



State of Housing in Norwich 2026



Welcome



Contents

1.	Executive Summary	4
2.	Introduction	6
3.	Housing in Norwich: Current Landscape	8
4.	Transport and Connectivity	14
5.	Lived Experiences: Case Studies	16
6.	Planning and Development	19
7.	Age Friendly Principles	22
8.	Data Gaps and Future Needs	24
9.	Key Findings and Gaps	26
10.	Key Highlights and Recommendations	28

1

Executive Summary

In 2024, Age UK Norwich and Norwich City Council (NCC) joined the Age Friendly Communities Network, a World Health Organisation (WHO) programme delivered in the UK by the Centre for Ageing Better.



World Health
Organization

As part of this process, the city completed a benchmark assessment and published The State of Ageing in Norwich report (SOAIN), which set out the overall picture of what it is like to grow older in Norwich.



That report brought together a wide range of data and lived experience across the eight WHO Age Friendly domains, establishing a shared understanding of the key factors that shape later life in the city.

A central question emerging from this work was: are we ready for the growth in the older population? While Norwich has a younger age profile than many parts of Norfolk, the number of older people living in the city and using its services and assets will continue to grow. How well the city prepares for this change will have a direct impact on health, independence, demand on public services and quality of life in later years.*

Housing quickly emerged as one of the most critical issues when exploring this question. Engagement with older residents consistently identified housing as a priority, alongside transport and health. This lived experience closely mirrored the data, which shows clear links between housing quality and adverse health outcomes in Norwich, including excess winter deaths and high levels of respiratory illness. These conditions disproportionately affect older people and are often associated with cold, damp, poorly insulated or inaccessible homes. Together, the evidence points to housing as a key factor in determining whether the city is prepared for an ageing population. Healthy Housing is a bedrock of a healthy population.

This report therefore provides a focused, in-depth examination of housing for older people in Norwich, asking whether the current housing system is equipped to meet both today's needs and those of a larger older population in the future. It brings together insight from Norwich City Council, housing providers, developers, voluntary and community organisations, and older residents themselves. It considers the full range of housing options and the wider built environment within the specific context of Norwich as a historic, moderately dense city with a walkable centre and varied residential areas.

The purpose of this report is to understand how well Norwich is currently positioned. It identifies strengths in existing provision, highlights gaps and pressures, and sets out where improvement and adaptation are required if older people are to live independently, safely and well.



By bringing together data, professional insight and lived experience, the report provides a practical evidence base to inform planning, investment and service design.

Housing is one of the eight core domains of the WHO Age Friendly Cities and Communities framework. Ensuring that Norwich has the right homes, in the right places, and of the right quality is therefore fundamental to the city's Age Friendly ambitions.

*This report refers to older people from an Age UK perspective this is people over the age of 50. NCC's sheltered housing is for people over 60 and other organisations have different definitions of an older person. Therefore, we have data gaps which would benefit from using a mutual definition.

2

Introduction



About Norwich

Norwich is the only city in Norfolk. The latest [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) mid-year population data](#) indicates Norwich's population is approximately 147,000. The council area covers 40.55 km² with a population density of about 3,614 persons/km² (vs 407 in England; 353 ex-London). Norwich has a distinctive age profile due to its two universities: the largest band is 20–24. By 2028, under-25s are projected at 35.9% (highest in Norfolk) while 65+ are projected at 16.2% (lowest). Despite being a smaller cohort, some older residents face distinctive housing challenges.

Some people have housing precarity in later life; the traditional vision of retirement is of leisure, family time and new pursuits, but this depends on financial security and stable housing. However, Crisis research (August 25) reveals these ideals remain distant for many older people in the UK. The housing crisis is forcing some older people to reduce spending on hobbies and heating, limit time with family, delay retirement and seek work again. Their research highlights widespread fears about homelessness in retirement and the severe consequences when these fears materialise.

In the UK culture there is still traditional assumption such as owning your own home by the point you retire or having the independence to maintain and live in your own home safely. These can influence local policy decisions.

In Norwich's Reducing Inequality Target Areas (RITAs), disability levels are higher, life expectancy is shorter, and poverty levels fall within the top 10% nationally. For example, older people in these areas may need more support to remain living independently in their homes.

Through the provision of housing there is an opportunity to address population health issues through effective preventative planning across districts, population health, social care and NHS.

A widespread societal belief exists that growing old inevitably leads to residential care. However, this narrative does not reflect statistical reality: the vast majority of older people live independently in their own homes throughout their later years. ONS data tell us that just 2.5% of older people (aged 65 and over) live in care homes, yet common public assumptions lead people to believe it is much higher. As Norwich's older population grows, our housing landscape must adapt to support this reality by providing diverse, financially viable, socially connected and sustainable housing options that enable people to age well in their communities.

Age Friendly Housing Principles

The [World Health Organisations](#) has eight domains of Age Friendly Communities. These domains are part of a framework first published in 2007, which cover the key components of places that impact on how well people age.

The principles of Age Friendly housing are designed to support the wellbeing and independence of older people. These principles include Accessibility, Inclusivity, Flexibility, Community Integration and Well-being (more detailed information later in the report).

Refer to the recommendations for best practice guidance.

3

Housing in Norwich:
Current Landscape

Housing Supply Overview

The following table provides a comprehensive breakdown of specialist housing for older people in Norwich, but there are still data gaps:

Housing Type	Current Supply	Occupancy Rate	Waiting List Length	Projected Need by 2041*	Shortfall
Sheltered Housing	2,100 homes	data is unavailable	data is unavailable	2,515 homes	415 homes
Enhanced Sheltered	101 homes	data is unavailable	data is unavailable	[data is unavailable Forecast required]	[data is unavailable Analysis required]
Extra Care Housing	192 homes	data is unavailable	data is unavailable	477 homes	285 homes
Retirement Village	98 homes	data is unavailable	data is unavailable	[data is unavailable Forecast required]	[data is unavailable Analysis required]

Housing characteristics: Norwich has 69,160 properties. ONS 2021 sets out social rent is 30.3%, Home ownership 42.6%, private rented 27.0%, rent free 0.2%. This shapes options for older residents (downsizing, accessibility and affordability).

Housing scale: As of October 2025, Norwich City Council owns 14,211 properties (13,291 general needs; 915 sheltered). Much of the municipal housing dates from 1965–1982 and will need accessibility and energy-efficiency upgrades. This will be managed through the council’s planned works programme.

Within Sheltered Housing provision specifically, NCC is landlord for 915 homes (mainly one-bed bungalows and flats) across 26 schemes, all with 24/7 alarm security and access to a tenure neutral handyperson service launched to help vulnerable residents with small tasks that improve safety and independence at home. These properties are available to people over 60 via the council’s housing register.

Demand pressures: There is high demand for affordable housing in Norwich, including for older residents seeking to ‘right-size or benefit from accessible properties.

*According to the Norfolk Older Persons Housing Options Study (2021)

Norwich offers a diverse range of housing options for older residents, reflecting a mix of tenure types, care models, and accessibility features. Provision includes sheltered housing, enhanced sheltered housing, extra care housing, and a retirement village, each catering to different levels of support and independence, alongside homeownership and private sector rental.

Norfolk County Council hosts the [Norfolk Community Directory](#) listing care homes, nursing homes and housing with care; the Department of Health and Social Care hosts a Capacity Tracker for vacancy information — but neither covers mainstream older people's housing types.

The area benefits from a strong existing supply, well established sheltered and extra care provision, and secure tenancies that support ageing in place. However, challenges include an ageing housing profile, limited development of new specialist housing, and pressure on the housing register.

Accessibility Context

Within Norwich there are limited properties that meet the Government's M4(2) accessibility construction standard, however, much of the sheltered housing provision and specialist older persons accommodation are more accessible than 'general needs' properties. The council also administers Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) via the Home Improvement team and provides necessary adaptations for all residents on a tenure neutral basis. Common adaptations include ramps, stairlifts, wet rooms, Closomat toilets and occasionally through-floor lifts or property reconfigurations or extensions.

Tenure Landscape for Older People in Norwich

Only 56% of residents aged 75+ in Norwich are homeowners.

(lowest rate in Norfolk).

Consequently 44% are renters, much higher than in rural districts with implications for affordability, stability and suitability for ageing in place.



Private Rented Sector

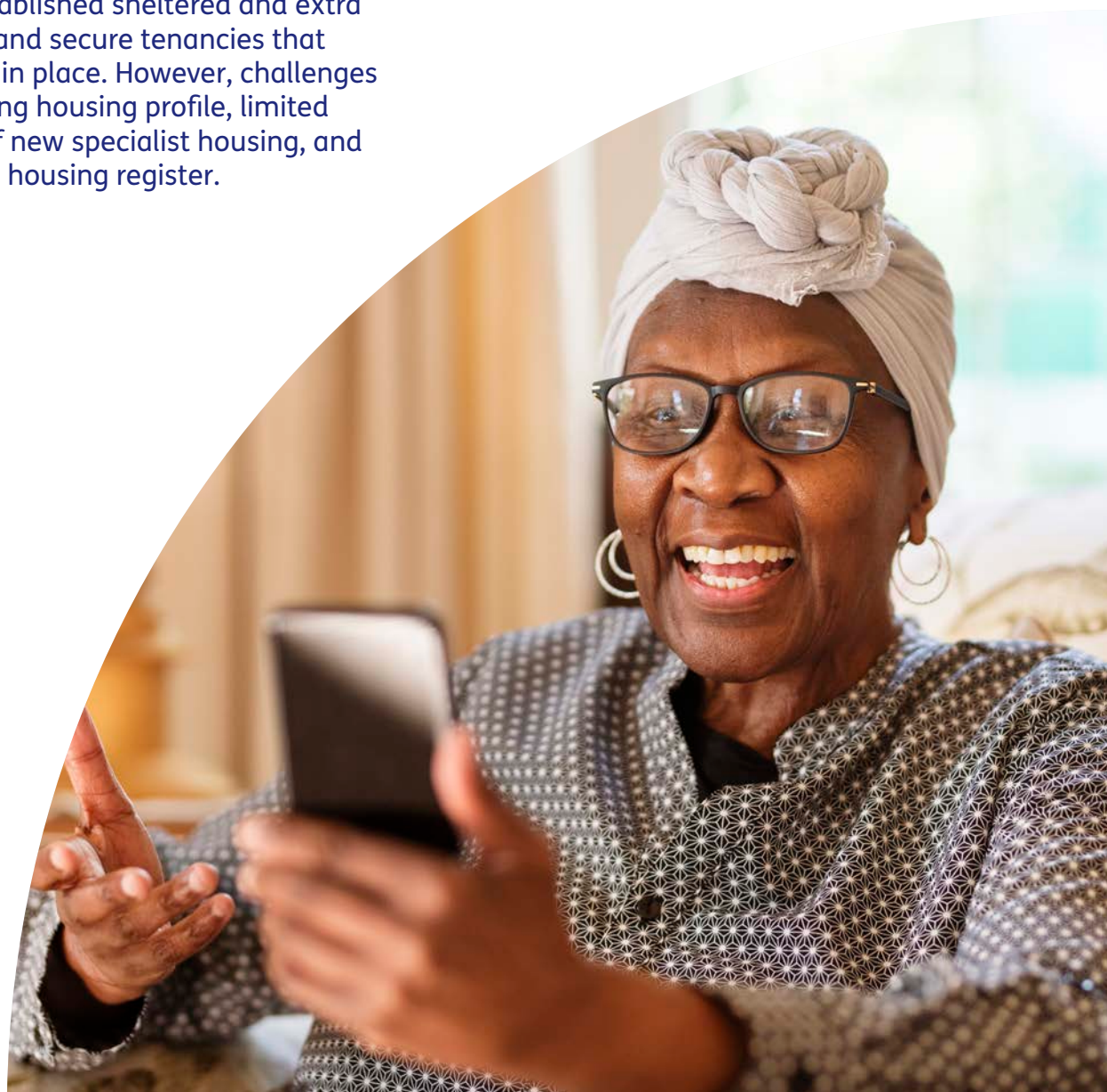
National research shows nearly 867,000 households where the lead tenant is someone aged 55+ now rent privately, a 70% increase since 2010/11, a trend particularly salient in Norwich's PRS-heavy market.

Affordability pressures in the private rented sector can have a significant impact on people who rely on fixed or limited incomes, particularly as rents continue to rise. This can create ongoing concerns about financial stability and housing security, with these issues often being especially pronounced for older people who can depend on pensions or other fixed incomes.

[The Renters' Rights Act 2025](#) (from May 2026) abolishes Section 21 no-fault evictions, constrains rent increases and strengthens rights to request reasonable adaptations (non-essential changes may be required to be reversible).

Social Housing

Norwich ranks in the top 3% of English local authorities for social housing provision (approx. 14,500 homes; 22.1% of total housing). Among social tenants, 43.3% are aged 55+ and 27.4% report a disability. Much of the council homes dates from 1960–1990, with the council currently engaged in a program to deliver upgrades and energy improvements to its housing.



Owner Occupation

Despite the lower homeownership rate among older people in Norwich, 56% of 75+ households are owner-occupiers. (2021 Census data).

Local services such as the Integrated Home Improvement Team at Norwich City Council have supported over 400 residents aged 65+ in 2024–25 with grants and assistances totaling more than £1.6m. Adaptations have included stairlifts, level-access showers, handrails and essential repairs to reduce the risk of falls and support independence.

Other options to support independent living include downsizing/rightsizing, retirement housing (buy or shared ownership).

But barriers still include include moving costs, limited supply of suitable accessible homes, maintenance/fuel costs, emotional ties and the equity-rich/income-poor paradox.

Adaptations and Home Automation

In 2023/24, 456 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) were completed in Norwich (total spend £2.8m); 51% of recipients were aged 66+.

The Integrated Anticipatory Care Team (INTERACT) is a partnership including Norwich City Council, the Integrated Care Board (ICB), Age UK Norwich and Norfolk Citizens’ Advice. The service supported 73 residents, aged 65+ in 2024/25, living in very complex circumstances, through decluttering, essential works, moves to suitable housing and connections to benefits, health / wellbeing services and community support.

Safe Habitable Homes, a partnership including Norwich City Council, the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and St Martin’s Housing Trust, supported 22 older people with severe self-neglect and/or hoarding risks. The council has adopted a Vulnerability Framework to ensure person-centered practice and inclusivity.

Home automation can simplify daily tasks (i.e lighting, heating, door operation and safety sensors and promote independence, aligning with Foundations’ guidance ‘enhancing comfort and autonomy’. This is typically accessed via Norfolk County Council’s Assistive Technology Team.

Housing Quality and Health

Unsafe, cold or hazardous homes worsen health outcomes and lead to avoidable costs to health and social care.

The Social Housing Regulation Act 2025 and Awaab’s Law (October 2025) require Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to address hazards and emphasise their responsibility to provide safe and comfortable homes.

In April 2025, a three-year Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund programme began to make council homes warmer, greener and cheaper to run.

Norwich City Council’s Integrated Home Improvement Team also support safe discharge home from hospital and preventative home-focused support through INTERACT which strengthens health, safety and independence at home. Both of these services are tenure neutral, so also support homeowners not just council tenants.

Factors that influence health

Socioeconomic Factors

Education | Job status | Family/social support
Income | Community safety

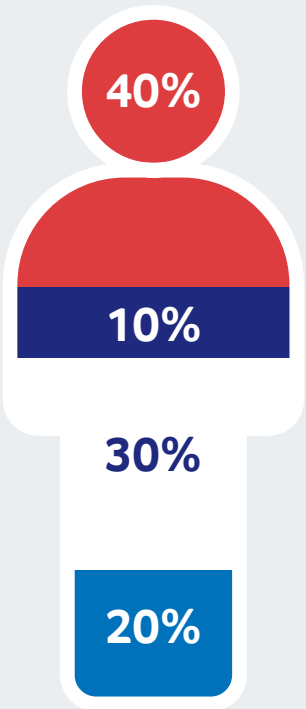
Physical Environment

Health Behaviours

Tobacco use | Diet and exercise | Alcohol use | Sexual activity

Health Care NHS

Access to care | Quality of care



Original source
Public Health England

Image supplied by
Corton House & Brewster Court

4

Transport and Connectivity

Transport is a lifeline in later life, enabling access to services, social connections and wellbeing. Norwich benefits from the Transport for Norwich (TfN) programme, focusing on buses, active travel, congestion reduction and sustainable travel, with a partnership approach to meeting residents' needs.



Specialist housing for older people should be in areas with good access to public transport and essential services; town center and service adjacent locations are preferred for those who no longer drive or have limited mobility.

Some sheltered housing schemes, i.e. Doughty's Almshouse in Norwich have invested in their own minibuses to ensure residents can access local facilities and link to public transport hubs.

Location standards

Due to the city's layout and the importance of local connectivity, there is increased value in ensuring that older residents live in walkable, public transport oriented locations. This includes meeting key locational standards such as being within 400 metres of accessible bus stops and within 800 metres of essential services and providing safe, well maintained pedestrian routes with adequate seating and dropped kerbs.

The Later Life Provider Network produced a Transport report in March 2024 highlighting how transport is a lifeline in later life helping keep people independent, healthy, active and connected.



5

Lived Experiences: Case Studies

Image supplied by
Corton House & Brewster Court

Case studies illustrate how accessibility, transport, neighbourhood amenities, and on-site support enable independence and wellbeing.

CASE STUDY 1:

Brakendon Close (Corton House)

51 flats/bungalows

Resident valued communal facilities, activities, and proximity to amenities; optional meals and cleaning reduce burden of home maintenance.

CASE STUDY 2:

Ashby Court (Places for People)

31 flats

Pavements and dropped kerbs enable scooter access to shops; bus stop nearby; community activities and 24/7 manager support provide reliable backup.



Image supplied by
Corton House & Brewster Court

CASE STUDY 3:

Doughty's Almshouse
(operated by Norwich Consolidated Charities)

57 self-contained flats

Resident avoided homelessness following no-fault eviction by moving into almshouse with extra-care support.

CASE STUDY 4:

Mature student
(wheelchair user)

Experienced discrimination and unsuitable housing; emergency modifications improved access but fundamental suitability issues remain, highlighting systemic gaps.

CASE STUDY 5:

NCC Home Improvement Team

Post-fall adaptations (stairlift, wet room, safe garden steps) restored safety and independence at home.

CASE STUDY 6:

INTERACT

Decluttering, essential items, handrails and referrals (community physio, Stroke Association) rebuilt confidence; resident walked to shops and used bus to city center for first time in 30 years.

6

Planning and Development

Norwich's demographic profile, characterised by a generally younger population overall, a high proportion of private rented housing, and an older cohort facing acute affordability and accessibility pressures, strengthens the case for Age Friendly planning and more ambitious accessibility targets.



Housing developments

Much-needed affordable housing is set to be delivered in Norwich through a new five-year partnership between Norwich City Council and Orwell Housing. The collaboration means council-owned land will be gifted to Orwell Housing for housing development and new homes will be allocated to applicants on the council's home options register.

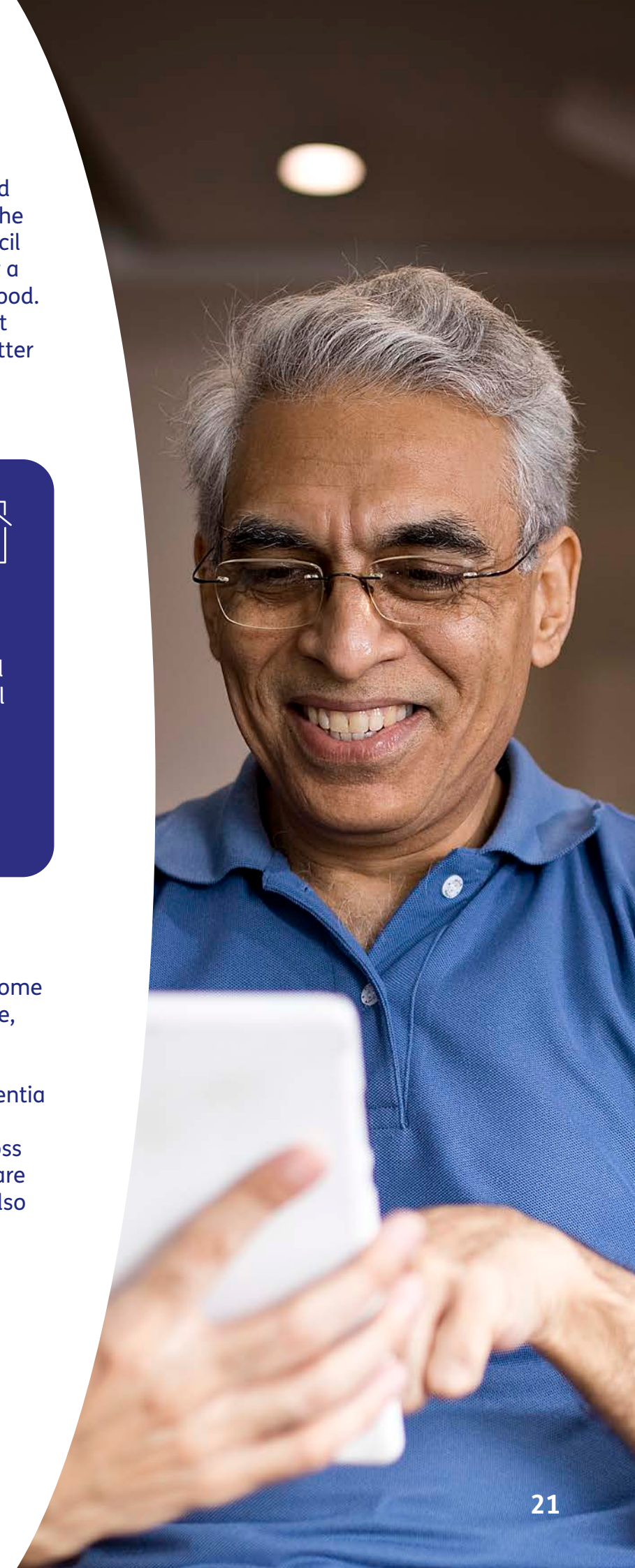
The redevelopment in the city centre of Anglia Square aims to deliver a significant number of affordable, well connected homes designed to support residents through improved accessibility and upgraded public space. Enhanced pedestrian environments and better connectivity will create a safer, more inclusive place to move around. The development also includes health and community spaces.

Outside the city centre on council owned land in Mile Cross, work has started on the first phase of construction on new council homes, creating a strong foundation for a well designed and inclusive neighbourhood. A proportion of these homes will be built to M4(2) construction standards and better supporting the needs of older and disabled residents.

Best practice examples from the UK utilising Locational standards which are the new rules of measurement for building works (called NRM2 400 m/800 m) developments including Angel Yard in Norwich (cohousing), Swallowtail Place in Acle (integrated care), Appleby Blue in London (dementia-friendly almshouse) and Belong Villages across the UK (intergenerational models).



New developments provide valuable opportunities to integrate digital and technological solutions such as smart home features, broadband ready infrastructure, telehealth compatibility and accessible interfaces that can better support older residents. At the same time, rising dementia prevalence highlights the need to apply dementia friendly design principles across all schemes, ensuring that new homes are not only technologically equipped but also intuitive, safe and supportive for people living with cognitive impairment.



7

Age Friendly Principles



There has been significant global research into the age friendly principles and the benefits of embedding them in the design and development of housing, suggesting that where possible development of future housing should align with Age Friendly principles.



Examples of those principles guiding housing developers and planning authorities are Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) principles, part M of building regulations and accessibility should be embedded across all specialist and mainstream housing. Key HAPPI features: generous space, natural light, private outdoor areas, step-free access, adaptability, communal facilities, secure entrances, digital infrastructure and proximity to services.

Policy should require M4(2) as construction standard and a proportion to the higher standard of M4(3) for wheelchair-user dwellings, with mixed-tenure and well-connected locations, aligning to the WHO Age-Friendly Cities framework.

Recent local developments illustrate these HAPPI principles in practice; evidence shows the right housing support at the right time improves discharge and reduces readmissions.



8

Data Gaps and Future Needs

Because a wide range of organisations are involved in supporting older and disabled residents, including housing providers, health partners and support services there are several shared challenges that present opportunities for improvement.

Key gaps include:

- Incomplete data on accessibility and location of 'age friendly' properties, we need to instigate an up-to-date 'Accessible Housing Register' held by every local authority, based on standardised, nationally consistent terminology, categories and definitions that relate to construction standards M 4(2) or M4(3).
- Inconsistent information on adapted properties, require Category M4 (2) and Category M4 (3) dwellings to be identified as such in promotional and lettings literature.
- Lack of information for health and other professionals about the importance of housing in later life and available resources to help improve people's accommodation.
- Improved communications from housing providers on what is available, will help people access relevant support.
- Due to the high level of demand for and financial strain on health, housing and social care services, some residents may need to wait for longer than they would like for assistance.
- 60+ impacts to service availability. This should be driven by need, not age.

Addressing these gaps would help create a more joined up, proactive approach to planning and delivering accessible, well supported housing across the city, with transparency to residents to support awareness and decision making.

9

Key Findings and Gaps



Norwich’s tenure landscape presents both opportunities and challenges for delivering Age Friendly housing.

Strengths to Build Upon



- Norwich has a strong social housing sector with 21.1% of housing being Registered Social Landlords (RSL), supporting many older residents (43.3% of tenants aged 55+; 27.4% disabled).
- Established specialist housing infrastructure across sheltered, enhanced sheltered, extra care and supported housing models.
- Both nationally and locally there is growing recognition of benefits of developing new build accessible, age friendly housing, meaning that people can retain their housing as long as required.

Critical Gaps to Address



- Making sure people know how to access the support where they are.
- Encouraging RSLs and their housing providers to implement the latest accessibility and good homes standards where possible.
- Older renters spend nearly 40% of income on rent leading to affordability challenges.
- People are living longer, which suggests there is a need for more specialist housing to meet these needs.

Policy Priorities

Age Friendly - All businesses (including housing providers) in Norwich should be encouraged to sign up to take the pledge to become Age Friendly Employers, building on the foundation of City becoming an Age Friendly community.

All planning and development teams embed the age friendly principles and Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) principles.

Work with key stakeholders to create an Age-Friendly Housing Partnership aiming to launch of a targeted awareness campaign and develop longer term comprehensive Age Friendly Housing Strategy.



10

Key Highlights and Recommendations



1 Significant Supply Shortage: Norwich faces a projected shortfall of 285 extra care housing and up to 415 sheltered housing supply by 2041*, representing a critical gap in provision for our ageing population.

2 Tenure Inequality: With only 56% of older households (75+) in homeownership—the lowest rate in Norfolk—Norwich’s older residents face unique challenges in accessing appropriate housing options.

3 Accessibility Crisis: More people require accessible accommodation as they age which increases the demand for ground floor and level access accommodation.

4 Transport-Housing Disconnect: Many existing housing schemes lack adequate proximity to public transport and essential services, limiting independence and community connection.

5 Health Disconnect: Segregation of population ages within housing, limited social prescribing connected to the environment and physical/social activity impacts health and wellbeing.

**According to the Norfolk Older Persons Housing Options Study (2021)



Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the support and collaboration of everyone involved in the collation of this resource in particular Norwich City Council, Abbeyfield's, Alzheimer's Society, Bridge Plus+ Limited, Corton House, Deaf Connexions, Doughty's Almshouse (Norwich Consolidated Charities), Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC), Shelter, McCarthy Stone, The Mercers Company, Norfolk Older People's Strategic Partnership, Norwich Housing Society, Orbit Housing, St Martins Housing and The Great Hospital for sharing their expertise for this research. To JLL for generously facilitating Bewonder's pro-bono design services, which have brought this publication to life.



The Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) Principles

The HAPPI principles are based on 10 key design criteria. They are important to older persons' housing which needs to both an attractive alternative to the family home and be able to adapt over time to meet changing needs. They reflect:

- Space and flexibility
- Daylight in the home and in shared spaces
- Balconies and outdoor space
- Adaptability and 'care ready' design
- Positive use of circulation space
- Shared facilities and 'hubs'
- Plants, trees, and the natural environment
- Energy efficiency and sustainable design
- Storage for belongings and bicycles
- External shared surfaces and 'home zones'

Best Practice Guides

Developers can refer here:

- [Checklist of essential features of age-friendly cities](#)
- [ADFL ebook](#)
- [Centre of Ageing Better Resources](#)





Denise Troughton, former Age UK Norwich's Policy & Campaign Lead, was the primary author of this report.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks for her expertise, insight, and dedication throughout its development. We would also like to thank JLL and Bewonder for their generous support with the design and production of this report, provided as a gift-in-kind to Age UK Norwich as part of their wider support to Age UK's across the UK.

How you can **help**:

Learn: Visit: www.agefriendlynorwich.org and find out more about the domains and sign-up to our newsletter.

Pledge: Show your support by becoming an Age Friendly Employer. www.ageing-better.org.uk/age-friendlyemployer-pledge

Get Involved:

- Become an Age Friendly Champion in your workplace or community.
- If you're 50+ and share your experiences to help influence change

If you would like to speak to us, please email:

Dan Skipper
Chief Executive Officer, Age UK Norwich:
dan.skipper@ageuknorwich.org.uk

Norwich City Council:
strategy@norwich.gov.uk