

Private Sector Housing Strategy

2022-2027



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Foreword



Cannock Chase Council's Private Sector Housing Strategy 2022-27 will play a key role in helping deliver our priorities of 'Economic Prosperity, 'Health and Wellbeing', 'The Community' and being a 'Responsible Council'.

At Cannock Chase Council we are committed to ensuring our residents live in safe and healthy homes. We understand that houses are far more than physical structures; they are the place where we spend most of our time, raise families, they are our homes! Since the start of the COVID pandemic, our homes have become our sanctuary and living in a safe, warm, healthy home is more important than ever.

We are aware that housing conditions can influence our physical and mental health and living in quality homes, which are free from hazards, can improve peoples' immediate and long-term health. The Private Rented Sector is key in meeting our District's housing needs and the Council will continue to work to help create supported, sustainable and cohesive communities.

This strategy sets out our proactive and reactive approach to improve the condition of properties within the sector and provide support to stakeholders. We are committed to continually improving our service and working with partner agencies and landlords to ensure homes meet the standards required.

Councillor Adrienne Fitzgerald
Housing, Heritage & Leisure Portfolio Leader

Introduction

The Private Sector Housing Team responds to complaints and requests for service mainly relating to concerns over poor housing conditions and energy efficiency. This Strategy sets out our approach to working within the Private Rented Sector (PRS) but also encompasses our offer to support owner-occupiers and Registered Providers.

The PRS in Cannock Chase is well served by the majority of landlords and letting agents who provide excellent service.

Cannock Chase Council will therefore seek to support and engage with landlords, letting agents, tenants and other stakeholders to ensure the PRS is attractive to both tenants and those property businesses seeking to invest in Cannock Chase.

However, if advice fails or there is an immediate risk from poor housing conditions, the Council will always seek to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of its residents.

In 2019 the Council declared a Climate Emergency and has set the ambitious target of creating a Net Zero Carbon District by 2030. This will be at the heart of everything we do. This Strategy therefore seeks to build on the Council's corporate objectives of 'Economic Prosperity, 'Health and Wellbeing', 'The Community' and being a 'Responsible Council'.



National and Regional Context

The number of households in the private rented sector in the UK increased from 2.8 million in 2007 to 4.5 million in 2017, an increase of 1.7 million (63%) households. A lack of housing supply generally, and the rise of the buy-to-let market has seen the sector more than double since 2007, with 19% of the population now living in privately rented homes.

The West Midlands region continues to demonstrate high demand for rented accommodation, with the sector providing valuable accommodation for residents. The West Midlands was the highest region for tenant demand during September 2021, illustrating the importance of the sector within the region as part of meeting overall housing need.

The Private Rented Sector generally has the highest proportion of non-decent homes which may be in poor repair, lack reasonably modern facilities or have ineffective heating or insulation. As of 2019-20 23% of rented properties failed to meet the decent homes standard with approximately 40% of the sector comprising households in the bottom third of incomes.

Rental reform is expected in 2022 with the publication of the Rental Reform White Paper. This is likely to lead to the introduction of a national landlord register, changes to legislation and changes to the Section 21 eviction process, where landlords can seek possession without needing a reason. Landlords and tenants are therefore encouraged to keep up to date with its progress, the consequences of which will likely be seen during the operation of this Strategy. The sector has also seen numerous changes to legislation and guidance in recent years affecting private sector landlords to improve standards.

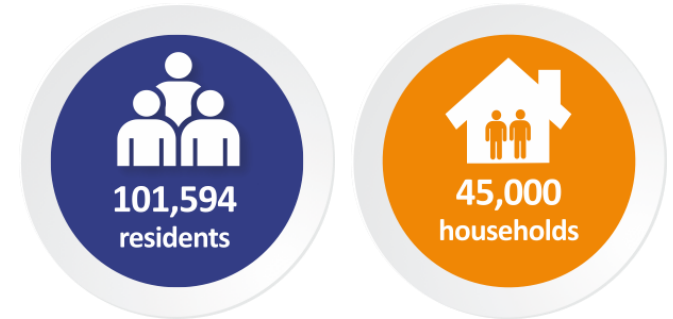


Local Context

Cannock Chase district is the second smallest district in Staffordshire covering 30 square miles with over 38% of it within the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and 60% designated as Green Belt.

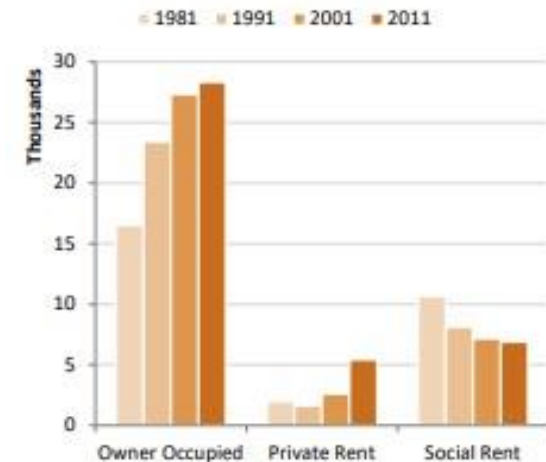


The District is an increasingly desirable place to both live and work. The population is expanding at a rate higher than the national average, which may be linked to employment or reflect positive levels of housing affordability in the area. As of 2020, the population is estimated at 101,594 living in around 45,000 households.



At the last estimate of households, 70% are owner occupied, 18% are social rented and 12% are privately rented. Levels of private renting in the District have risen significantly in the last 10-15 years, from 5% in 2001 to 12% in 2011, with this trend continuing. Cannock Chase generally has a low number of long-term empty homes, with 331 having been empty for a period of 6 months or longer. Less than one third are being charged an empty home premium of either 100%, 200% or 300%.

Population estimates project that by 2043 the District's population will rise to 115,178 residents with the number of households rising to 52,372.





The average house price in Cannock Chase was £173,058 in March 2020, below the Staffordshire, West Midlands and England averages. The affordability of housing in the District (comparing average house price to average income) is positive compared to the region and national average with Cannock Chase house prices being 6.2 times higher than average annual income.



Service Objectives

The Corporate Plan for 2021-2024 sets out four priorities: 'Economic Prosperity, 'Health and Wellbeing', 'The Community' and being a 'Responsible Council'.

The Private Sector Housing Strategy will contribute to these priorities through our three key commitments as set out below, and supported by our action plan:

Commitment 1 - Support through education and advice

We will ensure responsible landlords are supported through clear advice on legal compliance and we will work with landlords to ensure wherever possible that tenants are safe; we will seek to work with partners and to promote our offers of financial assistance to those who are vulnerable or require adaptations to remain in their homes.

Commitment 2 - Ensure Safe and Healthy Homes

We will seek to identify all Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the District and to ensure suitable amenity standards, fire safety precautions and management are in place. We will ensure targeted, proportionate enforcement action is taken against non compliant landlords letting substandard properties and that tenants are not illegally evicted from their homes.

Commitment 3 - Improve Energy Efficiency

We will seek to reduce the number of households in our District experiencing fuel poverty, working with partners to ensure our residents can access all forms of available financial support. We will support landlords in ensuring their properties meet minimum energy efficiency standards, taking appropriate enforcement action where necessary.

Ref	Commitment	How we will deliver
1	Support through education and advice	
1.2	Building Strong partnerships and collaborations	<p>Offer a wide range of grant and housing assistance such as disabled facilities grants (DFGs) to support vulnerable households live independently by our Housing Assistance Policy – Independent Living 2020.</p> <p>Contribute and signpost to other schemes delivered by partners, such as schemes to help tackle fuel poverty. Continue to offer home security grants to provide security measures for vulnerable residents.</p> <p>Provide homeowner advice about a wide range of issues relating to their homes. We will continue to provide advice and signpost where necessary.</p> <p>Where owner occupiers are faced with repossession colleagues in the housing options team can offer advice and support to help people keep their homes.</p> <p>Supporting the Housing Solutions Team in their work to address homelessness and ensuring accommodation is safe.</p>
1.3	Review and Promotion of Service Delivery	<p>We will place strong emphasis on proactive work to help identify future service needs and those of our customers, such as introducing a risk-based HMO inspection regime and use of targeted data.</p> <p>Seek to increase the range of services offered by digital platforms such as online licensing and payments.</p>

Ref	Commitment	How we will deliver
2	Ensure Safe and Healthy Homes	
2.1	Work to identify and ensure management and licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's)	<p>Improve joint working with other departments and agencies to identify and investigate all HMOs in Cannock Chase including the use of mobile applications.</p> <p>Introduce updated HMO Amenity Standards for the District and improve the quality of information offered to landlords. Introduce a risk-based inspection programme for HMOs.</p> <p>Encourage landlords to ensure good management standards and an understanding of legislation.</p>
2.2		
2.3	Take Appropriate Enforcement Action against poor standards	<p>Focus enforcement on the minority of landlords and lettings agents that provide poor conditions and services to tenants.</p> <p>Take action where conditions are immediately dangerous to occupiers or where private rented homes are found to be in disrepair and landlords have not acted on informal advice to improve standards.</p> <p>Increase use of powers against rogue landlords and the levying of financial penalties as an alternative to prosecution. Ensure the full remit of powers is available for use including rent repayment and banning orders and rogue landlord database entry.</p> <p>Protect tenants by investigating breaches of the Prevention of Eviction Act 1977 to ensure evictions take place in line with due Court process.</p>

Ref	Commitment	How we will deliver
3	Improve Energy Efficiency	
3.1		



Appropriate enforcement action (commitment 2.3 above)

Each property is assessed for hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). This is the tool used for addressing housing conditions in the sector and determining enforcement action.

If a hazard is serious and is an immediate risk to a person's health and safety, this is known as a Category 1 hazard, while less serious or less urgent hazards are known as Category 2 hazards. If a Category 1 hazard is identified, the Council has a legal duty to take action to ensure the hazard is removed or reduced to an acceptable level.

Available enforcement action includes:

- Hazard Awareness Notice
- Improvement Notice
- Prohibition Order
- Emergency Action
- Demolition action and clearance areas.

Enforcement charges will usually apply and may be followed by civil penalty or prosecution. Work in default may also be carried out and recharged to the owner where enforcement notices are not complied with.



Related key documents

[Local Plan & Local Housing Needs Assessment 2019](#)

The Local Plan helps shape the physical, economic, social, and environmental characteristics of Cannock Chase. It sets local planning policy and is used to determine planning applications, alongside the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Local Plan is currently being reviewed and will be subject to change as will the NPPF.

[Housing Assistance Policy - Independent Living 2020](#)

For both social and private sector homes, we seek to ensure appropriately adapted homes are available that support people living safely, independently, confidently and with dignity in their own homes for as long as possible. The Policy also introduces the assistance available for owner occupiers and those living in rented accommodation.

[Housing, Homelessness And Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2023](#) - The Housing Strategy is an overarching document that draws upon a variety of supporting strategies. Its purpose is to present a comprehensive picture of local housing needs, issues and priorities for action.

[Environmental Health Service Enforcement Policy](#) - provides guidance to all stakeholders on the range of options available to achieve compliance with legislation enforced by Cannock Chase Council Environmental Health and Public Protection service .

[Statement of Intent](#) - The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is a Government energy efficiency scheme to reduce carbon emissions and help tackle fuel poverty. The Statement of Intent allows funding to be more widely available to households within Cannock Chase.



Contact



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