



Consultation Report: Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy 2025 - 2030

Contents

Aims of the consultation	3
Approach to consultation	3
Demographics of respondents to the public consultation	4
Summary of Feedback.....	6
Consultation Questions and Responses.....	6
Action taken in response to consultation feedback	11

Aims of the consultation

We wanted to gather views on our new draft Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy 2025-2030. It sets out how we will manage and look after our council housing, buildings and land spaces.

It will guide our future strategic property decisions to make sure we manage our portfolio sustainably and efficiently so that it can adapt to remain fit for the future and support frontline delivery. Our assets are an important part of supporting and enabling us to transform the way we deliver public services with our partners and it is therefore essential that we have an innovative and forward thinking strategy in place.

The strategy will guide our approach over the next 5 years in how we look after this and invest in the future. The last strategy was written in 2017. A lot has changed since then. Today, we have higher building costs, higher interest rates, higher cost-of-living and new legal standards to meet.

Housing need and demand in Sandwell is also higher. There are more people approaching us for affordable housing. We need to increase the right types of homes in the right places. Through building, changing, buying and adapting homes. This new draft strategy will help us plan our approach and make Sandwell Council “a great place to live and work”.

Approach to consultation

Public consultation on the draft Strategy ran for a 6-week period from 1st September until 13th October 2023. Two versions of the Strategy were uploaded to the online consultation page – the full version of the strategy and a summarised version for people interested in the key highlights.

The Community Partnerships Team supported to increase the number of residents and community groups we heard from by promoting the consultation across their networks, providing paper copies where required and supporting individuals to complete the consultation online. The aim of the consultation was to include as many different voices and points of view as possible.

We have shared the draft Strategy with various stakeholders including:

- SMBC members
- Shared via internal communications - newsletters, Elected Members updates
- Registered providers operating in and with an interest in Sandwell
- West Midlands local authorities
- Black Country Health and Housing Partnership
- Sandwell’s Tenant and Resident Scrutiny Group
- Housing and advice organisations in the voluntary and community sector
- Homes England and the Regulator of Social Housing
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)
- Shared via housing forums and networks such as the Homelessness Forum, the West Midlands Housing Officer Group, and the Housing Partnership Forum

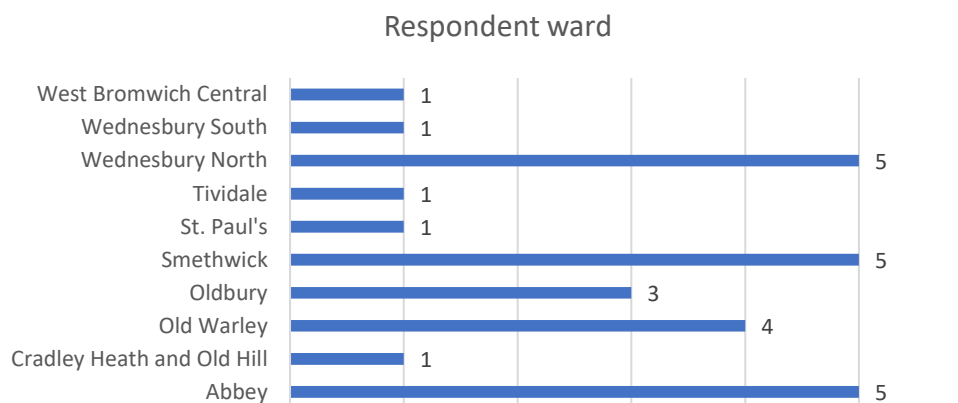
In total, we received a total of **30** responses to the Sandwell Council Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy public consultation (online and through both workshops and focus group events).

In addition, responses were also received from elected members when the strategy was presented to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny (SNAC) Board on 26th September 2023.

Demographics of respondents to the public consultation

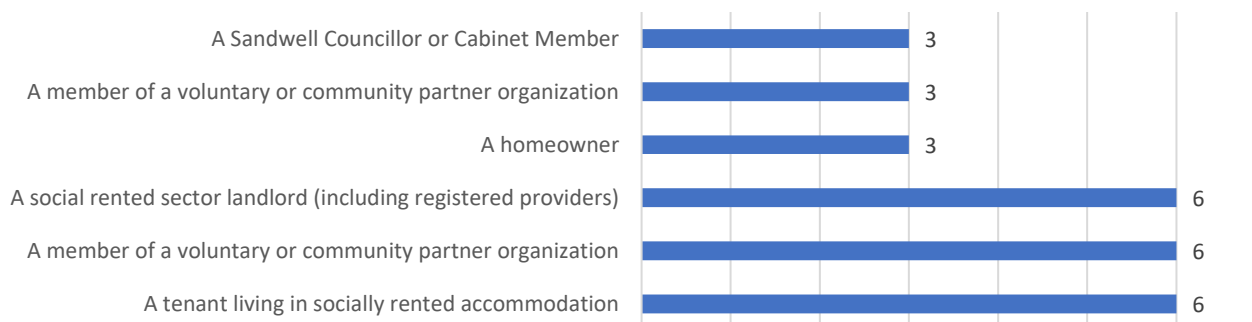
Respondents to the consultation survey were provided with the option to provide demographic information about themselves. It must be noted that this is optional and that not all respondents included this information. This data allows the demographic results to be included in this report to enable analysis of the scope of responses and representation from different demographic groups.

In total, 27 responses were captured by the online public consultation, with a small handful of paper copies being completed that were later inputted into the online response. A breakdown of which wards respondents live in is shown below.



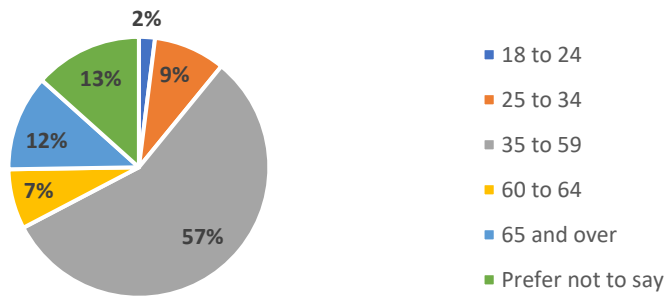
Respondents interests in the public consultation are shown in the chart below, with a good balance between each group of interest – particularly from social rented sector landlord respondents (22%), in proportion with members of a voluntary or community partner organisation (22%), and tenants living in socially rented accommodation (22%). In addition elected members, community partners and homeowners formed the remaining cohort of respondents (34%).

Which best describes your interest in this consultation



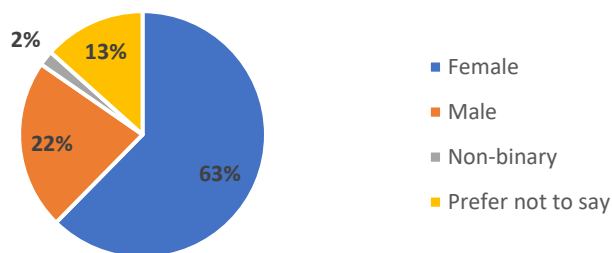
The most significant age proportion of respondents was 35 to 59 year olds (57%), followed by an even distribution of older respondents within the age ranges of 60 to 64 (7%) and 65 and over (12%). Amongst younger age groups, whilst there was decent proportion of respondents aged 25 to 34 (9%), the least represent age groups was 18 to 24 year olds with only a 2% cohort - therefore, any future consultation work should aim to include greater representation of this demographic. The remaining respondents (13%), did not wish to disclose their age.

Age group of respondents



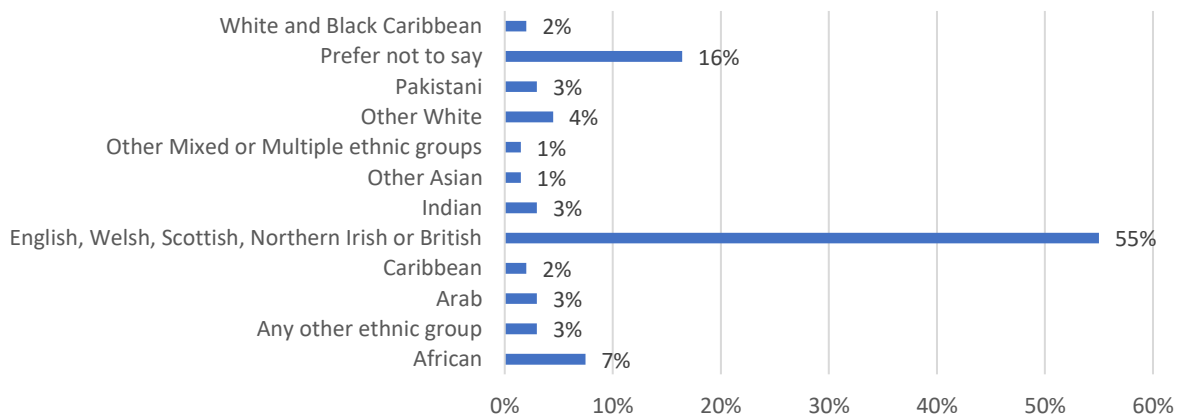
Overwhelmingly, female respondents had the largest say in this consultation, representing almost two thirds (63%) of respondents, in comparison to just 22% of respondents being male. In addition, 2% of respondents were non-binary. The remaining respondents (13%), did not wish to disclose their gender.

Gender of respondents



The largest ethnic group amongst respondents was white British (55%) – a similar proportional representation found in the wider Sandwell population. Ethnic minority groups represented 27% of the population – of these groups, the largest cohort included African (7%), other white (4%), followed by Pakistani, Indian, Arab and any other ethnic group - all with 3% each. Overall, it is important to see so many different backgrounds represented within this public consultation as this reflects the ethnically diverse population within the Borough.

What best describes your ethnicity?



Summary of Feedback

In various feedback formats, quantitative and qualitative data has been gathered to help shape and inform the Sandwell Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy, a full list of these responses can be found in the accompanying consultation spreadsheet.

Summary of key findings:

- The public consultation contained seven multiple choice questions – five relating to both the document's overall vision and strategic aims, one question in response to what is missing in the document and one question asking what the investment priorities should be over the lifespan of the strategy.
- Each question asked the respondent whether they agreed with a particular theme in the Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy, with options of 'strongly agree', 'somewhat agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'somewhat disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.
- Support across all questions was very high, with respondents either tending to agree or strongly agree with the priorities of the strategy. The average agreement was 81%, demonstrating a strong level of support for the aims of the Sandwell Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy overall.
- Across all the strategic aims of the strategy, the most well received amongst respondents was '*modern homes*' and '*planning and service delivery*', which generated an 88% agreeance overall.
- The response with the lowest level of support was the strategic aim around '*asset compliance and building safety*'. However, this was only slightly lower at 77%.

Within the public consultation, respondents were given the opportunity at the end of every priority, and for the strategy as a whole, to feedback anything they felt was missing or any point they particularly wanted to emphasise. This produced a range of responses, with a number of key words and phrases emerging repeatedly.

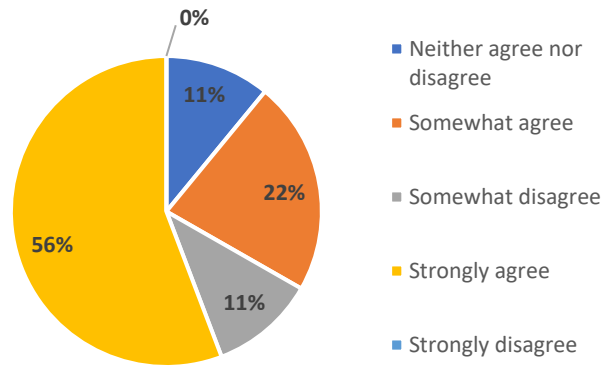
The top 5 phrases were:

- 1. Affordability** – respondents stressed the importance of affordable housing, highlighting the need for both quality and quantity.
- 2. Preservation** – there was concern expressed about Sandwell's open spaces, particularly as housing development continues to expand across the Borough.
- 3. Decarbonisation** – this referred to respondents who want to improve the energy efficiency of our homes whilst supporting tenants in fuel poverty.
- 4. Safety** – ensuring Sandwell Council homes are safe, secure and compliant and meeting all their landlord obligations implemented by central government.
- 5. Social housing** – many replies were supportive of social housing as a way of meeting housing need, and in the compliant manner.

Consultation Questions and Responses

Below is a percentage breakdown of the responses to each of the multiple-choice questions presented to the consultation respondents and a summary of the reasons for their responses.

- 1) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the overall vision of the document?**
Through active asset management and proactive investment, achieve a well maintained, sustainable housing stock that residents value and enjoy living in.

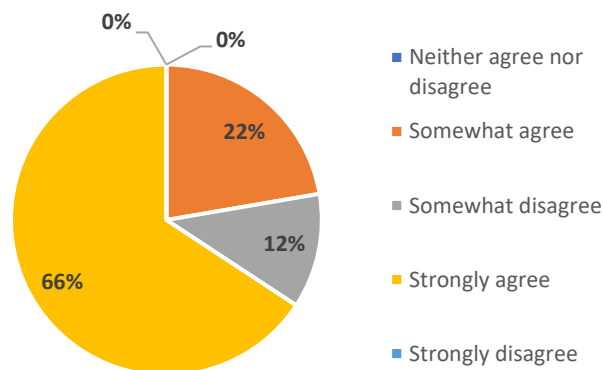


Response Analysis

- Support for document’s strategic aim was very high, with a large proportion of the respondents either tending to agree or strongly agreeing. 78% of respondents agreed with the Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy’s strategic aim (56% strongly agreeing and 22% somewhat agreeing).
 - One resident stated *“this document shows transparency and aims to keep residents informed with clear and precise information”*.
 - Whereas one community partner stated *“the strategy of the document from a surface level seems very good, it is realistically going to be achievable with appropriate measures implemented”*.
- 11% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the strategy’s overall vision.
 - Another resident stated *“without proper funding, this vision will be very difficult to achieve”*.
- 11% of respondents disagreed (no one strongly disagreed, but 11% somewhat disagreed).
 - One elected member stated the document *“needs to do more to make sure its cohesive”*.

2) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the strategic aim of the document?

Planning and service delivery: Understanding our properties and tenants to drive constant performance improvement and innovation.

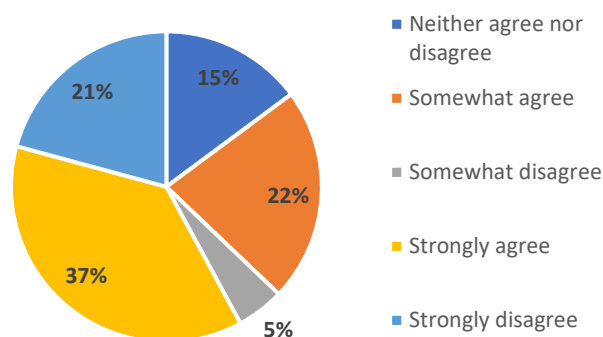


Response Analysis

- Support for document’s strategic aim was significantly high, with a large proportion of the respondents either tending to agree or strongly agreeing. 88% of respondents agreed with the Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy’s strategic aim (66% strongly agreeing and 22% somewhat agreeing).
 - One community partner stated this strategic objective has “*clear priorities and realistic outcomes*”, whereas a Sandwell resident said it “*recognises current challenges and opportunities to improve*”.
- 12% of respondents disagreed with this strategic aim (no one strongly disagreed, but 12% somewhat disagreed).
 - One elected member stated “*greater coordination and networking between local authorities and local community groups needed*”.

3) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the strategic aim of the document?

Modern homes: Providing homes which are warm, secure, high quality and affordable.

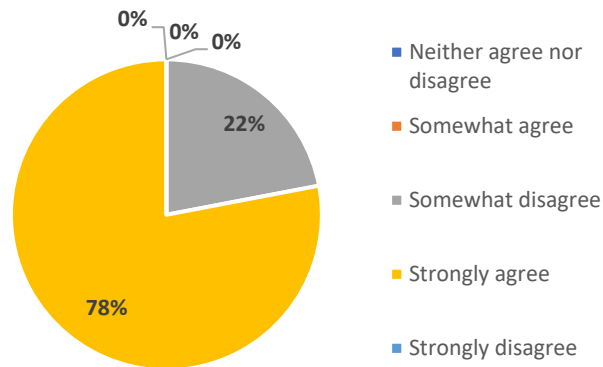


Response Analysis

- Support for document’s strategic aim was significantly high, with a large proportion of the respondents either tending strongly agree. 88% of respondents agreed with the Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy’s strategic aim (88% strongly agreeing, but no one somewhat agreeing).
 - Residents and community organisations were particularly supportive of this aim, stating “*all of the above are needed. Having supported a family to re-home due to poor housing conditions, we support all of the above*”.
- 12% of respondents disagreed with this strategic aim (no one strongly disagreed, but 12% somewhat disagreed).
 - One social landlord wasn’t totally convinced - “*I agree totally with the commitments but doubt that the service will have teeth to make changes at a borough level, especially in the face of dwindling resources and government funding*”.

4) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the strategic aim of the document?

Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation: Improving the energy efficiency of our homes whilst supporting those tenants in Fuel Poverty.

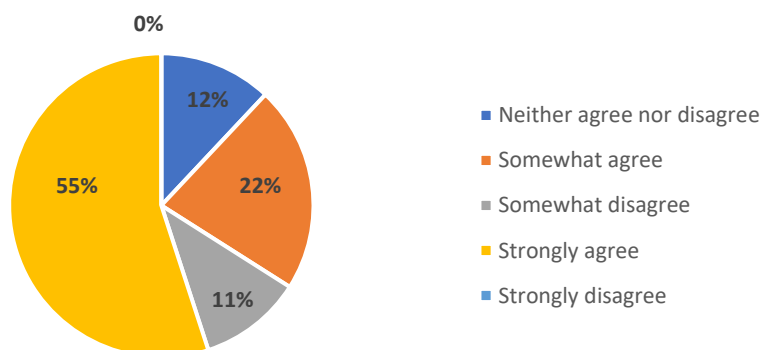


Response Analysis

- Support for document’s strategic aim was very high, with a large proportion of the respondents either tending to agree or strongly agreeing. 78% of respondents agreed with the Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy’s strategic aim (56% strongly agreeing and 22% somewhat agreeing).
 - One social landlord stated “this is absolutely necessary to achieving better outcomes, but you do also need to acknowledge that fuel poverty is worsened by deprivation which is high in the Borough”.
 - Whereas one community partner stated “
- 22% of respondents disagreed (no one strongly disagreed, but 22% somewhat disagreed).
 - One resident stated the strategy is a “total idealistic pipedream - we can’t afford these policies”.

5) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the strategic aim of the document?

Asset Compliance and Building Safety: Ensuring our properties are safe, secure and compliant, meeting all our landlord obligations.



Response Analysis

- Support for document's strategic aim was very high, with a large proportion of the respondents either tending to agree or strongly agreeing. 77% of respondents agreed with the Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy's strategic aim (55% strongly agreeing and 22% somewhat agreeing).
 - One social landlord commented this proposed aim is *"absolutely essential in order to support and reinforce national and local media messages and the government's own policies"*.
- 12% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the strategy's overall vision.
 - Another resident stated *"good aim but again just to be mindful that affordability is a central issue for people in fuel poverty who may not really be able to move beyond the second objective."*
- 11% of respondents disagreed (no one strongly disagreed, but 11% somewhat disagreed).
 - One elected member again stated the document *"needs to do more to make sure its cohesive"*.

6) What do you think is missing from Sandwell's Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy?

This generated the following responses, including:

- One homeowner stated *"While the strategy is set over a time frame, there should be clear targets set if not already on the 'how' and 'when'. For instance all homes will attain a C+ by 2027 with the aim of thermal comfort being the main driver which will also assist towards the D&M strategy"*.
- One elected member stated *"The council is really missing the spirit of community cohesion, there's only some council workers that will be around certain areas and befriend "certain tenants" and some tenants feel they are excluded. I don't think this is working, as it results in feelings of being left out and isolation. In order for this document to work I think the council needs to allow tenants opinions (whether they agree or not) to be heard rather than acting on what they perceive tenants think/feel"*.
- One resident stated *"I think council workers and tenants should collectively work together, it sometimes feels as if when a tenant expresses an opinion individual/s within the LA believe they are speaking ill of that person, and that person takes great offence to it. I also think that there should be a council/tenant messaging service (opened during office hours) where tenants and council workers can message if they have any concerns in/around their properties/area"*.

7) What investment priorities should Sandwell Council focus on as part of their Asset Management services?

This generated the following responses, including:

- One community organisation member said *"Empty and abandoned properties, unused spaces (garages, vacant land plots), upgrading existing properties i.e new kitchens, bathrooms, carpet"*

on the floors, removal of and finding the source and eradicating mould and damp and upgrading old electric storage heaters. All these should be done before putting the property back up for let”.

- One resident suggested “insulation and retrofitting to reduce fuel poverty”.
- One staff member said “Incremental approach to investment to achieve an improvement across a wide range of homes that are 2050 ready”.
- One elected member suggested “Building more properties for the elderly. There are many people being the sole occupiers because there are not enough properties being built with the elderly/disabled in mind”.

Action taken in response to consultation feedback

Response Received	Action Taken
Sandwell Council needs to compensate for the loss of Council houses that were sold off but not replaced.	Information regarding this is in our Housing Strategy 2023-2028 - ‘Councils are set to retain 100% of right to buy receipts for two years’. Further, we will add an action ensuring that the money which the council retains from right to buy sales will then be used to fund the one-for-one replacement of the social housing stock sold off via the scheme.
Preserving green spaces and not using these for housing developments is essential.	Within our Planning and Service Delivery aims, there needs to be an explicit link between housing and greenspaces. The document also needs to link in with overarching priorities such as Sandwell's Climate Change Strategy. In addition, outlining commitments such as supporting the Greenspace Strategy Delivery Board.
Building more properties for the elderly. There are many people being the sole occupiers, because there are not enough properties being built with the elderly/disabled in mind.	Whilst funding is mentioned in relation to retrofit, funding within new builds isn't mentioned. Priorities 1 and 3 of our Housing Strategy 2023 - 2028 provide more detail in our aims and objectives around how we aim to acquire external funding for new build housing, for instance, elaborating on how we have said we will work with Homes England within future housing development.
More focused education and energy efficiency awareness with incentives to move to net zero could be considered.	Action to be added to the third strategic aim and action plan outlining how we will explore incentives for both homeowners and households renting to move to carbon neutral facilities within their homes.
Building on brownfield sites regardless of costs. Not building on Green Spaces.	Within the Action Plan, more details will be provided on greenspaces. Particularly greater details on the opportunities for inward investment will include the West Midlands Brownfield Site Fund to deliver the challenges of bringing brownfield sites into development.

<p>The advice given to residents on tackling persistent black mould is often described to as unclear. A number of residents have complained that the advice to 'wash it with bleach' isn't good enough as they feel the problem is structural.</p>	<p>It has been added into the Strategy that “As part of the improvement planning process, we will analyse our repair data to determine whether we have a particular issue in certain locations, or with a certain type of property. This may lead to a focussed investment to proactively deal with damp and mould in certain properties including investing in innovative solutions for ventilation and digital monitoring”.</p>
<p>More social prescribing is needed – this should be mentioned within the document.</p>	<p>As part of social prescribing, housing officers are visiting properties to complete homechecks. Whilst the trigger of these homechecks is damp and mould, our housing officers take a holistic approach in order to identify any other issues that might possibly contributing to damp and mould in the home, including financial health, overcrowded homes and physical and mental health. This will be covered further in the Action Plan and Sandwell’s future Damp and Mould Strategy.</p>

In addition, recommendations were also received from elected members around operational delivery when the strategy was presented to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny (SNAC) Board on 26th September 2023. We will work to support these throughout the lifespan of the strategy:

Recommendation
<p>Recommended a further review of the strategy, once more data had been collected</p>
<p>Recommended that a summary of the strategy, once completed, be comprised to enable a digestible format.</p>
<p>Requested clarification on what consultation methods will be used and re-assurance that digitally excluded people will be included.</p>
<p>Recommended that information on the condition of properties from home checks should be centrally stored to assist in data collection</p>
<p>Recommended that an external funding strategy be available once we have received data detailing how much funding is required, where we will get the funding from and any associated timeframes</p>