

Stratford-on-Avon District Council

Council Tax Premium Consultation Results

1. Introduction

Since 2013, councils in England have had the power to charge additional council tax on second homes. For the purpose of council tax, second homes are dwellings which are substantially furnished but have no resident (i.e. it is not someone's sole or main residence). Since 1 April 2013 Stratford-on-Avon District Council removed the discount entirely from second homes.

From April 2025, councils will be able to use new powers to charge a premium of up to 100% additional council tax on second homes in their area, or parts of their area. The powers to charge second homes premium is discretionary, and it is for councils to decide whether to charge the premiums in their local area and at what rate, up to the 100% maximum.

Sections 11B and 11C of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 enables councils in England to disapply the section 11(2)(a) discount which may otherwise apply to second homes and apply additional council tax (commonly called a premium). The 1992 Act was amended through the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 which also introduced new powers for councils to charge premiums on second homes from 1 April 2025. Following the introduction of this provision to charge a premium, the Council's funding has been reduced accordingly.

A council must make its first determination to charge a second homes premium at least 1 year before the financial year to which it will apply. This is to provide owners of these dwellings sufficient notice to make any appropriate changes. It is also expected that Councils should consider how it might engage and consult with key stakeholders, including the local electorate and second homeowners, before taking a decision to charge a premium.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council has removed all discounts for second homes and charges 100% Council Tax on such properties, this has been the case since 1 April 2013.

The Council has a high number of second homes (859 dwellings, which is over 1% of the entire housing stock) in the district and the decision to remove the second home was taken to increase the cost of ownership, with the anticipated result in more properties being made available for sale. This objective being directly in line with the then Council Strategy objective of "Addressing Local Housing Need".

The availability and affordability of housing in Stratford-on-Avon District Council remains a key issue. The current Council Plan includes a key objective in relation to Housing, which states "We will strive to deliver affordable well built and maintained homes". In delivering this objective the Council has also agreed that it will make the best decisions in the public interest.

In January 2025, the Council considered a proposal, subject to consultation, to implement a Council Tax premium of 100% across the whole of the district. The proposal recognised that Stratford-on-Avon District Council is an area of high house prices, the average house price for the district in September 2024 (as per the Office for National Statistics) was £382,000, this compares to the average for the West Midlands of £257,000. It is anticipated within the proposal if the Council did choose to implement the Council Tax premium it may result in some of these properties being returned to the wider housing stock, therefore addressing this issue and meeting the Council Plan objective of providing affordable housing.

As the Council has the discretion to introduce a premium, the Government has reduced its funding to reflect this. If the Council chooses not to implement this premium, this results in reduced income in the Council's overall budget which funds the delivery of Council services and projects. This includes specific schemes such as supporting the delivery of housing in rural areas, and the purchase of housing to reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for temporary housing.

The Council decided on a formal engagement exercise with second home owners and the wider public surrounding this proposal.

2. Methodology

The Consultation began on Monday 15 December 2025 and ran for six weeks until Monday 2 February 2026. 589 responses were received online, plus 8 paper questionnaires via the post. A further 14 people responded by a direct email or letter. All second-home properties that would be affected were written to – 859 in total. The consultation was circulated to the Citizens' Panel and was widely advertised in the local press and social media. It was also included in the online newsletter to residents. Parish and town councils were also asked to advertise the consultation.

3. Summary of Results

- 97% of those responding did so as an individual.
- 97% were responsible for paying council tax to Stratford-on-Avon District Council.
- 6% were responsible for paying non-domestic rates to SDC on any property.
- Almost a quarter of respondents (23%) own a second home in the Stratford-on-Avon District Council area.
- 54% agreed that the Council should put measures in place to reduce the number of second homes in Stratford-on-Avon District. 10% of those who owned second homes in the area agreed against 67% who did not own one.
- 54% overall agreed with the proposal to introduce a Council Tax premium on second homes. 12% of those who owned second homes in the area agreed against 67% who did not own one.
- 49% overall agreed with the proposal that the level of premium should be set at 100%. 9% of those who owned second homes in the area agreed against 62% who did not own one.
- If the proposals for second homes was agreed, SDC would use a proportion of the income gained to meet local housing needs. 68% agreed that the income should be used in this way. 42% of those who owned second homes in the area agreed against 76% who did not own one.
- Overall 46% of the sample were aged 60 to 74. 55% of respondents were male.
- The summaries from the three open-ended questions are included in Section 4.

4. Results

1.	Are you responding as...?	
	575 (97%)	An individual
	16 (3%)	A business
	2 (0%)	Not for profit/voluntary organisation
	2 (0%)	A Town or Parish Council
	3 (1%)	Other

2.	Are you responsible for paying Council Tax to Stratford-on-Avon District Council on any property?	
	574 (97%)	Yes
	17 (3%)	No

3.	Are you responsible for paying Non-Domestic Rates to Stratford-on-Avon District Council on any property?	
	37 (6%)	Yes
	546 (94%)	No

4.	Do you own a second home in the Stratford-on-Avon District Council area?	
	139 (23%)	Yes
	453 (77%)	No

5.	Do you agree or disagree that the Council should put measures in place to reduce the number of second homes in Stratford-on-Avon District?	
	317 (54%)	Agree
	275 (46%)	Disagree
Breaking the result down further		
Second Home Owners in SDC?	Agree	Disagree
Yes	14 (10%)	125 (90%)
No	301 (67%)	149 (33%)

Second homes in Stratford-on-Avon District Council area are currently subject to a full Council Tax charge without any discounts. The Council has the discretion to charge an extra premium of up to 100% on top of the standard rate of Council Tax on second homes. Our proposal is to introduce a Council Tax premium on second homes from April 1, 2027. The level of premium we propose to introduce is 100%. This would mean that second homes, which do not qualify for an exception from the premium, would in effect pay 200% in Council Tax. As an example, that means for an average Band D property in Stratford-on-Avon District Council with a normal annual Council Tax bill of £2,379.91, the owner would pay £4,759.82 (based on 2025/26 charges).

6.	Do you agree or disagree with our proposals to introduce a Council Tax premium on second homes?	
	323 (54%)	Agree
	274 (46%)	Disagree
Breaking the result down further		
Second Home Owners in SDC?	Agree	Disagree
Yes	16 (12%)	123 (88%)
No	305 (67%)	148 (33%)

7.	Do you agree or disagree with our proposal that the level of premium should be set at 100%?	
	288 (49%)	Agree
	304 (51%)	Disagree
Breaking the result down further		
Second Home Owners in SDC?	Agree	Disagree
Yes	9 (6%)	130 (94%)
No	277 (62%)	171 (38%)
	If you disagree with the above, please tell us why:	
	292 responses	

Summary of Key Points from the Responses in Question 7.

1. Strong Opposition to a 100% Council Tax Premium

- Many respondents describe the premium as *punitive, excessive, unfair, or discriminatory*.
- A universal view that **second-home owners already pay full council tax despite using fewer services** (e.g., little waste collection, no school or social care usage).
- Some believe **the increase targets people simply for having a second home**, calling it a “wealth tax” or “politics of envy”.

2. Minimal Impact on Affordable Housing Supply

- Widespread belief that **very few second homes would become affordable housing even if sold**, as many are high-value, unsuitable, or in rural/holiday-focused locations.
- England/Wales evidence frequently cited: **similar premiums failed to improve affordability**, and councils later reversed or reduced them.

3. Negative Impact on Local Economy & Tourism

- Repeated claims that second-home owners:
 - Spend significantly in local shops, pubs, cafés, restaurants.
 - Employ local tradespeople, gardeners, cleaners.
 - Support theatres, arts venues, and community organisations.
- Fear that pushing second-home owners away will **damage tourism**, threaten jobs, or reduce footfall in rural villages.

4. Unintended Consequences

- Many expect owners to:
 - Reclassify their properties as **holiday lets** and move to **business rates**, potentially paying **zero tax** through Small Business Rate Relief.
 - Sell properties slowly or leave them empty due to market conditions.
- Risk of **rents rising** or **landlords exiting the sector**, reducing long-term rental supply and displacing tenants.

5. Personal Circumstances Often Not Considered

Respondents highlight numerous reasons for having a second home that are **not luxury-based**, including:

- Caring for elderly relatives.
- Work accommodation (commuting long distances).
- Inheritance cases, probate delays, retirement homes that are *impossible* to sell.
- Using a second home for childcare support, medical needs, or family stability.
- Properties restricted by covenants (e.g., must be holiday homes).

6. Calls for More Nuanced or Tiered Approaches

Suggestions include:

- Sliding scale based on **occupancy levels** or **property value**.
- Lower premiums (25%, 50%, 75%) rather than 100%.
- Exemptions for:
 - Retirement/independent living properties.
 - Properties in probate or actively marketed.
 - Long-term owners, heritage/Listed buildings.
 - Second homes used for work or caring responsibilities.
- Phased introduction instead of an immediate 100%.

7. Concern Over Council Motives & Use of Funds

- Strong suspicion that this is a **revenue-raising measure**, not a housing solution.
- Repeated doubts that **extra revenue will be ring-fenced for affordable housing**.
- Some argue the council should:
 - Reduce inefficiencies,
 - Enforce affordability quotas on developers,
 - Convert empty commercial buildings instead.

8. Local Housing Market Context

- Many believe Stratford-on-Avon District:
 - **Does not have a high proportion of second homes** compared to tourist hotspots.
 - Already has **thousands of new homes** under development.
- Fears the policy may **devalue existing homes**, cause market stagnation, or damage community cohesion.

9. Emotional and Community Impact

- Many long-standing family owners feel **punished or unwelcome**, despite deep community ties.
- Concerns that removing second-home owners will:
 - Hollow out village life,
 - Reduce volunteers in community groups,
 - Increase loneliness and weaken local networks.

10. Requests for Clarity

Respondents ask for clearer explanations on:

- How second homes are defined,
- Whether impact assessments were performed,
- What exactly the council hopes to achieve,
- Why 100% is the chosen level.

8.	If our proposals for second homes are agreed, we would use a proportion of the income gained to meet local housing needs. Do you agree or disagree that the income should be used in this way?	
	401 (68%)	Agree
	187 (32%)	Disagree
Breaking the result down further		
Second Home Owners in SDC?	Agree	Disagree
Yes	57 (42%)	78 (58%)
No	340 (76%)	108 (24%)

9.	The Government has set out a series of exceptions where this premium does not apply. Are there any other reasons that Stratford DC may want to consider creating exceptions for? Please indicate in the box below.	
	175 responses	

Summary of Key Points from the Responses in Question 9.

1. Strong Calls for Exceptions — Especially Probate & Actively Marketed Properties

A very large portion of respondents argue that:

- **12 months is too short** for probate and selling a property. Many report sales taking **well over a year**, especially retirement properties.
- Properties **in probate, recently inherited, on the market for sale, or undergoing major repairs** should be **fully exempt** from any second-home premium.
- There is general frustration that probate delays—often caused by government processes—could unfairly trigger the premium.

2. Widespread Support for Exemptions Based on Personal Circumstances

Many respondents felt certain life situations should exempt owners from paying a premium, such as:

- **Elderly or disabled owners**, or those needing to use a second home for **healthcare or accessibility** reasons.
- Homes used for **family support**, such as caring for elderly parents, disabled children, or providing occasional accommodation for relatives.
- People who split time between two homes for valid reasons (e.g., **work-related, medical, or family-related** challenges).

3. Job-Related Accommodation Is a Major Theme

People who own or use second homes for work reasons argue strongly for exemption:

- Some must stay in a second home because commuting is impossible.
- Others (e.g., contractors, key workers) fear they will be penalised for accommodation necessary for employment.

However, *some respondents strongly disagree*, saying job-related exemptions unfairly benefit certain groups (particularly MPs).

4. Many Believe Retirement and Supported-Living Properties Should Be Exempt

Several respondents note:

- Retirement apartments are **not suitable for general housing stock**.
- They can be **extremely difficult and slow to sell**, sometimes taking **years**, not months.
- They often cannot be rented, used for Airbnb, or adapted — so taxing them provides no housing benefit.

5. Significant Concern About Penalising Ordinary, Long-term, or Local Families

Respondents emphasised that many so-called “second homes”:

- Are **family homes kept for heritage reasons**, or used by multiple generations.
- Have been owned for **decades**, sometimes over 40–70 years.
- Are **not luxury holiday lets** but part of long-standing ties to the area.

Many fear the premium would force locals with deep community roots to give up cherished homes.

6. Strong Opposition to Classifying Certain Properties as Second Homes

Multiple people argue their properties:

- Are annexes.
- Are structurally connected to main homes.
- Cannot be sold separately or occupied independently.
- Are empty only due to legal or practical restrictions.

These respondents feel misclassified and believe the premium is inappropriate.

7. Some Support the Premium — but Only With Fair, Human Exceptions

A minority support the idea of a second-home premium, but:

- Urge clarity about what the Council aims to achieve.
- Want exemptions for people who **don't rent out the home** or who occupy it a substantial portion of the year.
- Prefer a **sliding scale** based on occupancy rather than a flat 100% increase.

8. A Large Group Oppose Any Exceptions at All

At the opposite end, some respondents say:

- “No exceptions.”
- If people can afford two homes, they should pay the premium.
- Second homes **drive up prices** and **harm local communities**.

These comments reflect strong frustration with housing affordability.

9. Some Believe the Policy Won't Work or Will Have Negative Consequences

Concerns include:

- People may switch homes to **business rates** to avoid the premium.
- There may be **no real increase** in housing supply.
- Could **hurt tourism**, especially Airbnb-dependent businesses.
- Could force landlords to raise rents or sell properties, creating **more homelessness**.

10. Repeated Calls for Compassion and Discretion

Many argue the Council should:

- Apply **human judgement** and consider **individual circumstances**.
- Create an **easy appeal system**.
- Avoid punishing people experiencing **bereavement, divorce, disability, or financial hardship**.

10.	Please make any comments below you may have in relation to Council Tax premiums on second homes.
	247 responses

Summary of Key Points from the Responses in Question 10.

1. Strong Opposition to a 100% Premium (Most Frequent Theme)

A large proportion of respondents **disagree** with the proposal. Key reasons include:

- **Second home owners already use fewer council services** (e.g., bins, schools, social services).
- Many feel **penalised without justification**, calling it “unfair”, “discriminatory”, or “retrospective taxation”.
- Concerns that it will **force long-term owners to sell**, particularly **elderly people**, widows/widowers, and those with personal or family ties to the local area.
- Fear of **negative impacts on tourism and the local economy**, as second home owners often spend significantly in pubs, shops, restaurants, trades, and cultural venues.
- Claims that **second homes form only ~1% of district housing**, so revenue gains are modest but harms may be large.

Many state that the proposal appears to be **a revenue-raising exercise**, not a housing solution.

2. Calls for a More Nuanced / Phased Approach

A significant number of respondents say they might accept **some increase**, but argue:

- **100% is too high; a lower or sliding scale** (e.g., 20–30–50–75–100% over several years) would be fairer.
- Premiums should be **means-tested, band-specific, or exempt older long-term owners**.
- Distinguish between:
 - *Holiday lets generating income*
 - *Genuine family second homes*
 - *Properties used for work reasons*
 - *Homes in probate or difficult-to-sell retirement units*
 - *Leased homes used for job-related accommodation* (e.g., RSC submissions)

3. Clear Support for Exemptions in Specific Circumstances

The strongest support for exemption relates to:

- **Job-required homes (Class J)** such as the RSC portfolio. Respondents argue these clearly meet statutory definitions and should be exempt.
- **Probate properties**, especially retirement-living homes which can be very slow to sell.
- **Work-related second homes** (e.g., NHS staff, people splitting residence for employment reasons).
- **Properties undergoing renovation**, or with restrictions, planning conditions, or listing limitations.

4. Evidence Cited from Wales, Cornwall, Pembrokeshire etc.

Many respondents refer to real-world examples, arguing:

- Second-home premiums **failed to improve housing availability**.
- They **reduced tourism, damaged local economies**, and in some cases were later **reduced or reversed**.

5. Concerns Over Impact on Local Housing Supply

Many challenge the council's assumption that taxing second homes will free up housing:

- Most second homes are **not affordable homes** and would simply be bought by other affluent buyers.
- Main housing constraints are **planning policy**, developer behaviour, and **national demand**, not second-home numbers.
- If sold, these homes **won't become affordable for local people**.

6. Frustration with the Consultation Process

Some respondents openly question the legitimacy of the process:

- Belief that **the council has already decided** to implement the premium.
- Concern that the consultation is a **"tick-box exercise"** and not meaningful engagement.

7. Arguments in Favour of the Premium (Minority but Strongly Expressed)

While fewer in number, some responses **support** the proposal:

- Second homes reduce available housing for young families and key workers.
- People wealthy enough to own a second home can afford to contribute more.
- Empty or infrequently used properties **harm village vitality** (loss of volunteers, school roll decline, fewer year-round residents).
- Premiums should also apply to **Airbnb's** and other short-term lets.

8. Desire for Better Use of Any Additional Revenue

Where people accept the principle of a premium, they often insist:

- Revenue should be **ring-fenced for affordable housing**.
- Or used for **infrastructure, roads, public transport, flooding mitigation**, and **public amenities**.
- Distrust that the money will be used as promised.

Overall Summary for Question 10.

The feedback is **overwhelmingly sceptical or negative** toward the 100% premium. Most concerns centre on **fairness, economic consequences, and lack of evidence** that the policy will help housing supply.

There is **clear support** for:

- **Exemptions** (job-related, probate, work-based, long-standing owners).
- **Phased or lower premiums.**
- **Targeting holiday lets / Airbnb's** more than family second homes.

5. Respondent Profile for Survey

11.	What age group do you belong to?	
	6 (1%)	Up to 29 years old
	56 (9%)	30-44
	139 (23%)	45-59
	273 (46%)	60-74
	100 (17%)	75 plus
	20 (3%)	Prefer not to say

12.	What is your gender?	
	326 (55%)	Male
	243 (41%)	Female
	3 (1%)	Non-binary/agender/gender-fluid
	0 (0%)	Prefer to self-declare
	22 (4%)	Prefer not to say
	If you prefer to self-declare, please write in below	
	5 responses	

6. Themes from Letters/Emails

The themes from the 14 letters and e-mails were:

- Not supporting the premium as they don't receive twice the services
- Contribution to local services
- Dissatisfaction with existing services delivered through council tax, spanning the responsibilities of both the Council and Warwickshire County Council
- Expressing their views that the premium was unfair or discriminated against second home tax payers
- Where applicants had multiple properties on their land, they disputed these were second homes
- Wishing to distinguish between second homes which generated a revenue for the owner, and those which did not
- Individuals who inherited homes and did not wish to sell them
- Individuals challenging whether the additional property was a second home
- Individuals who wanted the Council to consider creating a policy exception for homes only used by family members
- There were also a number of letters from people where an exception may apply based on the information set out in their response.