

Trafford Council



TRAFFORD
COUNCIL

Draft Housing Strategy 2024-2029 Initial Consultation Report



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Initial Consultation Report

Background

Trafford Council undertook an initial consultation to give residents and stakeholders an opportunity to shape Trafford’s Housing Strategy 2024-2029. The consultation consisted of an online survey which gave residents the opportunity to provide their opinions on housing in the borough, and three listening sessions where stakeholders provided their views on housing in Trafford during roundtable discussions.

This report provides a summary of the responses from the survey and listening sessions. The findings from initial consultation will be used to shape the Draft Housing Strategy 2024-2029.

Online Survey Findings

The online survey launched on 15th May 2023 and ran for a period of six weeks until 30th June 2023. Responses were received from 176 Trafford residents who provided their views on housing in the borough.

The word cloud below is made up of words most frequently used by residents and stakeholders in their responses. The size of the word demonstrates the frequency of use with larger words used more frequently and smaller words less frequently.



An analysis of the responses was undertaken, and summarised findings are detailed on the following pages.

Demographic of Respondents

The largest majority (28%) of respondents reported a household income of between £20,001 and £40,000; 12% had a household income of less than £20,001 and 16% had a household income between £40,001 and £60,000. 16% of respondents had a household income of over £60,001.



The main source of income of respondents is as follows; 64% employment; 16% pension, 5% welfare benefits, 1% student finance. 14% preferred not to say.



The respondents area of residence within Trafford is as follows; 46% Sale, 13% Stretford, 12% Urmston, 11% Partington, 11% Altrincham, 3% Hale & Bowdon, 2% Carrington, and 2% Old Trafford.



Gender

61% female, 28% male, 2% non-binary, 1% other. 8% preferred not to say.

Age

37% 55+, 16% 41 -50, 13% 25 -35, 11% 51 -54, 10% 36-40, 5% 16 -24. 9% preferred not to say.

Ethnicity

78% White British, 6% White Other, 2% Asian/Asian British, 2% Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups, 1% Other Ethnicity. 11% preferred not to say.

Sexual Orientation

71% heterosexual, 3% gay, 3% bisexual, 2% other, 1% lesbian. 20% preferred not to say.

Disability

69% do not have disability, 19% have a disability. 12% preferred not to say.

Housing Circumstances of Respondents



25% of respondents were experiencing disrepair in their home. Of these, 50% were homeowners, 23% were in social housing, and 16% were in private rented homes.



61% of respondents experiencing disrepair had structural defects in their property. 48% had issues with damp and mould, 27% had electrical defects, 2% had vermin/infestations, and 7% had 'other' disrepair issues.



32% of respondents are considering moving. Of these, 88% wanted to remain in Trafford. The most common reason was to become a homeowner.

Property Type

87% house, 11% flat, 4% bungalow, 1% refuge

Tenure

67% homeowner, 13% social tenant, 10% private tenant, 9% lodging with family, 1% shared ownership, 1% temporary accommodation, 1% other

Household Makeup

56% living with partner, 25% living alone, 17% living with parents/ family, 1% homeless, 1% living with friends, 1% other

Main Housing Issues in Trafford

Respondents were asked what they believed to be the main housing issues in the borough. This was an open question with respondents entering their response into a blank text box. From the responses, 9 clear themes emerged:

 Poor Infrastructure/insufficient amenities

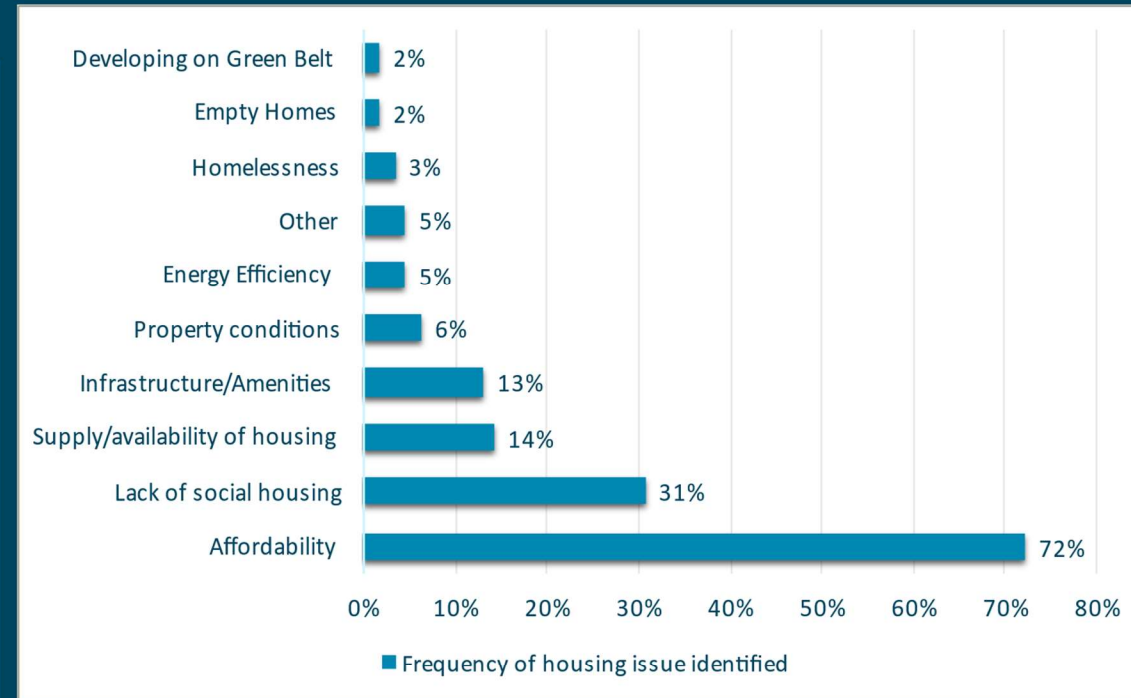
 Homelessness  Energy efficiency

 Availability of housing  Affordability

 Empty homes  Lack of social housing

 Developing on Greenbelt

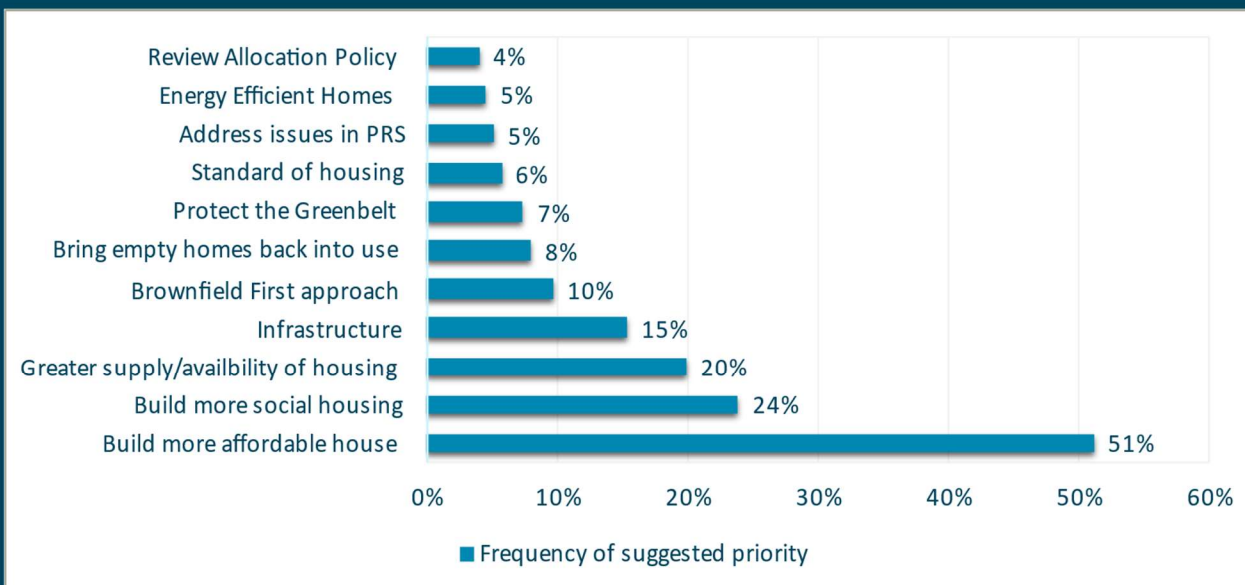
 Poor property conditions



The above chart shows the frequency of each theme occurring in respondents answers. 72% of respondents referenced affordability in their response, 31% referenced a lack of social housing, 14% referenced supply/availability of housing, and 13% referenced poor infrastructure and/or a lack of amenities when describing what they believe to be the main housing issues in Trafford.

Suggested Priorities

Respondents were asked what they believe the priorities should be for the new Housing Strategy 2024-2029. Responses were analysed and grouped into key themes, which are listed opposite:



The above chart shows the frequency of each theme occurring in respondents answers. 51% of respondents suggested building more affordable housing, 24% referenced a lack of social housing, 20% referenced supply/ availability of housing, and 15% referenced poor infrastructure and/or a lack of amenities when describing what they believe to be the main housing issues in Trafford.

Build more affordable housing

Build more social housing

Increase housing supply/ availability

Develop infrastructure / increase amenities

Take a Brownfield First approach

Bring empty properties back into use

Protect the Greenbelt

Increase standard of housing

Review Allocations Policy

Address private rented sector issues

Improve energy efficiency of new and existing homes

Q1. What should be done to create neighbourhoods of choice that address inequalities?

Address the North / South divide

Trafford has a North/South divide, with the South considered to be more affluent and less diverse. This is reflected in housing type / cost. The council should explore ways to reduce this divide and create a more equal distribution of housing across the borough.

Increase levels of supported and accessible housing

There is a need for increased awareness of neurodivergence, particularly in relation to autism, when it comes to housing in Trafford. An increase in diagnoses may lead to a greater need for supported housing in the future and the definition of 'suitable adaptation' may need to be updated to reflect the differing needs of those with neurodivergent conditions. A lack of suitable housing for those with high level support needs was also highlighted.

Improve mixture of tenure and property types

A successful neighbourhood would offer a wide range of different housing on the same site e.g., 1 to 5 bed homes with varied tenure, including market housing. Community cohesion is also important and buy in from the local community should be encouraged by the council. Trafford could look to utilise Area Action Plans to assist with this.

Improve infrastructure and amenities

Partington was highlighted as an area that is lacking in infrastructure and amenities, particularly transport links and shops. Attendees suggested green spaces and active travel need to be improved across the borough, access to schools in areas of high development needs to be improved, and greater opportunities for socialisation/activity needs to be created for families, children, and the elderly.

Increase amount of affordable housing

Affordable housing should be available in all neighbourhoods to address inequalities within the borough. However, the challenge is that affordable housing obtains bigger land values which reduces viability from a development perspective.

Q2. What can we do to end homelessness in Trafford?

Reform the private rented sector

Tackle the unaffordability of private sector housing by offering those on low incomes financial assistance towards rents. Trafford should also take a firm approach of enforcement against rogue landlords.

Increase housing supply

Trafford need to increase the level of affordable and supported housing in the borough for those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. There is a need for more appropriate housing for specific cohorts such as arsonists and entrenched rough sleepers, who are the most difficult to rehouse.

Improve Housing Options Service Trafford (HOST)

HOST should make better use of the Homeless Prevention Grant to incentivise private landlords, raise awareness of duty to refer, and increase multi-agency working. The service also needs to be more accessible for those with hidden disabilities such as neurodivergence. The induction process for staff should be improved and formalised. A Housing First approach should be standard.

Improve understanding of homelessness

Some areas within Trafford hold prejudice opinions of homeless individuals, which has caused opposition to homeless accommodation schemes at planning stage. Trafford should look to increase awareness/understanding of homelessness and those affected by it to break down these barriers. Basic training on housing and homelessness should be given to all frontline services.

Focus on Prevention

The council should provide financial assistance to residents affected by fuel poverty and the cost-of-living crisis to prevent homelessness. In addition, the Tenancy Support Service should be increased so more households who require support can receive it before reaching crisis point.

Q3. What can we do to address the sustainability and zero carbon challenges for new and existing homes?

Improve existing stock

Retrofitting of existing housing stock is both a necessity and a challenge; clever use of resources/financial modelling will be required. The council should advertise retrofit schemes to a greater degree, highlighting the benefits of such schemes. Trafford should introduce that only properties with an Energy Efficiency Rating of D or above can be rented in the borough. A greater effort should be made to engage homeowners.

Focus on sustainability for new housing

Places for Everyone and Trafford's Local Plan will be key to enforcing the zero carbon priorities. All new properties should be expected to provide Energy Efficiency Ratings of B or above rather than focusing on net zero carbon targets.

Work with RPs and Developers

Targets for sustainability/zero carbon in Trafford are more tailored towards Registered Providers than private developers, which needs addressing. All developers should be targeted at planning stage around sustainability and zero carbon.

Make use of government funding

New measures are costly and current grants are not meeting the costs sustained which leads to viability issues for developers. There are also shortages supplychain issues related to alternative suitable heat and solar sources, which needs to be addressed. Trafford Council needs to ensure that Registered Providers receive the funding they need to improve existing homes.

Consider commercial properties

The council should focus on improving the efficiency of commercial properties as well as residential. Commercial properties should be included in considerations for schemes for Solar Panels and Air Source Heat Pumps. It needs to be established whether Registered Providers current monitor their carbon usage for operations and estates, as only if it's monitored can it be reduced.

Q4. What do you feel are the issues in the private rented sector in Trafford?

Affordability

Upfront costs, rents, and service charges are much higher than other areas in Greater Manchester, especially for schemes that have concierge and specialist management. Local Housing Allowance rates are not reflective of rents, so those on benefits/low incomes are priced out.

Property conditions

There's a lack of work around disrepair and property conditions, with reports of damp and mould often not taken seriously. Tenants are often reluctant to complain due to fear of retaliation/eviction. Trafford need to be tougher on enforcement of repairs.

Not enough variety of homes

There is a lack of appropriate housing in the private sector for those with medical or health needs, which puts a bigger strain on social housing supply. Trafford should increase the number of private rented adapted properties and make it easier for private tenants to get adaptations.

Lack of security

There is no long-term security for private tenants. Landlords are aware of the demand for private rented properties in the borough and can increase rents on a whim, forcing existing tenants to look for more affordable homes.

Lack of advice and support for landlords

The advice and support offer for landlords could be improved; some landlords may not be familiar with legislation/law around being a landlord. Trafford should survey landlords to find out what support advice they require to continue to let properties. If the support and advice offer was improved more property owners may be encouraged to rent their properties.

Q5. What is meant by 'truly affordable housing' and what can we do to increase affordable housing in Trafford?

Clearly define 'affordable housing'

Residents are being priced out of what was previous considered 'affordable' in the borough. Trafford should consider developing a plain English definition of what 'affordable housing' means. Affordable housing should be considered by sub-area rather than borough and should be linked to local wages e.g. lower quartile income levels, no more than 25% of income or 3x annual salary.

Rethink the allocation of affordable housing

Trafford should ensure affordable housing goes to those who need it and prevent it being bought for other purposes such as buy to let/ Airbnb. Good practise should be shared between local authorities e.g. Liverpool have a band in their allocation policy for residents who are spending more than 40% of income on rent.

Review Planning process for affordable housing

The Planning process in Trafford is slow and can be challenging as the external viability consultant drives a hard bargain. Trafford should expedite applications that include affordable housing, and should consider subsidising schemes if they would reduce costs in other areas e.g. supported schemes.

Work with Registered Providers

Registered Providers are finding it increasingly difficult to deliver affordable homes due to competing priorities e.g., retrofit, sustainability, net zero etc., as the cost of developing is not in line with what an affordable property sells for/yields in rent. Trafford should set up a forum with Planners, Housing Strategy, RPs and Developers, and should consider subsidising affordable housing schemes.

Homes England grants / funding

Trafford should look to develop a long-term plan with SHP and Homes England to bring issues around grants / funding for affordable housing to light. There are difficulties when relying solely on RPs to provide affordable housing. Homes England should look at grant rates on a scale which vary depending on area and/ or grant rates should be based on local land values.

Q6. What do you think are the key housing issues in Trafford?

Affordability

Private rents in Trafford do not align with the Local Housing Allowance rates and do not reflect the real income of residents. Social housing rents have also increased, and home ownership is unattainable for those on lower to medium incomes. More genuinely affordable housing is needed.

Lack of specialist housing

The level of supported housing needs to be increased, especially for those with high-level/complex needs. More consideration should be given to accessible housing and meeting the needs of those with disabilities, making sure there is accessible housing in all areas. Trafford should establish the level of accommodation required for those with disabilities, and future proof for this.

Not enough variety of homes

There is a shortage of bungalows and level access accommodation, and a lack of 1-bed, 4-bed, and adapted properties. There is also a shortage of both social and private rented housing in the borough. Trafford could analyse Registered Provider mutual exchange data to identify trends as to what type of housing is in highest demand.

Poor property standards

Properties of homeowners are declining in their current states with households unable to afford repairs. Existing social housing stock is deteriorating and requires significant repairs, for which there is currently backlogs and barriers. There is also not enough focus on carbon neutral homes and retrofitting.

Insufficient housing for ageing population

There is an aging population in Trafford with a housing need that must be addressed. Not all older people want extra care housing; there is a need to diversify both the type and range of housing options for older people. There should be more focus on creating appealing downsizing options, taking into account the desires of older people who are currently under-occupying their homes.

Conclusion

The views of residents and stakeholders captured within the online survey and the listening sessions will be used as a reference point when drafting Trafford's Housing Strategy 2024-2029.

The findings provide valuable insight into the housing challenges faced by Trafford residents and highlight areas the council must focus on in order to provide actionable solutions. This insight will be captured within the draft Vision and Strategic Priorities within the Housing Strategy 2024-2029.

Trafford Council would like to thank all residents and stakeholders who contributed to the Initial Consultation.

