

# HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2023-2033

**Version: FINAL, Cabinet approved.**

## Version control

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## 1. **Foreword**

I am pleased to introduce the Cannock Chase Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2033, which covers our housing objectives and plans for the next ten years.

Housing is critical to all parts of our local economy and is also a significant contributor to health outcomes and the way we all live our lives. I understand that if we get the housing offer right, and there is choice for everyone, then enhanced prosperity and growth will inevitably follow.

The Council wants to ensure that all housing delivered is of a high standard and in the right place to meet the needs of those living and working in the district. We have a strong commitment to see new homes that are sustainable and energy efficient and to see improvement within existing housing stock that will help reduce fuel poverty.

The Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy focuses on what we want to achieve, working with and alongside our partners, for our residents and our housing priorities for the District. We are confident that positive changes can be made, even in these challenging times and look forward to working in partnership to achieve our shared aims.

I would like to thank all partners who have contributed to the production of this strategy.



**Councillor Adrienne Fitzgerald**

**Housing, Heritage, & Leisure Portfolio Leader**

## 2. Introduction

The Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out our plans for the improvement of housing and support needs across Cannock Chase for the next 10 years. This strategy is our first longer-term plan that includes all aspects of housing, homelessness and rough sleeping. The strategy will be reviewed after five years following completion of the statutory homelessness review.

The document has been developed in consultation with partners and follows on from the progress of the previous Housing Strategy.

The Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will:

- fully reflect the wider vision of the authority and its partners;
- reflect a clear and evidenced approach;
- provide a strong focus on how partners will deliver their commitments, including the infrastructure needed to support housing growth.

The Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy contains information about the housing market, demographic issues, the needs of particular groups, priorities, achievements and actions. This document will help to deliver the strategic housing priorities for the District and sits alongside a number of Council policies including the [Corporate Plan 2022-26](#).

The key aims of the Strategy are:

- To increase the supply of Affordable Housing;
- To improve the maintenance and management of existing housing and strive to achieve a carbon neutral housing stock in the future;
- To promote the provision of suitable accommodation, information and advice to prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.

### **3. Profile of Cannock Chase**

Cannock Chase District is situated on the northern edge of the West Midlands conurbation and is the second smallest District in Staffordshire after Tamworth, covering a total area of 7,888 ha. Over 38% of the District is situated within the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty between Hednesford and Rugeley/Brereton.

The population of the District, according to the ONS increased by 3.1%, from around 97,500 in 2011 to 100,500 in 2021. Cannock Chase is the 12th most densely populated of the West Midlands' 30 local authority areas, with around nine people living on each football pitch-sized area of land. Population estimates predict that the District population will reach 105,000 by 2037. A substantial aspect in this growth is the ageing population, with an increase of residents aged over 65. There are approximately 41,500 dwellings in the District, of which 69% are owner occupied, 17% are social rented and 12% are privately rented.

Many of the towns and communities in Cannock Chase developed around the industry of coal mining. Following the closure of the last remaining pit in 1993 there has been investment in the local infrastructure and the development of a broad base of new employers across sectors such as high-technology, heavy industry, distribution, services and retail. However, a legacy of the industrial heritage in the District can be seen in many social indicators such as health and unemployment, representing some of the worst levels in Staffordshire.

Life expectancy at birth in the District is significantly lower than the England average for both men and women. Healthy life expectancy is also a problem in Cannock Chase, with males and females both expected to spend significantly more time in ill or poor health compared to regional and national averages.

Health profiling also indicates that the issue of obesity remains significant amongst children and adults in the District. The Cannock Chase Locality Profile for 2018/19 figures found that around 21.4% of children aged 10-11 in Cannock Chase have excess weight (overweight or obese) with rates being higher than the national average. The proportion of people who are obese in Cannock Chase is also higher than the England average, 74% compared to 62%.

Disability Living Allowance levels in Cannock Chase exceed the rates at regional and national level. Half the wards in the District have claimant levels for DLA of around 6-8% of the working age population, above the 5% national average.

Qualification levels for the working age population in the District are substantially behind comparators, with the gap widening further up the qualifications scale. Only 33.4% of the District's population is qualified to NVQ level 4 or above (HNC

equivalent, below degree level), well below the ratio for regional analysis and over 10% below the national average (43.5%).

## **4. The Strategic context**

### **4.1 The National Housing Policy Agenda**

The pandemic has shone a bright light on the importance of a safe, secure and affordable home. The social rented sector has become a safety net for those who need it most, but we know it's becoming increasingly harder to access – particularly in England.

The current Government has diagnosed the planning system as central to the failure to build enough homes, particularly where housing need is at its most severe. There's a continued focus on supporting private sector delivery too. According to one estimate commissioned by the National Housing Federation (NHF) and Crisis from Heriot-Watt University, around 340,000 new homes need to be supplied in England each year, of which 145,000 should be affordable to all.

Although the private rented sector partially fills the gap, it now houses people of all ages and walks of life, and with increased demand, access to affordable good quality private rented accommodation becomes difficult for many households.

The Conservative manifesto and levelling up plans have in the past few years focused its housing policies on:

#### **➤ *Affordable housing supply***

The government announced a new, larger, £11.5bn Affordable Homes Programme 2021-26 (AHP), including funding for social rent, supported housing, and a renewed commitment to delivering homes using modern methods of construction (MMC). The AHP plans to deliver up to 180,000 new homes including:

- 50% of homes at discounted rent, including affordable rent and social rent in areas of high affordability challenge.
- 50% of affordable home ownership including a majority of shared ownership.
- 10% of homes to provide supported housing.
- 10% of homes in rural areas.
- 25% of homes delivered through Strategic Partnerships using MMC.

#### **➤ *Building safety and quality***

Implementing the findings of the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety by Dame Judith Hackett, however commentators say slow progress is

being made. Robert Jenrick MP, then Housing Secretary, announced in early 2020 new measures to faster and further improve building safety for high rise residential buildings. This included the introduction of a new [Building Safety Regulator](#) to be established, this was made law in April 2022 by the passing of the Building Safety Act which named the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as the Regulator.

➤ **Regeneration**

A £3.6 billion fund investing in towns as part of the government's plan to level up our regions released in 2020/21, with £2.35 billion allocated so far. The Levelling Up White Paper sets out how the government will spread opportunity more equally across the UK. It comprises a programme of change, including 12 UK-wide missions to anchor the agenda to 2030, alongside specific policy interventions that build on the 2021 Spending Review to deliver change.

➤ **Protections for tenants**

The charter for social housing residents: social housing white paper, released in November 2020 focused on ensuring that residents in social housing are safe, are listened to, live in good quality homes, and have access to redress when things go wrong. The charter sets out what every social housing resident should be able to expect:

- To be safe in your home. We will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.
- To know how your landlord is performing, including on repairs, complaints and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
- To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
- To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.
- To have your voice heard by your landlord, for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its board. The government will provide access to help, if you want it, for you to learn new skills to ensure your landlord listens.
- To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in, with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
- To be supported to take your first step to ownership, so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

The 'A fairer private rented sector' white paper, published June 2022, sets out the government's long-term vision for a private rented sector (PRS) that is fit for the 21st century and aims to deliver a better deal for tenants. This includes plans to:

- abolish Section 21 'no-fault' evictions and introduce a simpler tenancy structure
- apply the Decent Homes Standard to the PRS for the first time

- introduce a new Property Portal to help landlords understand their obligations
- introduce a housing ombudsman covering all PRS landlords and providing redress for tenants

➤ **Welfare reform**

Continuing the roll out of Universal Credit, while promising to ensure it works better for the most vulnerable.

The cost of living has been increasing across the UK since early 2021. The annual rate of inflation reached 9.9% in August 2022, close to a 40 year high, affecting the affordability of goods and services for households. Low-income households are most affected by rising prices.

Benefits increased in April 2022 by less than the current level – or the expected level – of inflation, which will put further pressure on incomes. Whatever level the Government increases benefits to next, it still means a prolonged period where benefits income fails to keep up with the rising cost of essentials.

➤ **Homelessness**

Enforcing the Homelessness Reduction Act and aiming to end rough sleeping by the end of the next Parliament in 2024. Government has expanded programmes such as the Rough Sleeping Initiative and progressed with pilots on Housing First schemes.

The ‘Everyone In’ scheme, which protected rough sleepers in hotels and other emergency accommodation after the Covid-19 pandemic reached the UK in March 2020 was considered very effective, and the housing sector is keen to take to the opportunity to build on its success to achieve the Government’s target of ending rough sleeping by 2024.

Homelessness Prevention Grant for local authorities was uplifted in 2021/22 and in October 2021 a further £65 million was announced as an “exceptional one-off payment” to “support local authorities to help vulnerable households with rent arrears to reduce the risk of them being evicted and becoming homeless, including helping households to find a new home where necessary”, which is part of the overall investment of more than £750 million last year to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

The [Homelessness Prevention Grant](#), available in 2022/23, is on top of the £66 million to provide rough sleepers with safe and warm accommodation and drug and alcohol treatment services this winter, and £65 million support package for vulnerable renters struggling due to the impact of the pandemic. Overall, the government is investing £2 billion over the next three years to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.



However the Government are currently consulting on changing the methodology for calculating the award of Homelessness Prevention Grant, this could dramatically change the amounts some LAs get for the better or worse depending on which options the Government progresses with for 2023/24 onwards.

## **4.2 Corporate Strategic Context**

### **Corporate Plan 2022-26**

Vision: Ambition is at the heart of our plan. Post pandemic we have an opportunity to repave the path ahead. We want a Cannock Chase that local residents are proud to call home:

- Rejuvenated town centres, local businesses that are supported and an environment where entrepreneurship is encouraged.
- Empowered residents encouraged to lead healthy and independent lives.
- A local environment that is protected, preserved, and enhanced for future generations.

We will be a forward-thinking Council, making best use of our assets, living within our means, and ensuring we are accountable for our decisions. The [Corporate Plan](#) has 4 priorities as set out below:

**PRIORITY 1 - ECONOMIC PROSPERITY - “To reinvigorate the economy and create a District that thrives”**

We aim to:

- Attract investment to develop the District’s economy.
- Encourage entrepreneurship, promote apprenticeships, and support business.
- Attract modern, green, and skilled industries and create jobs.
- Rejuvenate our town centres.
- Support the development of our visitor economy.

**PRIORITY 2- HEALTH & WELLBEING - “To encourage and support residents to lead healthy and independent lives”**

We aim to:

- Provide opportunities for residents to lead healthy and active lifestyles and recognise the importance of mental health and wellbeing.
- Embed health and wellbeing into all of our policies and everything that we do.
- Work with partners to address health inequalities across the District.
- Support residents that need our help.

PRIORITY 3 - THE COMMUNITY - “To ensure Cannock Chase is a place that residents are proud to call home”

We aim to:

- Ensure our neighbourhoods are safe, clean, and tidy
- Maintain our local parks and green spaces.
- Encourage residents to live a sustainable lifestyle.
- Improve the housing offer across the District.
- Ensure our communities are well designed, accessible, and inclusive environments.
- Support and build strong connections within our local communities.

PRIORITY 4 - RESPONSIBLE COUNCIL - “To be a modern, forward thinking and responsible Council”

We aim to:

- Improve our customers’ access to services.
- Enhance the use of technology and new ways of working.
- Develop our workforce to ensure they are suitably skilled.
- Be a responsible Council that lives within its means and is accountable for its actions.
- Make the best use of our assets.

## **Local Plan**

The Local Plan will help shape the physical, economic, social and environmental characteristics of the District. It sets local planning policy and is used to determine planning applications within the District, alongside the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It is also supported by Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) where necessary to help implement policies and provide further detail and elaboration.

The NPPF states that Local Plans are key to delivering sustainable development and that local authorities should produce a Local Plan for their area. The Local Plan can then be reviewed in whole or in part to respond flexibly to changing circumstances. The [Local Development Scheme](#) is the Council’s commitment to the preparation of a new Local Plan (a Local Plan Review) which will replace Local Plan Part 1 when adopted and will also cover the more detailed elements which would have been contained in Local Plan Part 2.

The new Local Plan has an adoption target of Summer 2023. The most up to date position for the Local Plan can be viewed at [www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/planningpolicy](http://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/planningpolicy).

## **Economic Prosperity Strategy 2022-32**

Our new 10 year [Economic Prosperity Strategy](#) outlines the Council's vision and priorities for the District's economy. The Council wants to work with its partners to support businesses to thrive and grow and to ensure local residents can take advantage of the many opportunities that are being created. The strategy sets out the priorities that the Council will focus on over the next few years and the ambitions that we will strive to deliver against in the medium-long term.

Housing growth is a big part of the strategy, and the Council will aim to:

1. Attract investment to develop the District's economy.
2. Encourage entrepreneurship, promote apprenticeships, and support business.
3. Attract modern, green, and skilled industries and create jobs.
4. Rejuvenate our town centres.
5. Support the development of our visitor economy

## **Asset Management Strategy for Land and Property 2022-26**

The [Asset Management Strategy for Land and Property 2022-26](#) sets out the Council's framework, at a strategic level, to align the usage of its land and property assets with the delivery of its business and more broadly to support the Council's Corporate Objectives for the benefit of its communities and to help stimulate economic growth within the district.

The Council owns various land and property assets spread across the district including its main operational premise in Cannock, a working depot at Hawks Green, its Social Housing stock, leisure centres and various parks, non-operational and community assets.

The housing stock has seen an ongoing programme of continuous improvement, with planned maintenance programmes being funded via a 30-year business plan. The stock is being maintained at 'the decent homes standard' and improvement programmes over the last 20 years have led to the majority of the residential stock achieving EPC level 'C'.

Key Actions include:

- setting up a Strategic Asset Management Group (AMG);
- setting up a Property Working Group;
- review the current approach and organisational structure, including individual Service responsibilities, for the management of property assets against a 'Corporate Landlord' approach to property;
- develop a programme of strategic asset reviews to ensure the property assets are fit for purpose and are delivering their intended

- potential against the corporate priorities;
- review the purpose and benefit of underperforming assets and determine how they could better help the Council achieve its corporate aims and objectives;
- identify surplus property which could provide a capital receipt to further assist the Council in achieving its corporate goals.

### **Private Sector Housing Strategy**

A new five-year [Private Sector Housing Strategy](#) was approved in June 2022.

More people are now living in private rented housing than ever before, and this trend is likely to continue. The strategy has been updated because of this growth and because tenant demand for accommodation is high. The strategy contains three key commitments:

1. Support through education and advice
2. Ensure safe and healthy homes (with enforcement as appropriate)
3. Improve energy efficiency

### **Allocations Policy**

The Council's [Allocations Policy](#) seeks to ensure that the Council's properties makes best use of its stock to meet the needs of transferring tenants and applicants, and help to build sustainable communities.

The Allocations policy objectives are:

- (a) Provide choice to applicants;
- (b) Be a simple and accessible system that transferring tenants, applicants and other agencies can understand and staff can explain and give informative advice about;
- (c) Address vulnerability;
- (d) Comply with legislative and regulatory requirements including the Housing Act 1985 (as amended), Housing Act 1996 (as amended, Homelessness Act 2002, Localism Act 2011, Data Protection Act 1998, Race Relations Amendment 2000, Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Allocation of Housing(Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces Personnel)(England) Regulations 2012, Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Former Armed Forces Personnel)(England) Regulations 2012 wherever it has a bearing on the allocation of housing;
- (e) Maximise the use of stock;
- (f) Help prevent overcrowding;
- (g) Help create sustainable tenancies within sustainable and mixed communities;

(h) Regularly review the allocations policy to ensure it is relevant to local circumstances, complies with legislation and is effective.

The Allocation Policy is currently under review and an updated policy is expected to be published in 2023/24.

## **5. Cannock Chase housing, homelessness and rough sleeping context**

### **Housing**

The current Local Plan review finds that a minimum 5,430 dwellings will need to be delivered to meet the District's housing need up to 2039 at a rate of 258 dwellings per annum. A further 500 dwellings will be delivered to help meet a shortfall arising from the wider housing market area, increasing total delivery to 5,930 dwellings at a rate of 283 dwellings per annum.

The [2019 Local Housing Market Assessment \(LHMA\)](#) conducted for Cannock Chase identified an affordable housing requirement of 110 homes per annum. This clearly demonstrates the current shortfall of affordable housing in the District. The LHMA also identifies the shortfall in property sizes and the most acute need is for two bedroom dwellings. The Council's housing register shows a high demand for both 1 and 2 bedroom accommodation too.

The revised [NPPF](#) (National Planning Policy Framework) stated that affordable housing contributions were to be sought from sites of 10-14 units rather than previous 11-15 units, with no contributions sought on sites under 10 units. A financial contribution is sought for sites less than 15 units (due to management issues of Registered Providers where less than 3 units on a site).

The requirement to provide at least 25% of all affordable housing units delivered by developers through planning obligations as [First Homes](#) has meant that the tenure mix for affordable housing provision in the District reflects this, and will now require 25% of units being First Homes, 60% rented and 15% Intermediate Housing. The emerging Local Plan policy for affordable housing will introduce a revised policy informed by a Whole Plan Viability Assessment.

During 2021/22 the Council took part in a pilot scheme for delivery of [First Homes](#). First Homes will make a proportion of new homes available on sites with a minimum 30% discount on the open market value which will be passed on with the sale of the property to future first-time buyers. This means homes will always be sold below market value and local communities will benefit for generations to come. Vistry Partnerships built 116 new homes at Walkmill Lane in Cannock on land formally owned by Homes England. 48 of the homes were affordable

housing taken on by Bromford Housing Association and offered as affordable, social rented and shared ownership dwellings to local families and those in housing need. A further 10 units were then offered as First Homes to test the scheme with the Council. The pilot went very smoothly, and the 10 units were quickly purchased by households previously living or currently working in the District.

Home ownership in the District had decreased from 74% in 2001 down to 69% in 2011, according to Census data. According to 2020 estimates this has been maintained at 69%. There is an appetite for homeownership however affordability is an obstacle for many people in Cannock Chase due to the relatively low levels of income.

According to the 2021 Annual Survey of Hours and Earning (provisional results) the average annual income for the District is £27,241, which is below regional and national averages. The average house price of £214,247 for 2022 (up to August) measured against the annual income is 7.86 times the amount typically earned. In the current conservative lending climate, most lenders will offer a maximum of four times a single applicant's base income, or about three times a joint income. Therefore, dependant on the level of interest rates available, a house purchase using a 5% deposit on a property price of £214,247 would require an individual annual income of £50,884 and around £67,845 for a couple/household, well above current average income figures for the District, which illustrates the affordability issues experienced by a large proportion of residents in Cannock Chase.

Levels of Private Renting in the District have risen significantly in the last 10-15 years, from 5% in 2001 and more than doubling to 11% in 2011, with this trend continuing to date – estimates suggest it was around 14% in 2021. As a result of increasing unaffordability of homeownership, lack of supply of new homes to the market and a dwindling social rented sector, more and more households are turning to the private rented sector.

One of the Council's priorities is the maintenance of our housing stock. The Government set the target of achieving decent homes standard for social housing stock by 2010, the Council achieved this and has maintained the total stock to the standard ever since. The Council's HRA (Housing Revenue Account) Capital Budget contributes to the delivery of new social housing, the maintenance of housing standards and enable our residents to live healthy and happy lives, as reflected in the Council's Corporate Plan.

A number of major improvement programmes are planned to be delivered over the next 3 years, these include:

<b>Key Task Area</b>
Replacement kitchens
Replacement bathrooms
Electrical upgrading
Central Heating upgrades
External Envelope works
Disabled Facilities Works
Sheltered Scheme Works
New Build

Since 2015/16 we have delivered 149 new Council homes for rent across four schemes:

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>No. of Dwellings</b>	<b>Mix</b>
Moss Road Redevelopment Scheme	65	30 x 2 bed houses; 27 x 3 bed houses; and 8 x 4 beds houses.
Green Lane/Hillsprings	23	14 x 1 bed flats; 2 x 2 bed bungalows; and 7 x 2 bed houses.
Former Garage Sites and Other Council Owned Land	39	11 x 2 bed bungalows; and 28 x 2 bed houses.
Land at Hawks Green Depot	22	8 x 1 bed flats; 6 x 1 bed houses; 6 x 2 bed houses; and 2 x 3 bed houses.

Under the Right to Buy scheme the number of Council properties has reduced since it's introduction as the building of new properties has not kept pace. Since 2018/19 when the last strategy was published up to the end of 2021/22 the Council had sold 126, but only built and let 50. In 2022/23 further sales are being made (15 at end of September) with no new properties are being built until 2023/24 at the earliest.

In addition to the Council's four sheltered housing schemes, there are approximately 12 sheltered/retirement schemes managed by Registered Providers and two extra care schemes in the District – Vine Court in Bridgtown, Cannock, managed by South Staffordshire Housing Association; and Chasewood, off Longford Road, Cannock, managed by Wrekin Housing Trust. The Council work with the County Council to try to enable further extra care schemes in the District on appropriate sites where there is demand. Bromford also manage a 14 unit supported housing scheme (MyPlace) in Rugeley for people with learning disabilities.

Fuel poverty in the District has increased in recent years, from 9.1% in 2014 up to 16.5%. Cannock Chase has the second highest proportion of households in fuel poverty in Staffordshire, but slightly lower levels than in the West Midlands. No one wants to see households struggling to keep warm and being unable to

pay their utility bills and despite the Energy Price Guarantee introduced to cap average household bills at £2,500 per year, this may still drive many more households into fuel poverty.

The Council and other Housing Providers are shifting their focus to support vulnerable tenants due to the cost of living crisis and high energy costs, this includes support such as: -

- Carrying out income and expenditure reviews with customers who are struggling to make rent payments – providing budgeting advice and further referrals to Citizens Advice / Tenancy Sustainment service if further help with debts is required;
- Ensuring customers are receiving any benefits/government assistance they may be entitled to, including DHP if relevant;
- Being more flexible with payment agreements, making sure they are set at time scales that best suit tenants and sometimes lower value agreements that previously wouldn't have been acceptable;
- Referrals to food bank as a short-term measure if they find themselves at crisis point financially;
- Promote Discretionary Housing Payments;
- Promotion of the Warm home Discount scheme when it re-opens in November 2022;
- Promotion of Staffordshire Warmer Homes Scheme;
- Promotion of benefits checker;
- Promote Severn Trent “Big Difference Scheme”;
- Promotion of energy saving advice from either: Gov.uk, Centre for Sustainable Energy or the Energy Saving Trust.

## **Homelessness**

Homelessness is a complex issue with no easy solution. Homeless people have extremely diverse needs and the available services need to be able to meet these needs. Prevention work plays a crucial part in tackling homelessness and should be the primary focus of present and future initiatives.

The [Homelessness Review 2022](#) established the extent of homelessness in the district, assessed its likely extent in the future, and identified what is currently being done, and by whom, to prevent and tackle homelessness.

### *Major Issues*

In compiling the review we have identified the following issues:

- **Shortage of affordable housing** – well documented issue, annual need calculated as 110 additional units. Whilst this has been achieved in two out the past five years, Right to Buy sales have reduced the number of available homes and with the need growing each year, affordable housing remains in short supply.



- **Level of domestic violence and violence generally causing homelessness** – level of homelessness applications and acceptances during the past few years has remained high due to domestic violence. Again, the economic climate and legacy of the pandemic could create a more pressured home environment for some households with the level of domestic violence and violence increasing as a result.
- **Accommodation and support provision** – the pandemic has meant the reduced delivery and in some cases closure, of services and put pressure on the few services that are able to continue providing housing and homelessness related accommodation and support.
- **Access to the Private Rented Sector** – Landlords are leaving sector due to tax implications, limits to welfare benefits, landlords themselves experiencing financial changes and needing to sell, resulting in fewer options in particular single people. The demand for accommodation is high and there is no incentive for landlords to rehouse on LHA rates, work to sustain tenancies or offer longer terms.
- **Sofa surfing** – sofa surfing is least visible form of homelessness, the majority of those sofa surfing already have insecure housing situations and are known to also rough sleep from time to time. Affordability is also an issue with LHA rates in the PRS and they often have a lack of support for their individual needs. There is a distinct lack of supported housing locally and the individual will often refuse to move out of the district and away from any support networks they have with friends and family.
- **Ex-Offender housing and related support** - There is a distinct lack of accommodation for those individuals who are prolific offenders. It is difficult to find placements into emergency accommodation due to their criminal background and suitability.

#### *Gaps in provision*

We have identified the following gaps in provision:

- **Lack of direct access accommodation** - we are reliant on using emergency accommodation locally which consist of B&Bs, another hotel out of district is used but has lack of cooking facilities. Need to create a pathway from the emergency/temporary accommodation to enable provision of enhanced support;
- **Lack of accommodation for the winter months** – to facilitate further opportunity to engage and support the individual;
- **Lack of floating support** - particularly for those with low/medium level needs i.e. those requiring support in maintaining PRS tenancy, support for those in lodgings, sofa surfing or living with family where they are threatened with exclusion;
- **Lack of access to PRS** – landlords currently experiencing much demand for their properties, so not liaising as much with the Council in taking our clients.
- **Lack of move-on accommodation** – limited stock, which is much in demand, to move those receiving support into settled accommodation.

- **Lack of temporary accommodation in the District** – very little accommodation in the District that we can utilise – currently using B&Bs and one hotel outside the District.

### **Rough Sleeping**

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness and in Cannock Chase it is a relatively small occurrence. The estimate of rough sleeping in the District, required annually by Government, found 4 people rough sleeping on a given night in November 2021. Whilst it fluctuates a little, it has traditionally remained at this level for a decade. The proactive work of the Housing Options team endeavours to keep the level of homelessness and rough sleeping at a comparably low level.

In March 2018 the then MHCLG published their Rough Sleeping Strategy which set out plans to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. The Strategy includes a range of commitments, intended both to help those who are sleeping on our streets or currently at risk of doing so, and to lay the foundations for a system focused on prevention, early intervention, and a rapid rehousing approach to recovery.

It was recognised there was a gap in provision within the District for rough sleeping outreach, and from late January 2019 to the end of September 2019 P3 were employed to provide a rough sleeper outreach service in the District. During this time P3 engaged with approximately 20 clients who were found on the streets or other hotspot areas and were suspected of sleeping rough.

P3 responded to reports of rough sleeping by offering assessment and solutions to support people found to be rough sleeping off the streets as quickly and sustainably as possible. P3 visited known hotspot areas and followed up existing referral cases working with each person to build a relationship, provide choices and options and encourage engagement. The help included assistance with accommodation, and also support to access drug and alcohol treatment, healthcare, assistance with benefits, reconnection to their local area/country.

In Autumn 2019 Cannock Chase District Council and Lichfield District Council appointed Spring Housing to deliver a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Pathway to provide a homelessness pathway for entrenched rough sleepers. The contract commenced on 1 September 2019.

Spring Housing have developed the service in both Districts to provide services to entrenched rough sleepers with multiple and complex needs. Spring Housing deliver a dedicated housing pathway for those individuals who are in need of accommodation. The pathway includes a seamless service provision from

assertive street outreach, including engagement and assessment of need, through to rapid rehousing options with ongoing support.

There are currently 8 units available for use as accommodation, 5 units supplied from the Council's stock, an additional 2 units purchased by the Council for use as part of the scheme and 1 unit leased by Spring Housing during the project.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Pathway contract was originally for a term of two years, with the possibility of two one-year extensions subject to the performance of Spring Housing and the availability of funding, solely at the discretion of CCDC and LDC. The final extension ends in June 2023. Lichfield DC are currently leading on the procurement of a new contract to extend the project for another two years the at the time of writing.

In September 2022 the Government announced a new [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#), in this year's Spending Review it was announced that £2 billion would be spent over the course of this parliament to end rough sleeping and tackle homelessness – the strategy sets the key funding allocations, totalling £764 million.

Approximately £500 million to be spent over 3 years for the Rough Sleeping Initiative, which this year will help provide 14,000 beds for rough sleepers and 3,000 staff to provide tailored support across England. This includes helping individuals find work, manage their finances and access mental and physical health services. An extra 2,400 long-term supported homes for those with the most complex needs, including young people, will also be provided, through a new £200 million Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme.

There is more support to break the cycle of addiction and rough sleeping, with an expanded Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant programme to an additional 20 areas in England. Thousands of prison leavers at risk of homelessness will also be helped into rental accommodation as part of an expanded government scheme designed to reduce reoffending and tackle rough sleeping.

Housing First pilots across the country (one in West Midlands) are also set to be extended which give homeless people with multiple and complex needs access to independent long-term housing as a secure and stable platform from which other issues can be addressed.

Further to the Homelessness Review outlining the resources and support for homelessness and rough sleeping, the Council has successfully been awarded monies from the 2022-25 RSI programme for a number of projects, which includes:

- The joint bid with Lichfield District Council for a total of £688,903 for the three years. Continuation and development of the Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Pathway Project to provide support including outreach, tenancy, mental health and substance abuse workers - contract currently with Spring Housing up to the end of June 2023.
  
- Four project areas were awarded a total of £177,000 in the programme.
  - **£62,000 for a Private Rented Support Service** – this will enable the establishment of a PRS team within the Housing Options team to specialise and concentrate on the PRS, explore and develop additional accommodation both on a temporary basis and more permanent basis. We anticipate increasing our access to PRS accommodation by 3 properties in the first year and up to 10 properties in years 2 and 3. To further sustain tenancies, encourage engagement and increase aspirations to move away from rough sleeping, a personalised budget for furniture and household items and other support will address their immediate need and give them an increased sense of future.
  - **£60,000 for an Ex-Offender Project** – this is required as there is no direct access or ex-offender accommodation in the district. An initial approach has been made to a provider to deliver a project. The grant will provide additional outreach and complex needs support to make the project financially sustainable as well as assisting with accommodation. Should the Project not prove deliverable we will be inviting other providers to establish a service.
  - **£45,000 for Flexible surge accommodation** - This will provide an opportunity to meet the arising need, particularly from sofa surfers, by providing sustained emergency accommodation until a successful move on into more longer term accommodation. Tenancy sustainment will begin before the move. Our proposal is to enter into negotiations to extend and enhance our current agreement with a local hotel who offer self-contained rooms/bedsits with all facilities.
  - **£10,000 for Community and Voluntary Support** - To enlist an active VCSE (Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise) community by appointing a consultant e.g. Homeless Link to undertake a scoping report and recommend proposals to engage the VCSE sector to work together to support rough sleepers to move off the street, reduce professional begging and not make the street a viable housing option. There is an element of professional begging in the district, supported by a generous community willing to help rough sleepers. To maintain generosity of donations these need to be channelled to make positive changes, the VCSE sector could help deliver a Professional begging/donation scheme to support the genuine and vulnerable rough sleeper, offer bespoke interventions

to give the rough sleeper proactive support in moving away from rough sleeping.

## **6. Objective 1: Increase the supply of affordable housing**

New homes are an essential element of economic growth, bringing in additional funding through community infrastructure levy, increased council tax receipts and job opportunities. The Government have stated that there is a need for 225,000 to 275,000 or more homes per year to keep up with population growth and to begin to tackle years of under supply.

Access to affordable housing is key to creating sustainable, prosperous communities. A lack of affordable housing affects household budgets, health and education and the ability to gain and sustain employment. Cannock Chase Council want to provide housing options to meet our residents needs. Genuinely affordable housing is needed for those on different incomes. Rented accommodation is in high demand in the District and intermediate housing has a role to play for those who do not have access to social housing but cannot afford the private market.

The Council works proactively with Registered Providers to secure the delivery of affordable homes through planning gain developer obligations and has plans to deliver approximately 70 new Council homes in the next three years.

Our Registered Provider partners have delivered over 400 affordable homes for either rent or shared ownership in the last three years.

### **Objective 1: Action Plan**

- Ensure schemes provide an affordable housing contribution in line with Local Plan policy to maximise affordable housing provision in the District.  
Resources: Officer time  
Officer: Housing Strategy and Service Improvement Team Leader
- Continue to source potential solutions / funding to provide housing to a standard to achieve carbon neutrality or maximise carbon reduction as far as is practically possible on the former Aelfgar school and Muldoon Close sites.  
Resources: Potential HCA funding / officer time  
Officer: Strategic Housing Manager / Housing Strategy and Service Improvement Team Leader

- Complete the redevelopment of the Aelfgar site.  
Resource: HRA / Officer time  
Officer: Strategic Housing Manager / Housing Strategy and Service Improvement Team Leader
- Complete the redevelopment of the Muldoon Close site.  
Resource: HRA / Officer time  
Officer: Strategic Housing Manager / Housing Strategy and Service Improvement Team Leader
- Continue to work with our Registered Provider partners and Homes England to maximise affordable housing delivery in the District.  
Resources: Homes England / Officer time  
Officer: Housing Strategy and Service Improvement Team Leader
- Continue to work with Staffordshire County Council to enable further provision of extra care accommodation across the District.  
Resources: Officer time  
Officer: Housing Strategy and Service Improvement Team Leader
- Review the Housing Investment Fund programme for the future delivery of new build Council housing.  
Resources: Officer time  
Officer: Head of Housing and Partnerships, Head of Finance.
- Explore new incentives to encourage the best use of homes which are under-occupied/have spare bedrooms (regardless of if they are subject to the spare room subsidy/ 'bedroom tax')  
Resources: HRA/Officer Time  
Officer: Tenancy Services Manager and Team Leaders

**7. Objective 2: To improve the maintenance and management of existing housing, and strive to achieve a carbon neutral housing stock in the future.**

While the Council has direct control over the quality and management of its own homes, it is also committed to doing all it can to promote and enforce higher standards for homes of all tenures.

Cannock Chase Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and set a vision for the District to become carbon neutral by 2030. It is recognised that around 16% of the UK's carbon emissions come from existing residential housing sector.

The Council aims to ensure it's existing housing stock starts reducing carbon emissions as much as possible. Development of a strategy to deliver a carbon neutral housing stock and a retro fit work programme is currently underway. Along with a rolling programme of stock condition surveys, a costed net zero action plan is being developed to aid an overall asset management plan.

In particular there are issues with the quality of some private rented homes in the District, where some landlords are failing to adhere to statutory standards and tenants are living in unfit and potentially dangerous conditions. We need more private rented homes, but we also need existing and new private rented homes to be the right quality.

For both social and private sector homes, we also need to ensure appropriately adapted homes are available that meet residents medical needs.

## **Objective 2: Action Plan**

- Develop a 'Housing Asset Management Plan', which is linked to the corporate Asset Management Strategy, and improve property specifications in line with the Housing Asset Management Plan, with the aim to deliver a retro fit work programme for a carbon neutral housing stock.  
Resource: HRA / officer time  
Officer: Housing Property Services Manager
- Regular reviews of the Council's 30-year Housing Revenue Account  
Resource: Officer time  
Officer: Head of Housing and Partnerships
- Improve the quality and reliability of homes in the private rented sector through the work of the Council's Private Sector Housing Team as per the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2022-27.  
Resource: General Fund / DLUHC via Staffordshire County Council Better Care Fund / Officer time  
Officer: Senior Environmental Health Officer
- Make the best use of existing homes through adaptations to Council properties. Where possible we follow up referrals from Social Care and Health to provide effective long-term solutions to tenants housing requirements taking into account their individual circumstances.  
Resource: HRA / Officer time  
Officer: Housing Property Services Manager
- Ensure new build schemes provide suitable properties to accommodate long term solutions to medical needs of residents to reduce the impact of adapting/retrofitting unfeasible properties and providing a more attractive

alternative to residents needing adaptations and fixed equipment in their current accommodation.

Resource: HRA / Officer time

Officer: Housing Property Services Manager

- Undertake rolling programme of Stock Condition Surveys to establish the 30 year business plan for asset management of stock.

Resource: HRA / Officer time

Officer: Housing Property Services Manager

- Participate in the [Rugeley Zero Carbon project](#) with partners to produce an innovative design for a town-wide Smart Local Energy System (SLES)

Resource: Officer time

Officer: Housing Property Services Manager

## **8. Objective 3: To promote the provision of suitable accommodation, services, information and advice to prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.**

The Council engages in many activities with partners to reduce and prevent homelessness including debt and financial advice. The general year on year trend for the number of people approaching as homeless does fluctuate but has been affected more by the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2019/20 cases peaked and there were 250 households assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty. This increased from the previous year (2018/19) of 182, but then came down to 178 in 2020/21. 'Family and friends unable to accommodate', 'Loss of rented accommodation' followed by 'Domestic Violence and Non-Violent Breakdown in Relationship involving partner' are the most common reasons for homelessness in the past three years.

Figures for 2021/22 indicate 216 cases owed prevention or relief duty, as we recovered from the Covid pandemic but started to feel early pressures from the cost of living crises, therefore 2022/23 could see a further increase in homelessness and rough sleeping if the cost of living crisis really does hit people hard.

### **Objective 3: Action Plan**

- Provide effective housing advice to those threatened with homelessness to sustain their existing accommodation if at all possible.

Resource: CLG / Officer time

Officer: Housing Options team



- Continue to build relationships with local landlords via the Landlords Forum and offer a range of packages and incentives to enable households to move into or remain in the private rented sector.  
 Resource: CLG & Homelessness Prevention Funds / Officer time  
 Officer: Housing Options Team Leader
- Proactively work with other local authorities to pursue government bids for funding.  
 Resource: Officer time  
 Officer: Housing Options Team Leader
- Establish joint working protocols with hospitals/prisons etc. to ensure an effective and efficient referral process.  
 Resource: Officer time  
 Officer: Housing Options Team Leader
- Ensure that Discretionary Housing Payment use is maximised to prevent homelessness.  
 Resource: DHP / Officer time  
 Officer: Housing Options / Housing Benefits
- Ensure the Council's Allocations Policy is regularly reviewed to make the best use of the Council's housing stock and housing those in greatest housing need.  
 Resource: Officer time  
 Officer: Strategic Housing Manager
- Continue to develop Tenancy Sustainment Services for prospective new Council tenants and homelessness applicants to ensure tenancies are maintained in the long-term.  
 Resource: CLG / Officer time  
 Officer: Strategic Housing Manager
- Continue to deliver the Severe Weather Accommodation Protocol (SWEP) to provide temporary accommodation to rough sleepers during periods of severe weather.  
 Resource: Homelessness Prevention Funds  
 Officer: Housing Options Team Leader
- In partnership with Lichfield District Council, manage the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Pathway and Housing First accommodation project in the two districts.  
 Resource: New Burdens & Flexible Homelessness Grant Funding and MHCLG Rough Sleeper Initiative Fund / Officer time / Support Provider  
 Officer: Strategic Housing Manager / Housing Options Team Leader

- Work with partners to allow the County Resettlement team to maintain sponsors (re-matching wherever possible) and make new matches for guests as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme.  
Resource: Officer time  
Officer: Strategic Housing Manager
- Deliver a Private Rented Support Service  
Resource: Officer time / RSI funding  
Officer: Strategic Housing Manager / Housing Options Team Leader
- Deliver an Ex-Offender Project  
Resource: Officer time / RSI funding  
Officer: Strategic Housing Manager / Housing Options Team Leader
- Secure Flexible surge accommodation  
Resource: Officer time / RSI funding  
Officer: Strategic Housing Manager / Housing Options Team Leader
- Appoint a consultant to undertake a scoping report and recommend proposals to better engage the VCSE sector  
Resource: Officer time / RSI funding  
Officer: Strategic Housing Manager / Housing Options Team Leader
- Review Allocations Policy to ensure it adheres with the latest homelessness and other legislation to meet the needs of applicants and transferring tenants.  
Resource: Officer time  
Officer: Tenancy Services Manager
- Review usage of aids, adaptations and emerging technology to support people to live independently.  
Resources: HRA/Officer Time  
Officer: Housing Property Services Manager and Tenancy Services Manager
- Attempt to avoid evictions wherever possible through Tenancy Sustainment work and interventions as appropriate.  
Resources: Officer time  
Officer: Tenancy Service Manager and Team Leaders

## 9. Updating the Strategy

As there is a statutory requirement to publish an updated Homelessness Strategy every 5 years this strategy will be refreshed after 5 years. A Homelessness Review will be undertaken in 2027 to inform the strategy update for early 2028. The strategy update will be consulted on and then approved by Cabinet.

The Action Plans for each objective will be reviewed regularly and progress monitored against each action.

## 10. Contact

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This document can be provided in braille, on audio cassette tape/disk, **Large print** and in other languages on request to Cannock Chase Council on 01543 462621.