OCTAVIA Abri



# Community Investment Plan 2026-2027

## Birchfield

Building a healthier, safer and more connected neighbourhood together

# Introduction

## Birchfield is one of our identified Community Investment Zones within Yeovil.

This plan sets out our long-term commitment to working alongside residents, partners and community organisations to support a healthier, safer and more connected neighbourhood. We believe homes and communities are places to belong, grow and thrive. Through the Octavia Foundation, we are committed to a place-based approach to community investment that builds on the strengths, relationships and potential that already exist within local communities. This plan has been shaped through a combination of local data, housing insight, community research and ongoing conversations with residents and partners. It reflects both the opportunities and challenges within Birchfield, while recognising the important role residents play in shaping the future of their neighbourhood.

This is a living plan that will continue to evolve alongside residents as local priorities, feedback and opportunities develop over time.

Our aim is not simply to deliver projects, but to support long-term community resilience, stronger local connections and improved life chances for residents.

### ABOUT BIRCHFIELD

Birchfield is a residential neighbourhood located on the eastern side of Yeovil with around 800 Abri properties. It is a well-established community with a strong local identity, made up of a mix of long-standing residents, families and newer households. The area has developed around local amenities and green spaces, creating a community-focused environment that has served generations of residents. Residents in Birchfield benefit from access to a range of local services and facilities, including Birchfield Community Primary School, doctors surgery, and open public spaces. The neighbourhood is also well connected to other parts of Yeovil, making it a practical location for work, education and everyday activities. The Birchfield Community Centre, established in 1977, hosts several activities, groups and events aimed at strengthening and supporting the local community. There are also plans to reinvigorate St Michaels church to create a thriving community hub. The area benefits from  a variety of greenspaces such as Birchfield Park offering plenty of natural environment space with lots of opportunities. The presence of active community organisations, educational facilities and well-used public areas creates opportunities for residents to connect and create a thriving community.

Our research also highlights wider socioeconomic challenges within the area, with the Yeovil East Ward ranking highly within the national Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Alongside this data, housing management insight, tenant satisfaction measures and community engagement activity have helped us build a fuller understanding of local priorities and experiences.

Importantly, this plan takes an asset-based approach. While we recognise the challenges facing the community, we also recognise the strengths already present within Birchfield, including resident knowledge, community relationships, local organisations and shared spaces that can support positive long-term change.

## WHAT YOU TOLD US

Listening to residents has been central to shaping this plan.

Through surveys, conversations, community events and regular engagement within the Birchfield community, residents shared what matters most to them and where they would like to see investment and support focused over the coming years.

You told us that the biggest priorities for the area are:

- Creating safer neighbourhoods and communities to increase belonging and connections with others
- Improving access to health and well-being support within the community
- Improving financial resilience within the area and financial support and advice services
- Building stronger communities through sustainable community assets
- Creating opportunities for residents to lead and participate
- Investing in sustainable change rather than short-term interventions

This feedback, alongside wider local insight and partnership engagement, has informed the priorities set out within this plan.



# Our approach

Our approach to community investment at Birchfield is long-term, place-based and community rooted.

This means:

- Working alongside residents to shape priorities and activity improving access to health and wellbeing support
- Building on existing strengths and community assets improving community safety
- Focusing on prevention and early support
- Developing strong local partnerships
- Creating opportunities for residents to lead and participate
- Investing in sustainable change rather than short-term interventions

We want to feel like a large organisation with a genuinely local presence — visible, accessible, and connected to the communities we serve.

This plan will continue to evolve over time as local needs and priorities change. We are committed to ongoing engagement with residents to ensure our investment remains shaped by the people who live here.

### OUR VISION FOR BIRCHFIELD

Our vision is to work alongside customers and partners to create safe, inclusive and connected communities and spaces, where people can access the health, wellbeing and financial support they need to thrive, feel a sense of belonging, and achieve positive outcomes.

# Our priorities for Birchfield

## Priority 1.
## Working with partners and communities to create positive and safer neighbourhoods

### OUR SHARED AMBITION

Success would mean:

- Residents feel safer and more confident in their neighbourhoods.
- Reduced antisocial behaviour and improved community safety.
- Strong partnerships drive positive local change.
- Communities are more connected, engaged and proud of their local area.

### WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON

Together, we will work to:

- Strengthening relationships between residents and community safety partners.
- Improve communication around local safety issues.
- Support community activities that build trust and neighbourhood pride.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

55% of local people told us that community safety and safer streets are important to you, particularly around creating more cohesion and connections. Data shows 124 crimes being reported per every 1,000 residents with violent crimes making up 35% of this, closely followed by anti-social behaviour and public order offences. Working with local authorities and grassroots organisations are a key focus in helping to create solutions to this priority.

# Priority 2.
# Supporting healthier, happier communities through accessible wellbeing services

### OUR SHARED AMBITION

Success would mean:

- More residents access physical and mental health support.
- Improved health, wellbeing and quality of life for residents.
- Increased participation in health and wellbeing activities.
- Reduced barriers to accessing support and services.
- Strong partnerships help create healthier, more resilient communities.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

76% of our properties fall within the 30% most deprived areas for health deprivation within Birchfield. This is reflected within the 2026 consultation with customers where more than half of local people told us more health and wellbeing support is needed within the area. Further engagement has highlighted this to cover both mental and physical health support, and access to services.

### WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON

Together, we will work to:

- Create and sustain regular and inclusive community activities.
- Improve promotion and visibility of existing wellbeing services.
- Work with local partners and organisations to expand opportunities for connections.
- Gather feedback and insight to ensure activities are relevant, accessible and inclusive.

# Priority 3.
# Improving financial resilience, advice and support to help tackle living costs and financial pressures

### OUR SHARED AMBITION

Success would mean:

- Residents are more financially resilient and confident managing their finances.
- More people access financial advice, support and income maximisation opportunities.
- Reduced financial hardship and improved financial wellbeing.
- Strong partnerships help communities respond to living cost pressures effectively.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Over 80% of our properties fall within the 30% most deprived areas for income deprivation within Birchfield. Over 50% of local people told us some progress has been made against this priority, but 66% either agreed or strongly agreed it remains a key concern for local people in line with the needs for the area. In addition, when asked what areas community members would like to see more support or improvements in, it was one of the top three areas highlighted.

### WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON

Together, we will work to:

- Support with maximising income and utilizing other support services to support resilience.
- Support with accessible financial advice and early interventions.
- Exploring employment opportunities, skills building and independence.

# Priority 4.
# Creating welcoming community spaces for everyone

## OUR SHARED AMBITION

Success would mean:

- Well used and welcoming and accessible community spaces for local people.
- More opportunities to connect, participate and build relationships locally.
- Sustainable and well-maintained community assets, responding to local needs.
- Stronger voices in shaping how spaces are used and developed.
- Greater collaboration between residents and local partners.

## WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON

Together, we will work to:

- Understand local needs by working with local communities and partners to create activities that make the biggest difference.
- Support local groups develop activities, events and services that bring people together.
- Improve access and inclusion by creating welcoming spaces.
- Invest and sustain community assets through improvements and making the best use of the spaces available.

## WHY THIS MATTERS

Investing in community assets and services helps create stronger, more resilient communities where people can connect, access support, and feel a sense of belonging. Around 60% of residents told us that more investment is needed in local community assets, such as Birchfield Community Centre, recognising the important role these spaces play in bringing people together and supporting community life.

## WORKING TOGETHER

**This plan represents the beginning of a long-term commitment to Birchfield and the people who live here.**

**We know that lasting change happens when residents, community organisations, public services and local partners work together around shared priorities and ambitions.**

**By continuing to listen, invest and build on the strengths already within the community, we believe Birchfield can continue to grow as a healthier, safer and more connected place where people feel proud to live.**

**We will continue to review progress with residents and adapt our approach as local priorities and needs evolve over time.**

## HOW WE WILL STAY ACCOUNTABLE

**We are committed to keeping residents updated on the progress of this plan and listening to feedback as the work develops. We will regularly review whether the actions in this plan are making a meaningful difference for the community and use resident feedback and local insight to shape future priorities and activity.**

**We will continue working with residents to shape how this plan develops and how progress is shared with the community over time.**

**A shorter resident-friendly summary version of this plan will also be developed alongside residents following the launch of the full Community Investment Plan.**

**If you would like to find out more, get involved in local activities or help shape future community investment at Birchfield, please contact Robert Tait on robert.tait@abri.co.uk or 07825144590.**

**For regular updates on the progress of each priority at Birchfield, check out our website.**