# Somerset Council sells C Block for £1.7 million to create housing for key workers



Part of the Somerset Council's headquarters in Taunton has been sold for £1.7 million, with plans to convert the premises into residential flats aimed at healthcare professionals and other key workers. The sale involves C Block of County Hall, which has seen limited use since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. Somerset Council confirmed in March 2024 that it was seeking to offload C Block as part of a comprehensive review of its properties and assets.

After months of discussions, the property was acquired by Prime PLC, a Worcester-based developer known for specialising in health and care properties, including the recently completed diagnostic centre at Yeovil Hospital. In the near future, Prime PLC intends to submit plans to convert the now-vacant building into flats, targeting local healthcare staff and public sector employees for occupancy.

C Block is situated at the western end of County Hall, conveniently located near the Crescent car park and within strolling distance of Taunton's town centre. The 4,600 square metre site will be transformed into residential units, echoing the Moxom development on Park Street, which successfully converted the former Debenhams back office into 69 flats.

Once completed, the new flats will be managed by Hyve, a not-for-profit provider focused on key worker housing. Hyve currently operates a similar project at Alexandra House in Brewery Square, Dorchester, close to Dorset County Hospital. The organisation plans to offer first preference for the new accommodations to local NHS employees and is collaborating with Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, the body responsible for Musgrove Park Hospital, to address the housing needs of local healthcare workers.

The location of C Block is notably less than a mile from the hospital, with a pedestrian crossing over the A38 Upper High Street and a public footpath linking the main road to Parkfield Drive. This connectivity links with other local walking and cycling routes, which may benefit potential residents. Should NHS staff not show sufficient interest, the flats could also be made available to other public sector workers, including firefighters, police officers, teachers, social workers, and childcare workers.

Will Bilbrough, the technical development director at Prime PLC, expressed enthusiasm for the project, stating, "On previous projects, we have seen first-hand how having access to holistically designed accommodation can transform the experience of key workers, improving their well-being and supporting them to stay with employers longer. We are excited to get started on redeveloping C Block at County Hall, giving it a second life as an asset to the local community."

The proceeds from the £1.7 million sale will be directed towards funding front-line services, as outlined in the balanced budget set by Somerset councillors in March. The sale also includes the area currently designated as a smoking zone for council staff, leading to instructions for personnel to smoke off-site and away from the building.

Councillor Mike Rigby, who oversees economic development, planning, and assets, commented on the completion of the sale, saying, "We are very pleased to see this sale completed. When Somerset Council was formed in 2023, we committed to reviewing our estate and making the right decisions, including selling buildings that were no longer required, to generate income that will play a part in protecting vital services for residents. This sale is a great example of the positive changes and steps we are taking to address the budget gap we face. Providing accommodation to our county's key workers is also a great opportunity, and we look forward to seeing these plans progress."

Prime PLC is set to formally apply for planning permission in the coming weeks to alter the layout of C Block in alignment with their residential plans. The developer also intends to hold public drop-in sessions as part of their planning consultation, with further details expected to be released later in the year.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/somerset-council-sells-part-of-county-hall-to-developer-of-key-worker-housing/> - This article confirms that Somerset Council has sold part of County Hall to Prime plc for redevelopment into key worker accommodation. It highlights Prime's expertise in health and care property development and the involvement of Hyve for managing the housing.
2. <https://primeplc.com/news/somerset-council-sells-part-of-county-hall-for-key-worker-housing/> - This news release details Prime plc's plans to convert C Block of County Hall into key worker housing, emphasizing its proximity to Musgrove Park Hospital and collaboration with the NHS Foundation Trust.
3. <https://www.noahwire.com> - The article source provides information about Somerset Council's sale of County Hall's C Block for conversion into residential flats for healthcare professionals and key workers.
4. <https://somersetcountygazette.co.uk/news/20091719.prime-plc-to-redevelop-county-hall-into-key-worker-housing/> - This article may provide additional local perspectives or updates on the redevelopment plans and public reactions.
5. <https://www.insidermedia.com/news/south-west/prime-plc-acquires-somerset-site-for-key-worker-housing> - Insider Media may offer insights into Prime plc's broader strategy for key worker housing developments and their significance in regional economic planning.
6. <https://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1768372/prime-plc-seeks-permission-key-worker-housing-> - Planning Resource could provide details on Prime plc's planning application for the C Block redevelopment and any associated community consultations.
7. <https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/part-somerset-council-hq-sold-10105057> - Please view link - unable to able to access data