

Avon and Somerset Police – Estates Strategic Plan

Police and Crime Panel Briefing, December 2023

Introducing the Strategic Plan for the Police estate in Avon and Somerset

A Strategic Plan for the police estate in Avon and Somerset was approved at Governance and Scrutiny Board in September 2023 and set out how we will build an estate that's fit for the future. The plan was presented in the context of the global, national, and local environment within which the Constabulary is currently operating.

From our HQ, multi-functional police centres like Patchway and large new police stations like Yeovil, to smaller police stations at the heart of neighbourhoods, specialist facilities like Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) Suites and offices for 'enabling' functions, the police operate a diverse property portfolio in terms of type, use, condition, cost, and suitability.

The expectations of and requirements from the physical place the police work in are many and varied, from meeting the basic physiological needs of the people who deliver service to the public, to accommodating the complex systems and infrastructure which are essential tools to do policing well and keep the public safe. Our buildings are a principal way through which the public 'see' the police in their communities.

All the time resources are limited – budget and the people to manage the day-to-day as well the changes the Police wants to make across its estate - there will be some difficult choices about what we do and when. Therefore, a key element of the strategic plan was a roadmap for the police estate in the short, medium, and long term to help define those choices and provide a point of reference against which new change is prioritised.

Police buildings are part of the essential infrastructure which will deliver the Constabulary's vision of outstanding policing for everyone. They need to be located, designed, and operated to serve and protect the communities of Avon and Somerset. They also need to be fit for purpose so that our officers, staff, and volunteers can count on having the working environment, tools, equipment, and information available to them in the right place and at the right time. In design, our buildings should strive to be at the forefront of best practice and sustainability goals, enabling the organisation to be modern, innovative, and futureproofed but also mindful of our financial, political, social, and environmental landscape.

The plan considers the important role police buildings play in ensuring a sustainable financial future for the service, maintaining a visible presence in communities to build trust and confidence, police culture and the wellbeing of our officers, staff and volunteers, and meeting Sustainability targets.

Sustainability

Direct carbon emissions from police buildings stood at 2,006 tonnes in 2022/23. Efforts to further reduce the emissions from those buildings and meet targets and beyond towards net zero, relies on the decisions that are made to invest in technology that decarbonises heat, for example heat pumps, and estate optimisation opportunities that allow the disposal of certain buildings completely or a 'downsize'. The need to adapt to a changing climate will also be a factor, in particular the demand this will place on cooling operational buildings in the summer months.

The affordable and successful retrofit of heat pump technology depends on building type and operation but where it makes sense, applications for funding from sources like the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) will be made to support our ambition. This has most recently included an application for funding to support the installation of a heat pump at Chard Police Station. A similar Low Carbon Skills Fund grant has already funded the creation of a Decarbonisation Plan to help focus efforts on where we can get the biggest carbon 'bang for our buck'.

The police estate must also play its part in unlocking the complex charging infrastructure required to support the decarbonisation of the fleet and a transition to electric, against a national policy backdrop which phases out the production of the internal combustion engine from 2035 but a vehicle supply market which is already rapidly transitioning ahead of that timeline.

The first phase of a regional Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure project concluded in October 2023 and high-level estimates from baseline modelling suggest a £12.4m investment may be required. Meanwhile, there remains a performance gap between electric vehicles on the market and the requirements of certain policing functions, for example patrol. A project mandate, expected January 2024, will formally commission a second phase of detailed activity and analysis. However, the challenge extends beyond the right vehicles and the right charging infrastructure to the fundamentals of how the police operate. As such, operational subject matter experts will be instrumental to the next phase of successful project activity.

Moreover, holding to some basic principles like investing in our existing building stock over demolition to re-build, is recognising the embodied carbon in the building structure and whole-life costs (for example the project to substantially refurbish Yeovil Police Station at Horsey Lane), whilst a preference for buildings we own will give us control and flexibility around how we design, maintain and operate our workplaces, with lightening our environmental impact in mind.

The police estate in Avon and Somerset in numbers

- 37% of the Constabulary's buildings are freehold (we own them), compared to a national average of 58%.
- 86% of the Constabulary's building footprint (in square metres, sqm) was built after 1976, compared to a national average of 59%. 36% is post 2000, compared to a national average of 22%.
- Our estate provides 17.6 sqm per fixed-term equivalent (FTE) officer or member of staff, compared to a national average of 18.6 sqm.
- We spend £144.50/sqm every year, compared to a national average of £149.29.
- Estates costs represent 3.9% of gross revenue expenditure, compared to a national average of 3.18%.
- The rental income the Constabulary receives from its estate is £6.42 per sqm, compared to a national average of £2.52.

Development of the strategic plan

A new approach to strategic planning in Estates has evolved over the last 12 months and is grounded in the principles of Lean Six Sigma, an industry-standard process improvement methodology designed to eliminate problems, remove waste and inefficiency, and improve working conditions to provide a better response to customers' needs.

This methodology has helped create capacity in a ‘lean’ estates management team and has been instrumental in influencing thinking on how the service can meet demand, resource constraints and customer need.

A prioritisation matrix will help assess new work through the lenses of:

1. Service to the public
2. Value for money
3. Our people

The current roadmap for the police estate in Avon and Somerset

	Tender	Work on site	Move in
Broadbury Road, Bristol	Complete	Commenced	Q4 2024/25, Q1 2025/26
Bath, Plymouth House	Q2 2024/25	Q3 2024/25	Q2 2025/26
Yeovil	Q2 2024/25	Q2 2024/25	Q2 2025/26
Minehead	Q4 2023/24	Q1 2024/25	Q4 2024/25
Trinity Road, Bristol	Completion of land purchase expected Q4 2023/24. Long stop date end 2027.		
Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure	Discovery phase. Project mandate expected Q1 2023/24		
Achieving Best Evidence Suites	Discovery phase. Project mandate expected Q4 2023/24		
Almondsbury	Discovery phase. Project mandate expected Q2 2024/25		

Beyond this timeframe, projects are currently planned at Somerton, Crewkerne, our ‘Learning’ estate (including firearms training) and Radstock.

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