climate change, biodiversity loss, flood risk, water resource pressures and the need to reduce carbon emissions. Recent countywide initiatives, including the new Gloucestershire Housing Commission, recognise the importance of strengthening the relationship between housing, health, wellbeing, economic growth and community resilience.

The role of the SDS is not to identify individual housing sites or replace Local Plans. Instead, it will provide a long-term strategic framework for addressing housing issues that cross local authority boundaries and require a coordinated approach. This includes considering the overall scale and broad distribution of housing, the relationship between homes, jobs and infrastructure, the delivery of affordable and specialist housing, and how future development can support wider social, economic and environmental objectives.

Local Plans will continue to determine site allocations, detailed housing policies and development management requirements, but will do so within the strategic framework established by the SDS, ensuring a more coordinated approach to meeting Gloucestershire's long-term housing needs.

This discussion paper begins an early conversation about the strategic housing issues that an SDS should address. It is intended to stimulate debate and gather views from residents, communities, developers, infrastructure providers, public bodies, businesses and other stakeholders. The questions raised are not proposals and no decisions have been made. Instead, they are intended to help identify the most important housing challenges and opportunities facing Gloucestershire and to inform the development of a shared long-term vision for housing across the county.

Policy and Legislation

The Housing Discussion Paper is informed by a range of existing housing policy, guidance and evidence prepared by Government, Gloucestershire County Council, district councils and partner organisations. These documents provide the baseline information needed to understand housing assets, conditions, trends, opportunities and constraints across the county.

- Housing Act 1996 (as amended) Housing Act 1996
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Care Act 2014 Care Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010 Equality Act 2010
- National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026) National_Planning_Policy_Framework.pdf
- National Planning Practice Guidance Planning practice guidance - GOV.UK
- Government Standard Method for Housing Need Housing and economic needs assessment - GOV.UK
- Homes England Strategic Plan Homes England strategic plan 2025 to 2030 - GOV.UK

Key Gloucestershire sources

- Gloucestershire Housing & Economic Needs Assessment (August 2026) Microsoft Word - Final Gloucestershire HENA August 2026
- Gloucestershire Housing with Care Strategy housing-with-care-report_17feb_21.pdf
- Gloucestershire Whole Market Position Statement 2024 Gloucestershire market position statement (MPS) 2024 | Gloucestershire County Council
- Gloucestershire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Health and Wellbeing | Inform Gloucestershire

Matters of Strategic Importance - Context

H1 Identifying a long-term strategic approach to the overall scale and sustainable, broad distribution of housing growth to meet identified needs and support sustainable communities.

Housing growth is one of the most significant long-term challenges facing Gloucestershire. The county is expected to experience continued population growth and demographic change over the coming decades, including an ageing population, changing household structures and evolving economic needs. Meeting these needs requires more than simply identifying sites for new development. Strategic decisions are needed about the overall scale of housing growth and how it should be distributed across Gloucestershire to balance housing demand, economic opportunities, environmental considerations and infrastructure capacity. These decisions have implications that

extend beyond individual local authority boundaries and therefore require a countywide strategic approach.

The distribution of housing growth influences travel patterns, access to employment, infrastructure investment, public service provision and the sustainability of communities. Housing growth that is aligned with major employment locations, transport corridors and existing service centres can help reduce the need to travel, support economic productivity and improve access to jobs, education, healthcare and community facilities. Development in locations where infrastructure capacity is limited or where residents are heavily reliant on car travel may increase congestion, infrastructure pressures and carbon emissions. Deciding where the broad distribution of growth should be is therefore a strategic issue for the future SDS that will affect how Gloucestershire works as a whole and how successfully future development can support sustainable patterns of living and movement.

There are also significant spatial variations across Gloucestershire which influence the capacity and suitability of different areas to accommodate growth. These include nationally protected landscapes, areas of flood risk, important habitats, water resource constraints, heritage assets and infrastructure limitations. Some parts of the county have strategic development opportunities linked to major employment locations, transport investment and regeneration priorities. Balancing these opportunities and constraints requires a strategic assessment of where growth can be accommodated most sustainably while supporting environmental management, climate resilience and the long-term prosperity of Gloucestershire's towns, villages and rural communities. The SDS provides the appropriate framework for considering these issues collectively and establishing a long-term spatial strategy that guides future Local Plans and investment decisions across the county.

H2 Improving housing affordability and maximising the delivery of genuinely affordable homes, including council-built, specialist, social and affordable rented homes that respond to local incomes and acute housing needs, as well as private housing.

Housing affordability is one of the biggest challenges facing Gloucestershire and has impacts on economic prosperity, social inclusion, health and community wellbeing. House prices and private rents in many parts of the county have grown faster than local incomes, making it more difficult for many households to find suitable housing. This affects a wide range of groups, including young people, families, key workers, older residents who want to downsize, and people on lower incomes. Gloucestershire’s communities face growing pressures on affordable housing supply, increasing housing waiting lists and difficulties keeping local workers and younger generations.

The availability of genuinely affordable housing is closely linked to Gloucestershire's long-term economic and social success. Employers across the county rely on being able to attract and keep workers across a range of business types, including health and social care, education, public services, manufacturing, and the visitor economy. Where housing costs are much greater than local incomes, businesses may struggle to recruit staff and local residents may be forced to move out of the area to find suitable housing and travel longer distances to work. Ensuring that housing growth includes an appropriate mix of market and affordable homes is not only a housing issue but also a strategic economic issue that has impacts on productivity, workforce mobility and inclusive growth.

Addressing affordability challenges requires a strategic approach that extends beyond individual development sites or local authority boundaries. Housing markets operate across the county and cross boundary, and where people need homes and choose to live is influenced by employment opportunities, transport connections, environmental constraints and neighbouring housing markets. The amount and location of future growth, together with the type and tenure of homes delivered, will influence the ability of Gloucestershire to meet identified housing needs and create balanced, sustainable communities. The SDS provides an opportunity to consider how increased housing delivery, particularly council-built, social rented and affordable rented housing, can be planned and supported alongside infrastructure investment, economic development and place-making objectives to ensure that more people can access homes that are affordable and meet their needs.

H3 Delivering the right mix of accessible, adaptable and specialist homes that respond to demographic change and meets the needs of older people, disabled people, families, younger households and people who need specialist or supported accommodation.

Gloucestershire's housing challenge is not only to deliver enough homes, but to provide the right types of homes for a changing population. The Gloucestershire Housing & Economic Needs Assessment (August 2026) projects substantial growth in the number of older residents and rising demand for accessible, adaptable and specialist accommodation across all age ranges, including housing with support, housing with care and residential care. The type, design and location of new homes will therefore be as important as the overall quantity delivered.

These needs cross local authority boundaries and affect health, social care, infrastructure, labour markets and community wellbeing. Suitable housing can help older people remain independent, enable disabled people to access appropriate accommodation, and allow families, younger households and key workers to stay in the communities where they work and have social connections. The Gloucestershire Housing Commission has highlighted these links and the need for housing provision to support wider social and economic outcomes.

Demand for specialist housing for older people, extra care accommodation, supported living and other suitable homes is expected to increase over the SDS period. Meeting these needs will require a coordinated approach to the distribution of growth, access to services and public transport, the location of health and care facilities, and the supply of appropriate homes across the county. A strategic approach can align housing and health strategies, support a suitable distribution of specialist accommodation and help create inclusive, healthy and age-friendly communities.

H4 Aligning homes with jobs, infrastructure, services and sustainable transport so that development creates complete and well-connected places.

The location of new housing shapes how people travel, access employment and public services, and participate in community life. As Gloucestershire grows, housing must be planned alongside jobs, transport, education, healthcare, utilities, digital connectivity and community facilities. Poorly coordinated growth can increase congestion, car dependency, pressure on services and inequalities, while well-planned growth can create sustainable places where people can reach everyday needs more easily.

This is a strategic issue because housing, employment and infrastructure relationships cross local authority boundaries. Gloucestershire functions as an interconnected housing and economic

geography centred on Gloucester, Cheltenham and the M5 corridor, with links to neighbouring areas. The Gloucestershire Housing & Economic Needs Assessment (August 2026) highlights how housing provision can support labour supply, workforce mobility and business investment, meaning the scale and distribution of growth will affect the county's economic centres, transport corridors and infrastructure networks.

A countywide approach is needed to align sustainable development and place-making with long-term infrastructure delivery. Future growth will require coordinated investment in public transport, active travel, schools, health facilities, water supply, wastewater treatment, energy and digital networks, many of which serve areas beyond individual district boundaries. Coordinating growth with providers can reduce the need to travel, support efficient investment and ensure communities can access essential facilities and services from the earliest stages of development.

H5 Ensuring housing growth creates healthy and inclusive places, responds to climate and environmental limits, and contributes positively to nature recovery and long-term resilience.

Where and how new homes are built can have a major effect on people's health, local communities and the natural environment. Well-planned development can create neighbourhoods where people can walk or cycle to jobs, schools, healthcare, open spaces and community facilities. Poorly planned development can increase car use, make services harder to reach and leave people feeling isolated. As Gloucestershire grows, new homes should support healthy lifestyles, bring communities together and help reduce inequalities.

New housing must also respect Gloucestershire's environmental limits. The county has important landscapes, wildlife sites, farmland and historic places, as well as areas at risk of flooding and climate change. Future growth will need to consider water supplies, wastewater services, wildlife and carbon emissions. Because these issues cross council boundaries, they need to be considered across the whole county.

This is an important strategic issue because housing, health, climate and the environment are closely linked. The SDS can help guide growth to the most sustainable places and set clear principles for climate resilience, nature recovery, green infrastructure and landscape protection. Local Plans can then provide more detailed policies on design, flood risk, biodiversity and healthy places, helping new housing meet local needs while creating healthier, greener and more resilient communities.

H6 Securing a housing strategy that is capable of being delivered over the plan period through a diverse portfolio of locations, sites, tenures and delivery models supported by infrastructure, funding and effective monitoring.

Delivering the homes Gloucestershire needs is not simply a question of identifying housing requirements. Experience shows that relying on a small number of large sites, developers or delivery mechanisms can create risks if development slows, market conditions change, infrastructure is delayed or sites prove difficult to bring forward. A successful long-term housing strategy therefore needs a diverse range of locations, site sizes and development opportunities across the county. This can help provide flexibility, improve resilience and ensure that housing

delivery continues throughout the plan period, even if some sites face delays or changing circumstances.

The delivery of new homes is also closely linked to the provision of infrastructure and investment. Housing growth needs to be supported by transport improvements, schools, healthcare facilities, utilities, digital connectivity, green infrastructure and community services. Without appropriate infrastructure, development may not be capable of being delivered sustainably or at the pace required. Coordinating housing growth with infrastructure planning, investment programmes and funding opportunities is therefore a strategic issue that extends beyond individual sites and local authority boundaries. It requires long-term collaboration between councils, infrastructure providers, government agencies, developers and other partners.

A deliverable housing strategy must respond to changing needs and market conditions over time. This includes supporting a range of housing tenures and delivery models, such as market housing, council-built housing, affordable housing, community-led housing, student housing / PBSA, Build to Rent developments, specialist accommodation, from small scale development to strategic urban extensions. Effective monitoring is equally important to understand whether homes are being delivered as planned and to identify emerging challenges early. A strategic approach to delivery helps ensure that Gloucestershire can meet its housing needs consistently over the long term while creating sustainable communities that are supported by the infrastructure, services and investment needed to thrive.

Matters of Strategic Importance for Housing

H1 Identifying a long-term strategic approach to the overall scale and sustainable, broad distribution of housing growth to meet identified needs and support sustainable communities.

Key strategic priorities

1. Deliver sufficient housing growth in the right locations to meet Gloucestershire's long-term housing needs, supporting sustainable patterns of development, addressing cross-boundary housing issues and ensuring that growth contributes to thriving urban areas, market towns and rural communities.
2. Create a spatial pattern of growth that balances housing need, infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints and economic opportunity, directing development towards the most sustainable locations and ensuring communities benefit from well-planned and coordinated growth.

H2 Improving housing affordability and maximising the delivery of genuinely affordable homes, including council-built, specialist, social and affordable rented homes that respond to local incomes and acute housing needs, as well as private housing.

Key strategic priorities

1. Increase the supply of affordable homes, particularly council-built, social and affordable rented homes, so that more households can access housing that is affordable relative to local incomes, reducing housing inequalities, homelessness pressures and barriers faced by younger households and key workers.

2. Support a wider range of housing delivery approaches, tenures and providers to improve affordability and housing choice, enabling greater delivery of affordable housing across Gloucestershire and broadening access to suitable homes for different groups and communities.

H3 Delivering the right mix of accessible, adaptable and specialist homes that respond to demographic change and meets the needs of older people, disabled people, families, younger households and people who need specialist or supported accommodation.

Key strategic priorities

Ensure new housing meets the needs of Gloucestershire's changing population by increasing the provision of accessible and adaptable homes, enabling older people to live independently for longer and improving access to suitable housing for families, younger households and disabled residents.

1. Plan positively for specialist, supported and care-related accommodation so that housing needs are met closer to services and support networks, improving outcomes for vulnerable residents and helping to reduce pressure on health and social care services.

H4 Aligning homes with jobs, infrastructure, services and sustainable transport so that development creates complete and well-connected places.

Key strategic priorities

1. Direct housing growth to locations where people can easily access employment, education, healthcare, community facilities and services through walking, cycling and public transport, reducing transport inequalities and supporting complete, connected and sustainable communities.
2. Coordinate housing growth with the timely delivery of strategic infrastructure, utilities, digital connectivity and public services, ensuring communities have access to the facilities they need and that infrastructure investment supports planned growth.

H5 Ensuring housing growth creates healthy and inclusive places, responds to climate and environmental limits, and contributes positively to nature recovery and long-term resilience.

Key strategic priorities

1. Create healthy, inclusive and resilient communities by ensuring housing growth improves access to green spaces, community facilities and essential services, reduces health inequalities and supports social connection, wellbeing and quality of life.
2. Ensure housing growth contributes positively to climate resilience, environmental enhancement and nature recovery by avoiding unacceptable environmental risks, strengthening green infrastructure and biodiversity networks, and supporting the transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient county.

H6 Securing a housing strategy that is capable of being delivered over the plan period through a diverse portfolio of locations, sites, tenures and delivery models supported by infrastructure, funding and effective monitoring.

Key strategic priorities

1. Maintain a diverse and deliverable supply of housing opportunities that can meet long-term needs, improve housing delivery rates, support a balanced portfolio of development sites and provide resilience to changing market conditions and delivery challenges.
2. Strengthen collaboration between public bodies, infrastructure providers, developers, registered providers and communities to accelerate housing delivery, overcome barriers to development and ensure planned growth is supported by effective monitoring, intervention and infrastructure provision.



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