

Contents

Section	Subject	Page
1.	Consultation	2
2.	Survey results	2
3.	Comments	3
4.	Conclusion	8
5.	Future engagement	8



Housing Strategy 2025-2030 – Consultation Report

1. Consultation

Executive agreed at a meeting on Tuesday, the 10th of September 2024 that the Housing Strategy 2025-2030 should go out to public consultation between the 17th of September and the 15th of October. It was also agreed that this should be a summarised version of the Housing Strategy instead of a full draft.

The Housing Strategy draft summary was published on Ipswich Borough Council's website on the 17th of September 2024. All interested parties, including members of the public, were invited to participate in the consultation by filling in an online survey that was available for the full duration of the consultation period.

Over 100 internal colleagues and external agencies were advised by email on the 16th of September that the public consultation for the Housing Strategy 2025-2030 would be open the following day. A reminder email was also sent out on the 30th of September, advising that there were two weeks remaining until the public consultation ended. In both instances, email recipients were encouraged to forward the information on to anyone else who may be interested in participating, including members of the public.

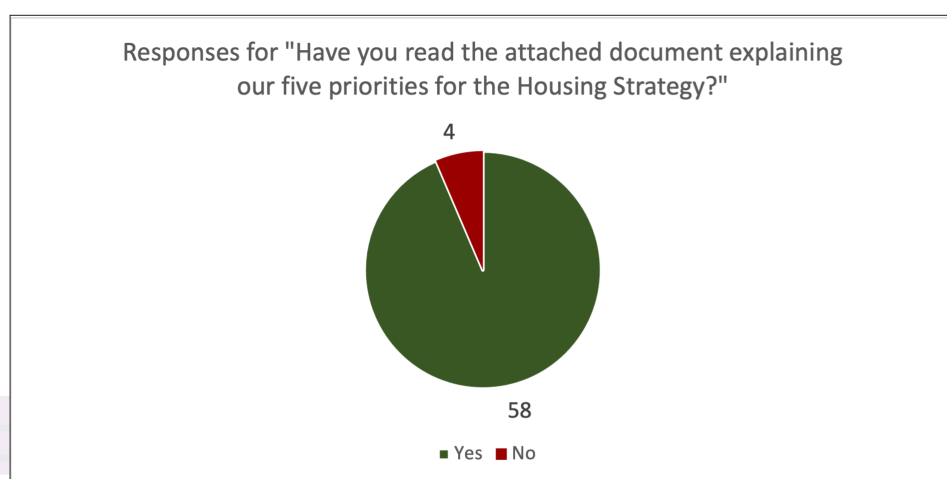
The consultation was also advertised on the Council's social media throughout the consultation period, and Ipswich residents and other interested parties were invited to participate.

2. Survey results

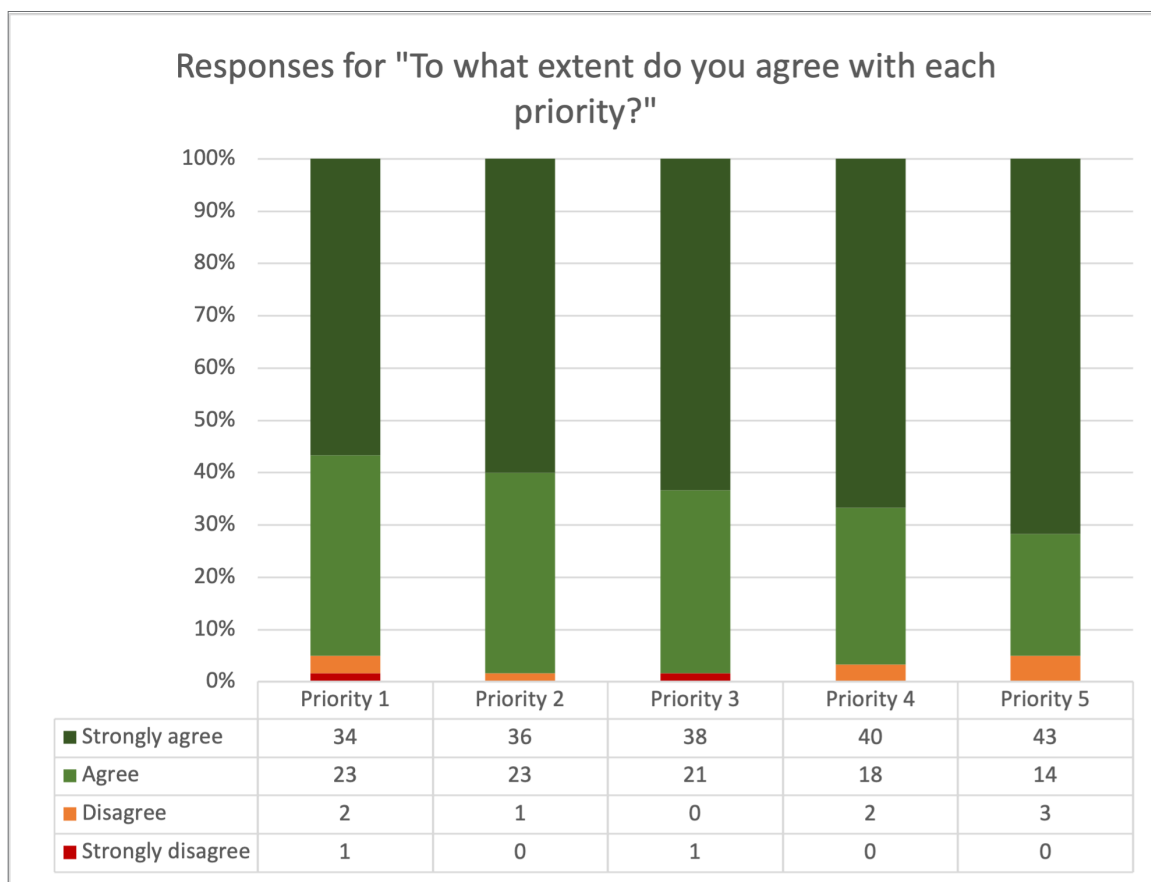
We received 60 responses via Survey Monkey. This is a significantly higher response level than that seen in the last Housing Strategy Consultation in 2019.

There was a mix of responses from internal colleagues, external agencies, and Ipswich residents.

Participants were asked to read a document titled "Five challenges for our Housing Strategy 2025-2030" before completing the survey. This document contained more information regarding each priority, including aims. The majority of the respondents stated that they read the document, as illustrated in the chart below:



Participants were then asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with each priority. Over 90% of participants stated that they agreed with each of the priorities for the Housing Strategy 2025-2030, as can be seen in the chart below.



3. Comments

The participants were then asked whether we had missed any key areas or actions that the Council should address in the Housing Strategy 2025-2030, and they were provided with an open text box where they could add their comments. Due to the volume of responses, we have categorised each comment and will address each category below. Sometimes, one comment contains several points – in these situations, we have broken down the text into separate comments.

3.1 Adaptations

There were three comments regarding adaptations and adapted properties. In short, respondents wished for more adapted properties to be provided, for the adaptation process to be accelerated, and for disabled tenants to be consulted about their specific requirements as not all disabilities are the same.

Our response: The Council acknowledges these concerns and they have been addressed in the strategy. We have recently reviewed our Adaptations Policy and are currently working on changes to our adaptations procedures to ensure they match this updated policy, and this is in the Action Plan for this strategy. This feedback prompted a few minor changes to the text of the strategy to include information regarding the new policy and procedures.



3.2 Allocations and social housing register

There were four responses regarding the social housing register and allocations. One participant was concerned about the suitability of current bedroom size requirements under the allocations policy. Another highlighted the need to reduce underoccupancy to free up homes for others on the social housing register, particularly large households. One individual stated that the current allocations system is failing disabled people. Finally, future changes to local connection criteria affecting care leavers were mentioned.

Our response: There are legal size requirements for bedrooms, and this is outside of our control. Regarding underoccupancy, the Tenant Incentive Scheme is mentioned and aims to address this issue. Furthermore, the needs of people with disabilities are addressed in the strategy and our Allocations Policy guides how social housing is allocated to people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Lastly, changes to local connection for care leavers are relevant to the Allocations Policy and this will be updated as and when needed. No changes are proposed as a result of this feedback.

3.3 Building safety

There was one comment regarding building safety, which emphasised the need to ensure buildings are safe.

Our response: The Council acknowledges these concerns and this has been addressed in the strategy. No changes are proposed as a result of this feedback.

3.4 Domestic abuse

There were two responses regarding domestic abuse by the same respondent. They stated that more should be done to support victims of domestic abuse to remain in their council homes, and that domestic abuse training should be provided to ensure a consistent approach across teams.

Our response: The Council acknowledges these concerns and has published a Domestic Abuse Policy which sets out how we work in relation to domestic abuse. No changes are proposed based on this feedback.

3.5 Eligibility criteria

Four comments stated that UK nationals, those born in Ipswich, and/or those who pay taxes in England should be prioritised for Council housing and other support.

Our response: To prioritise individuals in this way would be discriminatory. The Council works within the law when providing support for homeless households, and this includes eligibility criteria. Social housing is allocated based on local connection criteria, as set out in our Allocations Policy. Therefore, no amendments are proposed as a result of this feedback.



3.6 Empty homes

There were three responses regarding empty homes, which stressed the need to bring empty houses and buildings back into use, with a particular emphasis on these buildings being used for housing.

Our response: The Council acknowledges this concern, and this has been addressed in the strategy. However, as a result of this feedback more explicit references to unused buildings have been added.

3.7 Focus and terminology

There were seven comments regarding the focus of the strategy and priorities, as well as the terminology used. One respondent stated that Priority 2 was too broad, whereas another respondent stated that Priority 5 was too specific and should not only concern older persons. Similarly, another participant expressed disappointment that Priority 5 did not include people with disabilities. Two participants stated that two of the main focuses of the strategy should be affordability and social housing. Another stated that the term “households” is too restrictive. Finally, a participant pointed out that there was no reference to the Housing Act 2004.

Our response: The priorities are generally set out in broad terms, but there are specific aims and actions including some that specifically concern the increase of social housing and the need to tackle affordability issues. Therefore, the strategy does address the needs of all residents, as well as the needs of particular groups, such as older, younger, disabled, and vulnerable people. Finally, the term “household” is defined by the Office for National Statistics as people living together, but it also includes one-person households. Some of our services would be provided to already established households, such as Tenancy Services, however some services provide for prospective households as well, such as Gateway to Homechoice for social housing allocations. As a result of this feedback, further references to the Housing Act 2004 were added to the strategy.

3.8 Older persons

There were two comments regarding older persons. One respondent stated that older people should be offered support to remain in their own home as this would be more cost effective than other alternatives. Another respondent stated that people over 60 are discriminated against because they are only offered sheltered housing even if they do not require it.

Our response: Both of these concerns are addressed in Priority 5. In the future, we are hoping to offer less sheltered housing and instead widen our housing offer to older persons, including Active Living Schemes and the option to adapt their current home to fit their needs. Furthermore, applicants over 60 can bid on general needs properties as well, however, they are more likely to secure sheltered housing if they bid on it as the demand is lower. No changes are proposed as a result of this feedback.



3.9 One-person households

There were three responses regarding one-person households, which all mentioned that more single adult accommodation is needed.

Our response: The strategy is based on data insight of the housing needs of Ipswich residents and the need for more accommodation for one-person households is acknowledged. Therefore, no changes are proposed as a result of this feedback.

3.10 Partnership working

There were two comments regarding partnership working. In one comment, a charity worker stated that they wished they had more knowledge of the services provided so they could support and signpost service users more effectively. Another respondent stated that more tenancy support workers and more communication between Tenancy Services and Housing Options could help to prevent homelessness.

Our response: Partnership working to support homeless people is a priority in our separate Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030. The Council acknowledges the need to work effectively across departments and this has been addressed in the strategy. No change is proposed based on this feedback.

3.11 Planning

There was one comment regarding planning, which stated that medium density mixed-use developments should be prioritised. This would enable people to easily access the facilities they need, while also maximising the use of land.

Our response: The Council acknowledges and appreciates this suggestion. The mix of new housing on Council development sites is determined by a housing mix model, and the Council also works with developers to advise on tenure mix. Our policy regarding this is outlined in the Affordable Housing Statement. Therefore, no changes are proposed as a result of this feedback.

3.12 Private rented sector

There were four responses regarding the private rented sector. Two respondents stated that the Council should work more closely with private landlords to ensure there is more housing available for those in need. Another participant stated that rents in the private sector are unaffordable, and something needs to be done to tackle this. Finally, one respondent highlighted the need, following the publication of the Stock Condition Database, for the Council to work with Safe Suffolk Renters to maintain this database and to improve the conditions of the worst privately rented properties.

Our response: The Council acknowledges the need to engage with private landlords and to tackle affordability in the private rented sector and these issues are covered in the strategy. The work carried out by LET Ipswich is also mentioned but is discussed more in-depth in the separate Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030. Finally, working with Safe Suffolk Renters in relation to the database is included as an action. As a result, no changes are proposed following this feedback.



3.13 Rough sleeping

There were four comments related to rough sleeping. Two respondents mentioned the need for more emergency off-the-street accommodation for rough sleepers. One respondent highlighted the need to deal with the varied support needs of this cohort. Finally, another participant mentioned the cycle of homelessness.

Our response: These concerns are addressed in the separate Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030. No changes are proposed as a result of this feedback.

3.14 Sustainability

Four comments concerned sustainability. Three comments made by the same participant mentioned the need to promote and provide sustainable homes, improve public transport, and use brownfield sites for development. Another respondent stated that they would like to see more green areas in the town to encourage residents to grow their own produce.

Our response: The Council acknowledges the above concerns, and the first three comments have been addressed in this strategy. However, it is unclear how the last comment directly relates to this strategy. Therefore, no changes have been proposed as a result of this feedback.

3.15 Tenancy Services

There were six comments regarding Tenancy Services. Two participants stated that the Council should communicate with tenants more meaningfully and seek to understand their personal circumstances and specific needs. One participant stated that tenancy visits from estate officers should be more regular. Another wished that the process to transfer and exchange properties was faster for those wishing to downsize, while another wished for succession rights to be implemented. Finally, another stated that Tenancy Services should be more easily accessible via phone.

Our response: Most of these concerns are addressed in the separate Tenant Engagement Strategy 2024-2027. Succession rights are set out in our Succession Policy, and anyone not eligible would be signposted to the Housing Options team for support. There are references in this strategy to the Tenant Incentive Scheme (TIS) to encourage and assist households wishing to downsize. The Council operates a targeted tenancy visit program which focuses on tenants who may require additional support, and one of the groups targeted is tenants who have not reported a repair for 24 months or more. As a result of this feedback, a reference to the targeted tenancy visits procedure has been added to Priority 3.

3.16 Younger persons

There was one response related to younger persons. The participant stated that there should be a clear move-on strategy for young people between the ages of 16 and 24, as this group often struggles to find suitable affordable accommodation.

Our response: We are developing a new Ipswich pathway and move-on process for supported housing, which is mentioned in this strategy, the Action Plan, and also in the separate Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030. No changes are proposed as a result of this feedback.



3.17 Other

One comment stated that there should be a 'deeper understanding of all barriers in applications, contacts and reports issues'. Another comment mentioned carers with a relative, either child or parent.

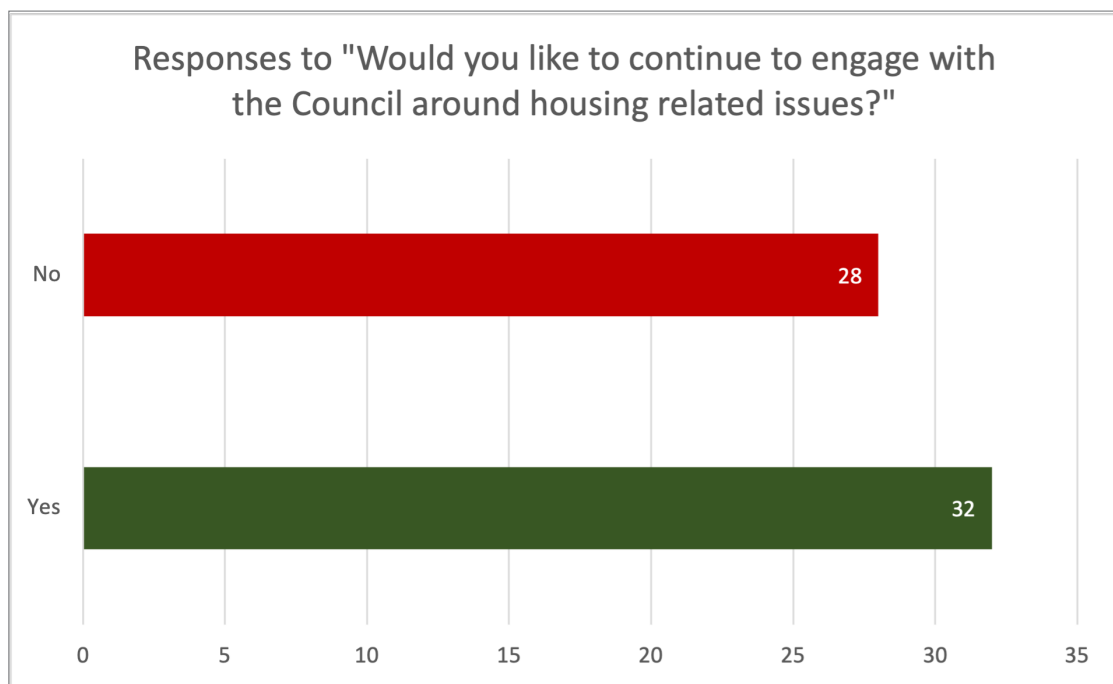
Our response: We are unable to identify the issues raised in either of these comments and it is unclear how they relate to this strategy. However, as a result of this feedback, we have reworded some of the text regarding the Equality Act to be more explicit on protected characteristics.

4. Conclusion

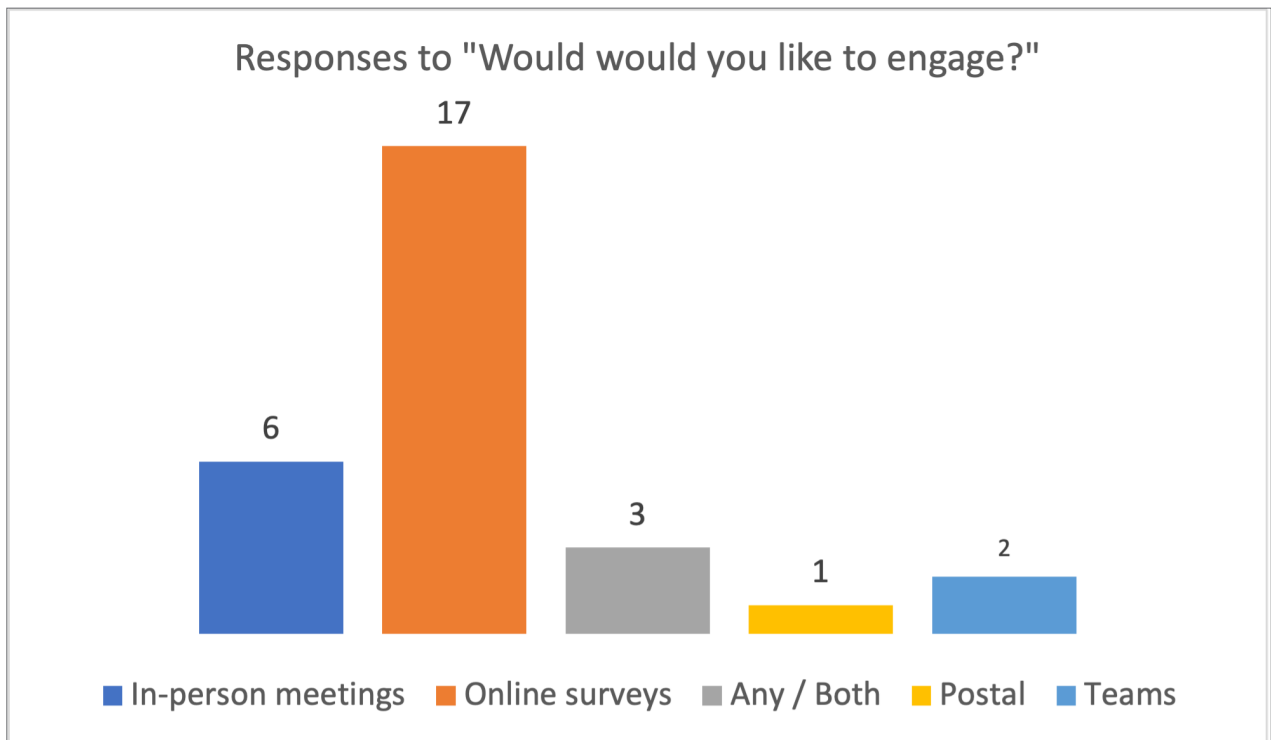
A few minor amendments were carried out to this strategy as a result of the feedback provided in the consultation survey. The majority of comments mentioned concerns that were already addressed in the Housing Strategy 2025-2030, reinforcing our view that the strategy reflects the town residents most pressing and relevant needs.

5. Future engagement

At the end of the survey, participants were asked whether they would like to continue to engage with the Council regarding housing related issues. The chart below shows that responses were mixed, with a higher number of people stating 'No' than expected considering the level of engagement we received in the survey.



Those who stated 'Yes' were then prompted to select how they would like to engage. The majority of participants wished to continue using online surveys to provide feedback, but some preferred in-person meetings.



The Council is committed to consult regularly with relevant agencies and Ipswich residents throughout the life of this strategy, both to share our progress and to understand how best to address any future concerns. Based on the feedback from this consultation, this would be best achieved with a mixture of in-person meetings and online surveys for maximum engagement.

