canterbury city council

Housing Strategy
2026-2030

Date: 30 June 2026

Contents

1. Introduction

Canterbury City Council's Housing Strategy was adopted on 30 June 2026, superseding the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 to 2023. It is written from the council's strategic perspective as the Local Housing Authority, rather than as a social housing landlord.

There is a statutory requirement for local housing authorities to produce a Homelessness Strategy, but not a housing strategy. Yet, the Housing Strategy remains the key policy document that underpins and supports all the council's housing-related strategies.

An up-to-date Housing Strategy was urgently needed to address new Government housing policies and the new Corporate Plan, to provide a policy framework for increasing the number of council homes and to support the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan.

It addresses housing needs on a district-wide basis across all tenures, but the council is very limited in its ability to control or influence many issues in the private sector because of lack of resources.

The Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy have been separated into two strategic documents to enable the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to be tailored to address the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and reduce reliance of temporary accommodation outside the district.

The housing situation is challenging. Expectations of social landlords have increased, with updated regulatory standards, and greater prominence for the Regulator of Social Housing and their judgements. There is more emphasis on improving the quality of housing management and maintenance, on healthy homes, fire safety and compliance, based on sound information about our homes and our tenants, and by listening to the experience of tenants.

High property prices and rents in Canterbury District mean that many local households cannot afford to rent or buy a home on the open market, yet there is insufficient affordable housing available from the council and Registered Providers (RPs). As a result, the only choice for many people is privately rented accommodation, and the council is focused on implementing the Renters Rights Act, which from 1 May 2026, will give tenants new rights and introduce new rules for private landlords.

Affordable housing is in short supply: accommodation provided by the council and RPs make up about 11% of all homes in the district, so many people who need an affordable home cannot get one. There is considerable political and financial support nationally and locally to build more affordable housing.

The council is making strenuous efforts to increase the number of new homes it owns, to make better use of existing homes, to improve their quality and to rationalise its residential portfolio by disposing of properties that cannot be brought up to modern standards at reasonable cost.

Local government devolution is expected within the next two to three years, which will result in the reorganisation of the current two-tier arrangements for local authorities. This document explains the council's strategic approach to housing for that period and aims to leave the new authority a sound legacy without fettering its discretion.

It is primarily aimed at an informed audience of councillors, council officers, planners, developers, Registered Providers, representative and advocacy groups.

1.1 Purpose

The Housing Strategy is the council's vision for housing in the district, providing an overarching strategic framework for the council's housing related policies.

It supports the council's role as a place maker and leader of communities. Providing a clear understanding of local housing needs in all tenures, a vision for the kind of housing that is appropriate in the district and how it might be delivered, making an important contribution to the council's strategic framework and helping to achieve the social, economic and environmental objectives that shape a community and create a sense of place.

Key purposes of the Housing Strategy are to help make the council's Corporate Plan a reality and to provide strategic and practical support to the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan and all the council's housing related strategies.

The Housing Strategy explains the housing needs of the district and how these might be addressed through the provision of new homes and by making better use of existing homes. It does not identify allocated development sites or infrastructure requirements, which are a function of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan (Policies SS6, DS8 and DS9) rather than the Housing Strategy.

1.2 Links to other strategies

Although it is not a statutory requirement, the Housing Strategy links all housing-related strategies and plans, giving and receiving support to the following:

- Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028 | Canterbury City Council
- Adopted Local Plan | Canterbury City Council
- Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan
- Housing homelessness and rough sleeping policy 2018-23
- HRA Business Plan 2019
- Housing allocations policy 2023
- Tenancy strategy December 2020
- Tenancy policy December 2020

- Report of the councillor working group on older persons' accommodation 2026
- Housing Asset Management Strategy 2025 to 2029
- Kent-and-Medway-Housing-Strategy-2025-web.pdf

2. Where we want to be

2.1 Vision

Everybody needs a decent home. Our vision is to improve choice, opportunity and quality of life for our communities by providing attractive, well-designed homes that achieve the highest modern standards of comfort, convenience, practicality & energy efficiency in desirable, welcoming, sustainable neighbourhoods at a price that local people can afford.

2.2 Aims

- To support the Corporate Plan commitments to:
  - Retrofit council housing
  - Reduce use of temporary accommodation outside the district
  - Increase the number of council homes
  - Put local people first for housing
- To support the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan
- To understand local housing needs in all tenures
- To identify local housing priorities
- To ensure that local housing markets meet local needs, and support the delivery of new homes, particularly affordable housing
- To promote efficient and effective use of existing homes

3. Where we are now

3.1 Overview of Canterbury District

A description of the district, it’s demographics and economy are contained in the 2017 Canterbury District Customer and Community Profile, Canterbury City Council Housing Needs Assessment (September 2021) and Housing Needs Assessment Update (July 2025).pdf

Canterbury is the third largest local authority district in Kent, with an estimated population of 165,400 at mid-year 2019.

The city of Canterbury has seen significant levels of growth and planned infrastructure investment as part of the Canterbury District Local Plan 2017 and will continue to be the focus of growth as the economic hub of the district. The city is well placed to deliver further growth, being well connected to London and the continent, with links to HS1 and the A2, and has a regionally significant economy, including its three universities.

With three universities, Canterbury’s ratio of students (aged 18+) to permanent residents (aged 16-74) is one of the highest in England at

16.4%, resulting in a distinctive age profile and a high annual churn of population between domestic and international locations.

There is expected to be a substantial growth in the size of the resident population aged 65+.

Population forecasts 2022-2042

	Total	**0-15**	**16-64**	**65+**
2022	169,300	26,800	106,600	35,900
2027	181,200	27,400	114,000	39,900
2032	191,500	27,600	119,300	44,600
2037	195,900	28,700	119,000	48,200
2042	201,100	30,000	120,900	50,200

KCC Housing led forecast (2021) Kent Analytics, KCC

3.2 The local housing market

Council Tax statistics record a total of 68,846 dwellings, with a relatively high proportion of bungalows, flats and detached properties when benchmarked against the county, region and England totals.

The average household size is 2.3 people, slightly below the average for England and Kent.

Summary of Housing Tenure in Canterbury District 2021

	Canterbury		**Kent**		**England**	
All Households	**63,792**	**100%**	**648,393**	**100%**	**23,436,085**	**100%**
Owned: Owned outright	24,477	38%	227,729	35%	7,624,693	33%
Owned: Owned with a mortgage or loan	16,836	26%	201,054	31%	6,744,372	29%
Shared ownership	586	1%	8,734	1%	235,951	1%
Social rented: Rented from Local Authority	5,006	8%	35,782	6%	1,945,152	8%
Social rented: Other	2,794	4%	52,087	8%	2,060,511	9%
Private rented: Private landlord or letting agency	12,522	20%	108,543	17%	4,273,689	18%

	Canterbury		Kent		England	
Private rented: Other	1,502	2%	13,954	2%	521,200	2%
Living rent free	69	0.1%	510	0.8%	30,517	0.1%

Source: 2021 Census - Table TS054

Canterbury is considered to be a self-contained housing market area with four sub-areas:

- Canterbury City
- Whitstable and Herne Bay Coastal
- Rural North
- Rural South

There has been an average annual housing completion rate of +572 new homes per year since 2001/02, although completion rates as percentage of dwelling stock have fallen below the Kent and regional averages since 2015.

3.3 Private sector housing

The private sector is the largest part of the housing market. In the 2011 Census, 67% of households were owner occupiers, falling to 64% by 2021, a trend similar to the rest of the county.

The private rented sector accounted for 20% in 2011, rising slightly to 22% by 2021, higher than the rest of Kent and England, a reflection of the student population.

The sector has some of the poorest housing conditions. In 2018 a private sector stock condition survey found:

- 5,167 dwellings in the owner occupied and rented private sector had category 1 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards, approximately 9% of all properties.
- 1,224 (about 8%) of dwellings in the private rented sector had category 1 HHSRS hazards.
- The highest concentrations of all HHSRS hazards in the private sector were found in the wards of Reculver, Chartham & Stone Street and Little Stour & Adisham.
- The highest concentrations of fuel poverty in the private sector were found in the wards of Little Stour and Adisham, Northgate and Chartham, and Stone Street.
- For excess cold, the highest concentrations were in Reculver, Chartham and Stone Street, Little Stour and Adisham.
- The average Standard Assessment Procedure or SAP rating for all private sector dwellings in Canterbury was 59, which is worse than both England (60) and South East (60).

- For owner occupied homes, the figure is 58 and for private rented accommodation it is 62. The SAP rating is expressed on a scale from 1 to 100, with higher scores indicating better energy efficiency and lower fuel costs.
- The total cost of mitigating category 1 hazards in Canterbury's private sector homes was estimated to be £15.2 million: £11.6 million in the owner-occupied sector, and £3.6 million in the private rented sector.
- There are an estimated 3,890 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), of which approximately 1,110 came under the mandatory licensing scheme, which applies to most properties used as HMOs in England which house 5 people or more in 2 or more separate households. The number of licensed HMOs had reduced to 723 by June 2026.
- 5.6% (3,332) of private sector dwellings, including 4.5% (669) of private rented dwellings, were estimated to have an EPC rating below band E.
- There were an estimated 16,397 private homes with uninsulated cavity walls and 10,523 with less than 100mm of loft insulation.
- Analysis of the energy efficiency variables indicates that owner-occupied properties have the highest average figures for all variables, such as CO_2, energy and heat demand, energy and heating cost.

There is no significant Government funding to address many of the issues in the private housing sector, and the council's General Fund does not have sufficient resources to do so. Therefore, the council is focusing on:

- Implementation of the Renters Right Act 2025, which from 1 May 2026, creates a simpler, more secure Assured Tenancy structure, strengthens tenants' rights and introduces new rules for private landlords including:
    - Abolishing Assured Shorthold Tenancies. All new, and most existing, Assured tenancies will become Assured periodic (rolling) tenancies.
    - Abolishing Section 21, so-called 'no-fault', evictions alongside updates to the grounds for possession.
    - Limiting rent increases to one per year that must not exceed open market rent.
    - Giving tenants the right to challenge rent levels at the First-tier Tribunal.
    - Ending no-fault evictions and providing greater security of tenure.
    - Introducing a new Private Rented Sector Landlord Ombudsman to provide quick, fair, impartial and binding resolution for tenants' complaints about their landlord. This will bring tenant-landlord complaint resolution in line with established redress practices for tenants in social housing and consumers of property agent services.
    - Creating a Private Rented Sector Database to help landlords understand their legal obligations and demonstrate compliance. It will provide better information to help tenants make informed decisions when entering into a tenancy agreement and will also help

the council to target enforcement activity where it is needed most. Landlords must be registered on the database to use certain possession grounds.
    - Giving tenants the right to request to keep a pet.
- Ensuring Houses in Multiple Occupation are safe, well managed, and comply with all relevant Management Regulations.
- Tackling unlicensed HMOs.
- Timely adaptations to support independent living within the community for those with medical vulnerabilities.
- Ensuring mobile home sites are safe and well managed.
- Addressing poor housing conditions, including disrepair, fire safety, no heating or hot water, damp and mould.

The council prefers to engage, educate and support private landlords before resorting to enforcement action.

3.4 Empty homes and second homes

Empty homes are a valuable unused resource. Most empty homes are in the private sector. According to MHCLG statistics on 7 October 2024 there were:

- 2,466 vacant dwellings.
- 903 were vacant long term
- 42 belonged to Registered Providers
- 82 council properties (which had reduced to 10 by 16 June 2026)

To be classed as "long-term empty" a home must be liable for council tax and have been unfurnished and not lived in for over 6 months. This figure is increasing.

There is a reasonable explanation for some homes that are empty, for example, the owner is in care or has recently died and the property is held in probate, waiting to be transferred to a beneficiary. These are exempt from council tax.

Some empty homes have not been unfurnished and empty for longer than 6 months but may become long-term empties soon.

Second homes are not used as somebody's primary residence. They may, in some circumstances, be used as weekend or holiday homes for their owners, but they may also be used as investments, kept vacant, accruing value for their owner.

Holiday lets are an extension of second homes: not used as primary residences but used to make profit for their owners, short let for several weeks or months of each year, preventing them from becoming a permanent home. In many cases owners 'flip' to business rates which may be cheaper than paying council tax.

Action on Empty Homes analyses Government data on long-term empty homes:

Canterbury council taxbase data overview of empty homes 2024

Council Taxpaying Empty Homes including long-term empties	1,908
Second homes /furnished empties	1,343
Council Tax Exempt empty homes	684
Total vacant homes	3,935
Total Homes 2024	72,443
Total vacancy %	5.4%
1 in every 'x' homes out of use	18

Source: Action on Empty Homes using MHCLG statistics

Canterbury district homes not in residential use on a long-term basis

Long Term Empty Homes 2024	903
Long Term Empty Homes 2025	1,073
Long Term Empty Homes change	170
Long Term Empty Homes % change	+19%
Second homes 2024	1,636
Second Homes 2025	1,343
2nd Homes change	-293
2nd Homes change %	-18%
2025 data Total Homes	72,443
Long Term Empty Homes occurrence %	1.48%
Second Homes occurrence %	1.85%
Total Number not in use	2,416
Total % not in Primary Residential Use	3.34%
1 in every 'x' homes out of use	30
National average of 1 in every 'x' homes out of use	51

Source: Action on Empty Homes using MHCLG statistics in November 2025

Canterbury is classified as a “medium” performer by Action on Empty Homes.

However, according to the council’s Council Tax records on 16 June 2026, the number of long-term empty homes was:

Long term empty properties on 16 June 2026

Unoccupied and Unfurnished 12 months to 5 years	469
Unoccupied and Unfurnished 5 to 10 years	60
Unoccupied and Unfurnished 10 years or more	14

Second homes and holiday homes are important in seaside towns like Whitstable and Herne Bay, contributing to the local visitor economy. However, large numbers of second homes can affect the character of a town, reduce the number of permanent residents and affect the viability of local businesses. The number and percentage of second homes identified in the table seem less than might have been expected.

Also, student accommodation is exempt from council tax if it is owned, let or managed by an educational institution, so data for the purpose-built student accommodation in Canterbury is not featured in these statistics.

The council wants to:

- Encourage the permanent occupation or use of existing homes within the district and
- Increase the supply of homes, particularly affordable housing, and enhance the sustainability of local communities

There is no significant Government funding to deal with empty homes. Private sector housing is a function of the council’s General Fund, which does not have sufficient resources to devote solely to empty homes.

If empty properties are causing serious detriment to a local community, the Private Sector Housing Team tries to find a resolution, bring empty homes back into use and improve housing standards by providing information, guidance and general support to landlords, leaseholders and owner-occupiers.

If negotiations fail, there is a range of powers available to the council, including compulsory purchase orders, empty dwelling management orders, and the ability to take over land or houses. However, all of these options are complex and very time consuming, requiring extensive efforts to find and negotiate with property owners.

Therefore, **to address the issue of second homes and empty homes, the council has adopted a financial incentive.**

From 1 April 2025, a council tax premium of 100% is applied to an empty and furnished property, which is not used as someone's

main home. The premium increases the council tax payable to 200%.

To address long-term empty homes, from 1 April 2025, a council tax premium is charged when a property has been empty and unfurnished for one year or more. The following premiums apply:

- For properties that have been empty and substantially unfurnished for one year, but less than five years, the premium is 100%
- For properties that have been empty and substantially unfurnished for five years, but less than 10 years, the premium is 200%
- For properties that have been empty and substantially unfurnished for 10 years or more, the premium is 300%

There are some exceptions to these rules.

The table below shows the value of the total of the additional premium applied to the Council Tax accounts from 1 April 2026, excluding the standard charge for Council Tax. This is the value raised and not the value collected. It also includes accounts that were live accounts on 1 April 2026 but have since been closed due to a change in liability or a change in premium charge, so only the apportioned amount of the premium is calculated in the totals.

Property	**Number of properties**	**Total raised**
Unoccupied and Unfurnished 12 months to 5 years	469	£1,026,896.31
Unoccupied and Unfurnished 5 to 10 years	60	£273,013.08
Unoccupied and Unfurnished 10 years or more	14	£88,934.61
Unoccupied and Furnished (referred to as 2nd home)	897	£2,016,358.80
Total	**1,440**	**£3,405,202.80**

The income is generated for the General Fund and cannot be used by the ringfenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

3.5 Council housing

On 31 March 2025, the Council owned 5,130 homes.

Summary of council homes on 31 March 2025

Type of property	**Number of bedrooms**				**Total**
	One	**Two**	**Three**	**Four+**	
Flats - low rise	1,108	350	10	0	1,468
Flats - medium rise	309	351	65	2	727

Type of property	Number of bedrooms				Total
	One	Two	Three	Four+	
Flats - high rise	63	68	0	0	131
Houses & bungalows	362	915	1,391	114	2,782
Hostel places	20	2	0	0	22
Totals	1,862	1,686	1,466	116	5,130

CCC Draft Statement of Accounts 2024 to 2025

Many of the council’s homes are over 50 years old and need significant investment to address important priorities, such as health and safety compliance, Awaab’s Law, improvements to the condition and quality of existing homes, decarbonising the housing stock and preparing to meet the new Decent Homes Standard.

The Regulator of Social Housing carried out an inspection in July 2025, published in October.

The council was graded as C3, meaning it is not compliant, with weakness or serious failings in one or more areas, requiring significant improvement.

The regulator recognised that the council has an action plan in place to fix the failures and is engaging constructively.

It praised recent improvements to the repairs and maintenance service including better appointment times, the way the council deals with anti-social behaviour and the fact the council treats tenants and prospective tenants with fairness and respect.

The regulator found the council:

- Does not have up to date information on the condition of most of its homes
- Needs to continue to make progress around health and safety compliance
- Needs to improve the adaptations service
- Needs to strengthen reporting and monitoring of hate-related anti-social behaviour
- Needs better data about its tenants so it can engage with all tenants effectively and services are accessible and equitable
- Needs to publicise repair target timescales
- Needs to continue to make progress on dealing with tenant complaints

The last stock condition survey was undertaken in 2017/18 and did not include an internal inspection of every home. At the time of the regulatory inspection, 27.5% of homes had been surveyed and the council does not know the number of homes that meet the Decent Homes Standard, which is a serious failing.

Stock condition data will become available during summer 2026 and will form the basis of a costed programme of works, which is likely to start having a noticeable impact from 2027/28.

In the meantime, the priorities are health and safety, sustainability, compliance, including the cladding of tower blocks, and the treatment of damp and mould, in accordance with the recently adopted Housing Asset Management Strategy 2025 to 2029.

Cabinet agreed to set up an all-party Cabinet Advisory Committee to oversee, monitor and scrutinise the council's service improvement action plan and report back to Cabinet. The committee will include two council tenants.

The housing revenue and capital budget 2026/27 has been prepared to address the Regulator's findings and ensure that resources are available to support the implementation of the action plan. Some elements of the budget may need to be amended mid-year.

The full regulatory judgment can be found at Canterbury City Council (29UC) - Regulatory Judgement: 15 October 2025 - GOV.UK.

3.6 The council's older persons' accommodation

1,053 (21%) of the council's homes are designated for older people, of which:

- 585 properties (11.5%) were sheltered housing or Sheltered Plus for people over 60, accommodating approximately 645 residents and consisting of:
  - 458 properties in 12 sheltered schemes and adjacent satellite sites operating under the "Independent Living" brand.
  - 127 properties in four Sheltered Plus schemes of sheltered housing with additional services.
- 468 properties (9%) are non-sheltered independent living with minimal services for the over 55s. This designated older persons' accommodation is not included in this review.
- Most schemes contain about 30 properties, which is fairly small compared to many modern developments and makes it difficult to achieve any economies of scale.

A cross-party Councillor Working Group on Older Persons' Accommodation conducted a thorough review of the council's landlord services in older persons' accommodation between 2022 and 2025.

Many sheltered schemes are over 40 years old and require capital investment for repairs, maintenance and modernisation of approximately £8.74 million over the next 10 years. In addition, there is an immediate need to spend approximately £2 million on a new roof and recladding of 12-storey Windsor House.

The accommodation feels dated. 65% of properties do not meet internal space standards and 21% are small, unpopular studios. There is no Wi-Fi or electric vehicle charging points.

Society has changed dramatically since the schemes were designed and they no longer meet the aspirations of many of today's over-60s, which is reflected in limited demand from eligible housing applicants.

Properties were vacant for long periods, with an average relet time of 133 days (19 weeks) in 2023/24 and 2024/25, resulting in a loss of rent and service charge income of £278,808. These findings have spurred a concerted effort to reduce vacancy times.

The four Sheltered Plus schemes were among the worst performers for relet times for vacant properties, and the amount of rent and service charges lost as a result.

Housing need is increasing, and the council must make best use of its scarce supply of affordable housing for the benefit of local households of all ages and consider repurposing, remodelling or redeveloping less popular sheltered accommodation to address unmet need.

The full cost of the Sheltered Plus service is unaffordable to many prospective tenants because key elements of the service, such as the night reassurance and laundry services do not qualify for Housing Benefit, as they are personal care and not accommodation related.

The unfunded costs have been met by the HRA, which is not what it is intended for and, with the other financial pressures on the HRA, the situation is unsustainable and jeopardises the ability of the HRA to deliver key priorities.

The working group produced their recommendations, which included the redesign of services in the four Sheltered Plus schemes to provide a consistent service across the whole sheltered portfolio based on the sheltered housing service model, which includes replacing night reassurance and laundry services with alternative ways of service delivery and a medium- to long-term programme to appraise future options for each site based on the principles established in this report.

3.7 Registered Providers

For many years, Registered Providers (RPs) have produced most new affordable homes in the district, which are normally available to applicants on the council's Housing Needs Register.

Registered Provider completions in Canterbury District 2016/17 to 2024/25

	Social rent	Affordable rent	Shared Ownership	First Homes	Total
2016/17	0	38	10	0	48
2017/18	0	9	36	0	45
2018/19	0	19	37	0	56
2019/20	44	40	55	0	139
2020/21	0	35	22	0	57
2021/22	43	77	23	0	143
2022/23	31	57	70	0	158
2023/24	76	71	101	0	248
2024/25	29	213	289 *	4	535
			*202 provided non s.106		
Total	223	559	643	4	1,429

In recent years, RPs have produced more Affordable Rent and shared ownership homes than Social Rent because levels of capital grant were too low for Social Rent developments to be financially viable.

In the past year, the Government, through Homes England, has set a target of 60% of new rented homes to be for Social Rent. The council is supportive of this aspiration but recognises that delivery depends on the continued availability of sufficient capital grant, which is not controlled by either RPs or the council. Shared ownership properties often provide a degree of cross-subsidy for rented accommodation.

Since around 2022, RPs have displayed less appetite for buying s.106 affordable homes. This trend appears to have started on smaller sites with borderline financial viability that are difficult for regionally based organisations to manage effectively. It has since spread to sites of all sizes.

Even when RPs have bought s.106 homes in the early phases of a development, they have been unwilling to purchase more in later phases. S.106 homes do not attract Homes England grant funding.

RPs in Kent have made representations to the Government for some flexibility, even on a temporary basis, to allow grant funding to support s.106 acquisitions.

The increasing number of flats and smaller homes for rent on s.106 sites seem less attractive to the sector, even though the housing needs assessment identifies a need for this type of accommodation.

The House Builders Federation Report Winter 2024 (31 developers surveyed) found that nationally 139 sites with full planning permission were stalled, with approximately 17,332 affordable homes. Although the issues are nationwide, they are particularly acute in London and South East.

Since 2023, most RPs working locally have scaled back their plans, consolidating their activities close to their origins.

More established “not for profit” RPs with older, existing homes face competing demands for investment in planned maintenance, modernisation, addressing issues of damp and mould, recladding of high-rise buildings, inflation and high interest rates.

Those RPs that are still developing prefer to purchase larger sites that enable significant additionality, subject to oversubscribed grant funding. The council has been supportive of this approach.

Diverse financial arrangements, refinancing options, and funding arrangements with investors have possibly changed the focus of the type of development that RPs are willing to consider, and they seem keener to provide intermediate products, particularly shared ownership.

More “for profit” RPs are expressing an interest in providing homes in the district. At present, they are flexible about the type of developments and properties they are willing to consider, but it is unclear whether this will continue in future. There have already been instances of proposed rent levels being unaffordable.

4. The Housing Needs Assessment

Housing need is assessed on a district-wide basis using the latest standard Government-approved methodology and guidance.

The National Planning Policy Framework expects strategic policy-making authorities to follow Housing and economic needs assessment standard method for assessing local housing need.

The key pieces of evidence for the Housing Strategy and the full Regulation 19 draft Local Plan are Canterbury City Council Housing Needs Assessment (September 2021), Housing Needs Assessment Addendum (February 2024) and Housing Needs Assessment Update (July 2025). These studies estimate housing needs of different groups within the district, assess affordability, and calculate the number of new affordable homes that are needed.

The Housing Strategy references key parts of the Housing Needs Assessment but avoids unnecessarily duplicating the lengthy and detailed studies that are available on the council’s website.

4.1 Housing affordability

Canterbury appears affluent, masking housing need in the district. Relatively low earned incomes and high housing costs make it difficult for many households to rent or buy a home on the open market.

For many years, property prices and market rents have outstripped local earnings. Understanding how much someone needs to earn to pay their rent or mortgage is a key factor when modelling affordable housing needs. It is generally assumed that 30% of income is spent on housing based on English Housing Survey.

In September 2020, Canterbury's median house price was £312,750, and £350,000 for new homes. Affordability in Canterbury is low, with the district having a relatively high house price-to-earnings ratio, resulting in over 90% of households unable to afford to purchase a home.

Rental costs are also relatively high compared to the England average, but lower than the rest of Kent and the South East.

4.2 Private sector rents

Private sector tenants pay market rents. In Canterbury, 2025 ONS data suggested that the median private rent was £950 per month and lower quartile £655 per month. These figures seem comparatively low compared to the South East and may be influenced by the inclusion of student lettings.

In December 2024, listings of rental properties online suggest a lower quartile range of between £940 and £1,100 per month and a median range of £1,300 to £1,700 per month (excluding student lets, retirement properties and house shares).

These figures are higher than the ONS rent statistics for Canterbury, Kent, the South East and England, as well as being higher than the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate.

Private Rental Costs

Source	Geography	Lower Quartile Private Rent	Median Private Rent
ONS Private Rental Market Statistics (October 2022-September 2023)	Canterbury District	£655	£950
	Kent	£750	£950
	South East	£850	£1,050
	England	£650	£850
LHA Rate	Canterbury BRMA	£692	£951
Rightmove, Zoopla, On the Market	Canterbury District	£940 - £1,100	£1,300 - £1,700

Source: VOA, Rightmove, Zoopla, On the Market, ONS.

Given the range and uncertainty in the rental data, an average of the various sources has been used to assess affordability. This produces lower quartile rental levels of £875 per month and a median rental cost of £1,092 per month.

The estimated lower quartile rent of £875 per calendar month or £10,500 per year is higher than the Kent figure of £750 per month and the South East average of £850 per month.

If 34% of a private renter's household income is spent on housing costs, the minimum household income needed to afford a lower quartile rent is £30,880.

On average, private renters earn 84% of the 'all households' average. It is estimated that 68% of private rent households cannot afford lower quartile rents.

Of owner-occupiers, who on average earn 115% of the 'all households' average, approximately 41% cannot afford lower quartile open market rents.

The affordability estimates for private rents do not include any housing-related benefits to which tenants may be entitled to help them pay their rent.

The council has no power to control private sector rent levels. However, the Renters Rights Act 2025 limits rent increases to one per year that must not exceed open market rent and gives tenants the right to challenge rent levels at the First-tier Tribunal.

4.3 Council and Registered Provider rents

The council and RPs provide the cheapest accommodation in the district. Rent is the primary source of income to pay for housing management, maintenance, capital expenditure for planned maintenance and new homes.

The council and RPs are tightly constrained by Government policy about the rents they can charge, either:

- Social Rents which are assessed according to a rigid formula and equate to about 40% to 50% of market rents exclusive of service charges or
- Affordable rents which are 60% to 80% of market rents inclusive of service charges.

Government rent policy provides the framework for rents to increase by CPI+1% and this settlement will remain in place for 10 years from April 2026 to provide financial certainty.

CPI is based on the rate for September 2025. The rent increase rarely keeps pace with costs.

In January, the Government reintroduced rent convergence, permitting RPs, including the council, to increase weekly rents for Social Rent homes that are below Formula Rent by up to £1 per week over and above CPI+1% from 1 April 2027, and by up to £2 per week over and above

CPI+1% each year from 1 April 2028, until Formula Rent is reached. Formula Rent refers to the formula that must be used to calculate the rent for a property when it is relet.

Convergence will only apply if the rent of a property is below Formula Rent, which is the maximum that can be charged if the Social Rent home was re-let to a new tenant.

Rent convergence is important to the council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) because in 2025/26, 4,835 tenants paid less than the target rent, reducing income by £43,760 per week.

The council cannot increase rents by more than CPI+1% plus convergence but may agree a lower figure. However, this would have a serious impact on the long-term financial sustainability of the HRA.

Rent initiatives by previous Governments significantly reduced income to the HRA with no mechanism for the council to claw back the shortfalls in subsequent financial years. If the council opts to increase rents by less than CPI+1%, it will never be able to recover the lost income.

75% of council tenants receive either full or partial Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to help pay their rent, which mitigates against the full impact of rent increases and rent convergence.

Comparison of rental costs and incomes needed

Housing option	Monthly cost	Annual cost	% of income spent on rent	Income needed
Median Private Rent	£1,092	£13,107	34%	£38,550
Lower Quartile Rent	£875	£10,500	34%	£30,880
Lower Quartile Rent (Kent)*	£750	£9,000	34%	£26,470
Affordable Rent	£710	£8,524	30%	£28,410
Social Rent	£460	£5,516	30%	£18,390

The table above does not take account of eligibility for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, which affects affordability.

4.4 Property prices

The median house price in Canterbury on 31 March 2023 was £365,000, with properties more expensive than across Kent (£357,500), but cheaper than the South East average of £380,000.

Over the last five years, median property prices in the district averaged 11.2 times the median annual earnings but have recently fallen to 9.6.

Property price to earnings ratios in Canterbury District 2021–2023

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	5-year average
Median house price	£315,000	£344,995	£350,000	£360,000	£340,000	£341,999
Median gross annual earnings	£27,891	£26,515	£33,116	£31,597	£35,607	£30,945
House price to earnings ratio	11.3	13.0	10.6	11.4	9.6	11.2

Source: ONS House price to workplace-based earnings ratio

To purchase an entry-level (lower quartile) property, at a price of £275,000, an income of £66,790 is required (assuming a loan to income ratio of 3.5 and a mortgage deposit of 15%), which is just about affordable for a household with two median incomes.

Property prices and incomes needed

Housing option	House price	Deposit	Income multiplier	Income needed
Median House Price	£365,000	15.%	3.5	£88,640
Lower Quartile House Price	£275,000	15%	3.5	£66,790

Affordability by housing option

Housing Option	Income needed	% of all households unable to afford
Social Rent	£18,390	18%
Affordable Rent	£28,410	46%
Lower Quartile Rent (Kent)	£26,740	40%
Lower Quartile Rent	£30,880	53%
Lower Quartile House Price	£66,790	95%

The table above does not take account of eligibility for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, which affects affordability.

4.5 Housing needs

Estimates of the need for social and affordable rent housing is derived from a combination of sources, including the CCC Housing Needs Register (HNR), homelessness and temporary accommodation statistics, priority need indicators, overcrowded and concealed households and newly forming households.

The Housing Needs Assessment Update of July 2025 estimates that 1,347 households are in housing need.

In October 2024, there were 2,107 households on the Housing Needs Register (HNR), including 1,186 active housing applications and 921 'suspended' applications.

Households on the CCC Housing Register by bedroom need in October 2024

Assessed Band		Bedroom need					
	Total	1	2	3	4	5	6
Band A: Critically urgent needs	22	13	6	1	1	1	0
Band B: Serious needs	79	32	16	6	22	2	1
Band C: Higher preference needs	481	106	96	215	59	5	0
Band D: General housing needs	604	464	89	44	6	1	0
Total	1,186	615	207	266	88	9	1
% Share	100%	52%	17%	22%	7%	1%	0%

Source: CCC HNR 2024

Number of households on the Housing Needs Register & waiting times in December 2024

Band	Active applications on HNR	Current average waiting time	Minimum waiting time for 2024	Maximum waiting time for 2024
Band A	17	607 days	135 days	2432 days
Band B	63	451 days	72 days	1244 days
Band C	474	833 days	40 days	6756 days
Band D	602	472 days	15 days	2054 days

In 2023/24 2,094 households approached Canterbury City Council for homeless advice and assistance. Demand for homelessness services remains high with 1,641 approaches in 2025/26.

Finding temporary accommodation remains challenging, with competition from Social Care, Probation, the Home Office and other local authorities. The council aims to place households within Canterbury district, but this is not always possible, and sometimes accommodation must be sourced elsewhere.

On 22 May 2026, there were 186 households in temporary accommodation and of these 87 households are placed out of district.

The Housing Needs Assessment Update 2025 identifies a need over the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan period of 2024/25 - 2042/43 for:

- **1,215 homes per year in all tenures, a total of 23,085 new homes over the period**
- **695 new affordable homes per year**

The location of allocated development sites and supporting infrastructure and facilities are addressed in the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan (Policies SS6, DS8 and DS9) rather than the Housing Strategy.

4.6 Preferred tenure and bedroom mix

The Corporate Plan, the current Local Plan, the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan and the Housing Strategy are all committed to increasing the supply of affordable rental housing and addressing the home ownership gap.

Policy DS1 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan requires that development proposals for 10 or more dwellings, or on sites of 0.5 hectares or greater, will provide affordable housing in line with the requirements below:

Site typology	Affordable housing provision
100% brownfield land sites	At least 15%
All other sites	At least 30%

Source: Policy DS1 Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan

The lower percentage requirement for brownfield sites reflects the additional costs of developing brownfield land on financial viability.

Policy DS1 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan has been updated and affordable housing contributions will not be sought from proposals for student accommodation (including shared living) or older persons' housing (including sheltered and extra care housing) because of concerns about financial viability.

Affordable housing should be provided on site. Off-site financial contributions will only be considered where robust evidence is provided, which clearly demonstrates that on-site provision is not suitable and/or achievable, having regard to the operational requirements of RPs. In such cases, a financial contribution will be calculated in accordance with the council’s Commuted Sums Calculator

The Social and Affordable Homes Programme 2026 to 2036 (SAHP) provides grant funding from Homes England to support the capital costs of developing affordable housing.

Social Rent is a key priority, and SAHP aims for at least 60% of all affordable homes funded by the programme to be Social Rent, which is an aspiration that the council supports in principle.

However, building homes for Social Rent is only financially viable with substantial capital grants, which are not within the council's control. A larger capital subsidy towards the cost of construction does not overcome the problem that social rents are too low to meet long-term costs of maintenance, modernisation, health and safety and carbon reduction.

The Housing Needs Assessment (2025) identifies that 80% of the affordable housing need in the district is for affordable or social rent. However, reflecting the findings of the Canterbury District Local Plan Viability Study (2026), it is necessary to provide a balance between the meeting the needs of the district and the viability of residential development more generally through the required tenures.

Therefore, **Policy DS1 of the Regulation 19 draft Local Plan requires the following tenure mix for affordable housing**:

a. 60% for affordable rent;
b. 10% for social rent; and
c. 30% affordable home ownership models.

The council wants developers and RPs to produce as many homes for social rent as possible, and its preference is for social rent above affordable rent. The requirement for 10% social rent provision is a minimum and any proposal to reduce this percentage will only be accepted where there is robust evidence from RPs that this tenure is not deliverable on a specific site. In such cases, this element of the affordable housing provision should be provided as affordable rent tenures.

Affordable housing should be dispersed throughout the site, avoiding large clusters of affordable homes, and integrated with the market housing to create a cohesive community. Quality and design of affordable homes must be of an equally high standard to that of the private units on site.

The district-wide housing mix requirements for new homes are explained in policy DS2 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan:

Recommended bedroom mix by tenure

Bedrooms	Market housing	Affordable home ownership	Social and affordable rent
1 bed	4%	16%	43%
2 beds	26%	43%	26%
3 beds	40%	37%	23%
4+ beds	30%	4%	8%

Source: Policy DS2 Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan

New development proposals must include an affordable housing mix that is broadly aligned with the council's requirements unless there is robust evidence from the RP that this is inappropriate.

4.7 Rural housing needs

The Housing Needs Assessment is district wide. However, housing need exists in the rural parts of the district, with a shortage of accommodation that many local people can afford, with implications for the sustainability of rural settlements and local facilities, such as schools, shops and employment.

The adopted Local Plan generally considers rural housing developments to be unsustainable and are only be supported in very limited circumstances where the rural character and appearance of the countryside is protected.

Policy DS4 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan sets out clear criteria for assessing proposals for affordable housing and community-led housing schemes in rural areas, which must be supported by a recent local housing needs survey and be located directly adjacent to a settlement boundary.

4.8 People with disabilities

The most recent study on the housing needs of people with disabilities is the Housing Needs Assessment September 2021. It found that the prevalence of disability in Canterbury's household population, and the limitations on daily activities associated with it, is heavily skewed towards older age groups.

A disproportionate share of the population with long-term health and disability issues live in social housing.

Population projections indicate substantial growth in the at-risk population over the next 20 years.

Meeting the disability needs of Canterbury's ageing population will require both adaptations to existing housing stock, and the delivery of appropriately designed new dwellings.

By 2040, it is estimated there will be 13,400 people in Canterbury whose activities are 'limited a lot' by their condition (+1,660 from 2020). For those also suffering from 'bad or very bad health', a total of 7,000 people is estimated for 2040 (+874 from 2020).

By 2040, an additional 2,200 homes (across all ages and tenures) could require some form of adaptation in Canterbury (around 17% of total household growth), predominantly to meet individual needs resulting from the growth in the older age population.

If a council tenant has a disability, the council may provide adaptations or aids to help them stay safe and independent in their home. Homeowners and private tenants need to apply for a disabled facilities grant instead.

Information is available on the council's website [Home adaptations and aids for people with disabilities | Canterbury City Council]

The current proportion of wheelchair users within the district is estimated to be around 2.4% (4,000 people) with the highest usage found in the 50–64 age range (4.9%), closely followed by those aged over 65 (4.5%), including those living in care homes. This evidence, alongside the projected population and household change driven by growth in the older age groups, means wheelchair usage could increase by 700–1,000 by 2040, with an additional 400 households with a wheelchair user by 2040, around 3.5% of all households.

To ensure that new major residential developments provide for the needs of different groups within the community, **Policy DS2 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan requires:**

Typology	**M4 (2) accessible and adaptable standards**	**M4 (3) wheelchair user standards**
Proposals for 10 or more dwellings, or sites of 0.5 hectares or greater	15%	5%
Student accommodation	0%	5%
Older persons' accommodation	15%	5%
Gypsy & Traveller pitches	0%	0%

Where appropriate, this may be provided as bungalows which must be designed to prevent their upwards extension or the creation of loft rooms, such as through a shallow roof pitch, and the council will apply a condition to remove the permitted development rights relating to upwards extension of these bungalows.

4.9 Older persons' housing needs

Canterbury Housing Needs Assessment Update of July 2025 forecasts a 66% growth in the population aged 75+, rising from 18,138 in 2023 to 26,168 by 2043.

However, that does not result in an automatic increase in demand for purpose-built older persons' accommodation because other factors are important when people choose a home, such as aspirations, locality, proximity to family, availability, tenure and ability to pay.

The council's sheltered housing portfolio is part of a mixed economy of accommodation for older people.

When the housing market was surveyed, there were seven other registered providers managing about 380 rented sheltered housing properties in the district on social rents. However, this is a snapshot in time and may change.

There are also at least 20 private sheltered schemes in the district aimed at the over 55s or over 60s, covering a wide range of price points, either leasehold or market rent, with services that include scheme manager, alarm and communal lounge.

Service charges are similar to the council's sheltered schemes and lower than Sheltered Plus.

- Market values from £80,000 to £420,000
- Most priced below £200,000
- Rental alternative was £975 per month
- Ground rent £200 to £400 per year
- Service charge £2,000 to £2,800 per year

This accommodation is probably beyond the financial reach of many applying for council accommodation.

Also, changes in society and people's self-perception means that many people are still working and do not consider themselves elderly at the age of 60.

They have a different lifestyle and aspirations, which is reflected in a diminishing number of applications to the council's Housing Needs Register for sheltered housing and the length of time it takes to relet vacant properties.

Housing Needs Register data

	1 December 2021		**4 April 2025**	
	No.	**%**	**No.**	**%**
No. of households on Housing Needs Register	2961	100%	1356	100%
No. of households on HNR that qualify only for general needs housing	2438	83%	934	69%
No. of households on HNR that qualify for older persons housing	513	17%	422	31%
No. of households on HNR waiting for sheltered or Sheltered Plus	291	10%	165	12%

Meanwhile, many younger households who are not eligible for these properties are in desperate need of a home and some are obliged to live in temporary accommodation outside the district at great expense.

Some less popular sheltered accommodation could potentially be repurposed to meet these housing needs.

Although the popularity of sheltered housing seems to be diminishing among eligible applicants on the Housing Needs Register, feedback from tenants reveals that it is valued by existing residents and some applicants who prefer a quieter lifestyle among people of a similar age.

Therefore, the council will continue to provide some accommodation designated for residents over 60 years of age, but this is likely to reduce in quantity to better reflect housing needs and demand.

The Canterbury Housing Needs Assessment Update (July 2025).pdf identifies the following need for older persons' accommodation by 2043:

Summary of net additional needs for older persons' housing by tenure and typology

Type	**Tenure**	**Net Additional Need by 2043**
Age Exclusive	Social Landlord	225
	Ownership	145
Sheltered Housing	Social Landlord	297
	Ownership	-107
Enhanced Sheltered Housing	Social Landlord	-111
	Ownership	89
Extra Care 24/7 support	Social Landlord	483
	Ownership	1,835
Nursing Beds		750
Residential Care Beds		1229
Total		4,835

Source: Canterbury Housing Needs Assessment Update (July 2025).pdf

The Housing Needs Assessment concludes that in terms of future needs for older persons housing in Canterbury:

- The need to address the provision of specialist housing for older persons is "critical".
- There is a specific and immediate need for Age Exclusive and Extra Care housing, mainly for market tenure properties, even after the current pipeline supply is taken into account.
- By 2038 there will be a net additional need for residential care and nursing home beds.
- The release of family housing resulting from the provision of Extra Care housing has long been an aim of the council.
- The health and well-being benefits of delivering specialist older persons housing is also an important consideration when developing policy.

- Meeting specialist older persons housing needs for social rented accommodation will also assist in meeting the overall affordable housing needs.

The study shows an increased need for sheltered housing, but a diminishing need for enhanced sheltered housing, such as Sheltered Plus.

In respect of a future policy response, Kent County Council's preferred approach is to enable older people to remain in their homes for longer to reduce the number of residential care homes and nursing homes required.

The evidence demonstrates a need for specialist forms of older persons housing. The study therefore recommends that consideration is given to identifying sites suitable for specialist older persons housing, such as Extra Care, ensuring that larger strategic site allocations in the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan deliver a proportion of new specialist older persons housing, where appropriate.

Most of the council's existing sheltered schemes consist of about 30 properties, which is small compared to most modern developments and makes it difficult to achieve the economies of scale required to deliver efficient, cost-effective services. This mitigates against existing schemes being repurposed to provide alternative specialist older persons' housing, such as Extra Care.

The council fully supports the need for additional Extra Care accommodation and discussions with KCC are ongoing.

Policy DS2 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan requires proposals for 300 or more homes to provide a minimum of 10% of the homes as older persons housing. The type of provision should be based on robust evidence of local needs.

Policy DS2 also requires 15% of older persons' accommodation to meet M4 (2) accessible & adaptable standards and 5% to meet M4 (3) wheelchair user standards.

Policy DS5 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan supports proposals for specialist older persons housing where they help address an identified need. The proposal must be sustainably located within a settlement boundary and with easy access to public transport, or the site must be allocated for residential development in the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan and is located within an urban area.

The loss of specialist older persons housing will only be permitted where a replacement facility of better quality is provided and does not reduce the number of bedspaces. Or it must be demonstrated through a local housing needs survey that the current facility or accommodation is no longer required.

4.10 Young persons' housing needs

Only a modest increase in the general population of younger people is forecast to 2040 compared to older age groups. The housing needs of most younger people account in part for the increased housing needs assessment for 1-bedroom accommodation. However, the housing needs of students, care leavers, and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are addressed separately because of their social implications or their impact on the local housing market.

4.11 Student housing needs

Student housing analysis by the University of Kent shows that full-time University of Kent student numbers in Canterbury have declined from 18,000 in 2018/19 to around 15,000 in 2022/23. Internal forecasts by the University indicate a recovery by 2030, suggesting a need to monitor demographic shifts over time.

There has been a trend towards purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA), which is favoured over houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) due to the quality, self-contained features, and cost certainty offered by PBSA options. En-suite, self-catered cluster bedrooms are especially in demand.

The amount of student accommodation in the private rented sector distorts the local housing market and results in the loss of family accommodation, which is converted into student HMOs.

To control the proliferation of HMOs, the council adopted an Article 4 Direction covering the urban area of the city of Canterbury and neighbouring parishes that requires planning permission for small HMOs, which primarily serve the student population.

Policy DM3 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan aims to maintain an appropriate demographic and housing mix and to safeguard the character of local communities by stipulating that the proportion of HMOs within the areas subject to Article 4 Directions should not exceed 10% of the total number of dwellings within a 100m radius of any application property.

An HMO is a property let to at least three tenants who form two or more households and who share a toilet, bathroom or kitchen. HMOs can include a shared house or renovated self-contained flats.

Large HMOs must be licenced by the council. A property is defined as a large HMO if all the following apply:

- It is rented to five or more people who form more than one household
- Some or all tenants share toilet, bathroom or kitchen facilities
- At least one tenant pays rent (or their employer pays it for them)
- Each HMO must have its own licence

The following properties also need a licence:

- Purpose-built flats of no more than two units where tenants form more than one household and they share a toilet, bathroom or kitchen.
- A commercial property with purpose-built flats of no more than two units, where at least one flat has tenants that form more than one household and they share a toilet, bathroom or kitchen.

Purpose-built flats of three or more, such as student halls of residence, do not need a licence.

There were 723 licensed HMOs in the district on 17 June 2026, a reduction from approximately 1,100 in 2018. Licensing is dependent on the number of persons in residence and the presence of shared facilities, not the status or occupation of the intended residents. Therefore, no distinction is made between student and non-student HMOs.

Policy DS5 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan supports proposals for purpose-built student accommodation within higher and further education campuses. Where this is not achievable, proposals must be located within 10 minutes' walk of the relevant campus. In exceptional circumstances, if it can be demonstrated there are no suitable sites, locations with easy access to high frequency public transport may be considered.

However, they must not compromise the delivery of sites allocated for general housing, employment or other uses within the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan and demonstrate that any existing use for employment, commercial, leisure or other main town centre uses is no longer viable.

The council is keen to avoid an over-concentration of students in an otherwise residential area and be well served by pedestrian and cycle routes and public transport, with easy access to local shops, community facilities and the establishment’s existing educational facilities.

PBSA must be well designed to appropriate space standards and capable of being adapted in the future to alternative residential use.

A pipeline of approximately 1,500 PBSA rooms in the city centre indicates future supply growth. However, development is constrained by factors such as rising rents, inflationary pressures, and regulatory challenges like nutrient neutrality restrictions.

The evidence suggests that the council’s approach to HMO and PBSA has had beneficial effects.

4.12 Care leavers

Young people leaving care, aged between 16 and 21, should be supported by Kent County Council (KCC) through their Local Offer, which provides information for care leavers about what support they can receive from services.

As Corporate Parent, KCC has a statutory duty to make care leavers feel safe and supported and know how to access advice and services. The support covers a range of areas including accommodation, money, health and well-being, housing, leisure, education, training and employment.

Care leavers are entitled to support up to the age of 21 (or longer, if they are in full-time education).

Canterbury is an attractive location for young people because of employment opportunities and the concentration of universities.

KCC has published its Sufficiency Strategy, which summarises the county-level accommodation profile for children in care, along with the forecast numbers of children in care in 2027. Unfortunately, it does not include a breakdown of the forecast number of children in care, care leavers or unaccompanied asylum-seeking children by district.

Data provided by KCC indicates there are 11 children's Residential Homes in Canterbury, registered for a total of 54 beds. However, the 2021 Census communal population recorded 18 residents at children's homes within Canterbury.

Suitable accommodation may be difficult to access. It can take many forms, such as supported accommodation, shared houses, private renting, social renting, or student accommodation.

There is a national trend in England, published by Office of National Statistics of care leavers increasingly living in semi-independent living accommodation that is not subject to regulation. Such annual trends are not publicly available at smaller geographies such as the South East, Kent, or Canterbury.

In March 2023, the Government announced that from October 2023, all accommodation for care leavers aged 16 to 17 must be regulated and registered with Ofsted. This change is expected to increase the demand for appropriate accommodation for care leavers and should be taken into consideration by planning authorities.

Although KCC has the primary responsibility, Canterbury City Council recognises the importance of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

Care leavers as defined by the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 may be able to join the council's Housing Needs Register via discretionary local connection.

The council is keen that young people have a good foundation for a stable and successful independent adult life. Therefore, it supports in principle the provision of appropriate accommodation for care leavers, particularly supported housing, commissioned by KCC in partnership with a specialist housing provider.

There are no specific policy recommendations or need figures for children in care in the Housing Needs Assessment, as the City Council does not have corporate parenting responsibility.

The Meeting Development Needs Topic Paper 2026 recognises the importance of accommodation for children in care. **Therefore, Policy DS9 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan supports suitable medical, health and social care facilities, which would include accommodation specifically for children in care.**

The council will prepare its Local Supported Housing Strategy in 2026 and ensure that it addresses the needs of care leavers and is aligned with the strategies of partner organisations.

4.13 Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

Canterbury District has a long and proud history of welcoming people fleeing violence, conflict, and persecution.

The council has an excellent track record in delivering integration services through the UK Resettlement Scheme, Afghan Resettlement Programme and Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

Immigration policy is controlled by the Government and is not within the council's influence. However, the Housing allocations policy contains local connection criteria that limits access to council homes in the district.

The council works closely with partners in the statutory and voluntary and community sectors, and there is a robust framework in place to support people in the best way possible.

In July 2023, the High Court ruled that the Home Office's routine use of hotels to house unaccompanied asylum-seeking children was unlawful, and that KCC must take every possible step to increase its capacity to accommodate and look after all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in the county.

The Court made this ruling because Section 20 of the 1989 Children Act requires local authorities to take into their care any child or young person who presents in their area and has no one with parental responsibility to look after them. This includes unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who arrive in small boats or on lorries into Kent, for example, and the Court has formally confirmed that it is KCC's responsibility to take all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children into their care regardless of their mode of arrival in Kent.

Based on its own and Home Office data, KCC anticipates that referrals of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children into its care will increase significantly, and so it must identify suitable accommodation to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as they arrive.

At present, KCC does not have sufficient placements in Kent to look after all new arrivals, even though significant numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are transferred to the care of other local authorities.

In Canterbury, young asylum seekers are supported by various organizations and services. KCC has designated a property for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, providing a temporary home for up to 50 young people aged 16 and 17. The facility is staffed 24/7 and is designed for a maximum 10-day stay before the children are moved to other parts of the country.

Although most unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are dispersed throughout the country, Canterbury, because of its situation and concentration of universities, is an attractive location. No data is publicly available to enable the council to assess the impact.

Many young people are placed in accommodation in the private rented sector or in supported accommodation managed by organisations other than RPs. This may distort the local housing market and risk placing vulnerable young people in largely unregulated, expensive accommodation.

Some of the supported accommodation is known as ‘exempt’ because it is exempt from the usual caps on housing benefit levels, which means that residents, and therefore providers, can receive higher amounts of housing benefit than for other types of accommodation, which has to be funded by the council, with serious financial implications.

The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 came into force on 29 August 2023. The Act sets out to introduce changes to how supported exempt accommodation is regulated.

The Act allows the government to create National Supported Housing Standards, which will set out minimum standards for supported exempt accommodation and introduce licensing requirements for people who have control of or manage supported exempt accommodation.

Local authorities must carry out a review of supported exempt accommodation in their area, and following this publish a supported housing strategy.

The review must include the authority's assessment of the supported exempt accommodation available in its area and the expected needs for this accommodation in the next five years. The government will publish regulations stating the date by which local authorities must comply with this requirement.

Local housing authorities and social services departments must have regard to the supported housing strategy once it has been published.

Exempt accommodation tends to specialise in housing residents with a particular vulnerability. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are a significant client group, but this type of supported accommodation is also used for people with mental health issues or discharged prisoners, for example. The subject of exempt accommodation will feature in the council's Local Supported Housing Strategy 2026.

The council recognises that a coordinated, well managed and forward-looking approach is needed to safeguard the welfare of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children moving into the district and promote community cohesion and the council is committed to becoming a "District of Sanctuary."

The council is concerned that young people have a good foundation for a stable and successful independent adult life. Therefore, it supports in principle the provision of appropriate accommodation for appropriate numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, particularly supported housing, commissioned by KCC in partnership with a specialist RP provider.

4.14 Gypsies and Travellers

The Canterbury District 2025 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment Update (GTAA) provides the latest available evidence to identify the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople across the Canterbury District.

More detail is available in Chapter 4 of the Development Strategy Topic Paper (2026) https://haveyoursay.canterbury.gov.uk/43579/widgets/130223/documents/102997

Data has been carefully analysed to provide a picture of current provision across Canterbury District and an assessment of future need to provide an up-to-date and robust evidence base.

The 2021 Census identified a population of 383 people who identified as 'White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller' or 'Gypsy/Romany' plus 1 person identifying as 'Roma' living in Canterbury District and an estimate of 155 households where the household reference person identifies as being a Gypsy/Traveller.

The 2025 Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) identified a need for 43 Gypsy and Traveller pitches across the period of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan. The GTAA identified no need for Travelling Showpeople plots.

Ensuring that there is sufficient provision for the growing needs of Gypsies and Travellers within the district is essential in planning for the sustainable growth and development of the district and its communities.

The council considers the best approach to meet the identified Gypsy and Traveller need is to prioritise the use of existing sites. This focuses development on brownfield land and endeavors to meet the growing needs of the community in a way that aligns with their cultural traditions. In addition, much of the district's Gypsy and Traveller need is because families are growing, so assessing existing sites for regularisation recognises this key driver of need.

In planning positively, the council has looked to largely use existing sites to meet the identified need across the Local Plan period. **In Policy DS6 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan, this is to be achieved through both the regularisation of existing sites which do not currently have permanent planning permission, and through the intensification of existing sites to occupy further pitches.**

The Gypsy and Traveller Site Assessment Approach and Outcomes (2025) and Policy DS6 identify eight existing sites: one site for intensification; one site for regularisation; and six sites for regularisation and intensification, which provide a combined total of 23 additional pitches.

The remaining need for an additional 20 pitches across the Local Plan period is met across two Draft Local Plan allocations at Policies W6 and W9 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan.

5. Meeting our aims

Delivering the aims of this Housing Strategy is very challenging and depends on the availability of sufficient time, staff, expertise, money, land and willing partners.

Other critical factors are not within the control of the council, such as the availability of capital subsidy from Government, the timetable for local government reorganisation, the financial climate for developers and RPs and national policies on the council General Fund and HRA.

The Housing Strategy relies on the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan to facilitate its delivery through key planning policies and housing site allocations. In addition, some important development sites are being rolled forward from the Local Plan 2017, such as Ridlands Farm and the council car parks (Policies CF1 and CF2 in the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan).

The Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan aims to deliver good growth; to meet development needs through high-quality, sustainable communities and economic development, supported by infrastructure, to enable our city, town centres and villages to adapt and thrive, and to protect and enhance the natural and historic environment and the open spaces.

5.1 Market housing

The owner-occupied sector is the largest part of the local housing market, so the role of market housing is critical to the successful delivery of this Housing Strategy, the adopted Local Plan, the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan, the construction of new homes, the provision of affordable housing through s.106 agreements and new infrastructure.

The location of allocated sites and supporting infrastructure is contained in the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan rather than the Housing Strategy.

5.2 The role of RPs

For many years, RPs have been the main producer of new affordable homes. The council has always supported this approach and will continue to do so.

Since around 2022, there has been less interest by RPs in purchasing s.106 Affordable homes. More established “not for profit” RPs with older, existing homes face huge demands for investment in planned maintenance, modernisation, addressing issues of damp and mould, recladding high-rise buildings, inflation and high interest rates.

Crucially s.106 homes do not attract Homes England grant funding, and RPs in Kent have asked the Government for some flexibility, even on a temporary basis, to allow grant funding to support s.106 acquisitions.

RPs now prefer larger sites which enable significant additionality, subject to oversubscribed grant funding.

The three or four RPs currently active in the area prefer to buy land, build themselves, or via a joint venture with a developer, which gives them more control, enabling them to tailor development schemes towards their own requirements and standards.

Diverse financial arrangements, refinancing options, and funding arrangements with investors have possibly changed the focus of the type of development that RPs are willing to consider, and they seem keener to provide intermediate products, particularly shared ownership.

On s.106 affordable housing schemes, there are more flats and smaller homes for rent. RPs seem less keen on providing and managing 1-bedroom properties even though the housing needs assessment identifies a clear need for that type of accommodation.

More “for profit” RPs are interested in providing homes in the district. At present, they are flexible about the type of developments and properties they are willing to consider, but it is unclear whether this will continue in future. There have already been instances of proposed rent levels being unaffordable.

The council will continue to support RPs' aspirations to develop new affordable housing in the district, particularly on sites that provide additionality in the numbers of affordable homes built.

5.3 Making more efficient use of existing council homes

There is significant under occupation across the social housing sector, though data is hard to source. Given the expense of building new council housing, the council and RPs must make the most efficient and effective use of existing homes.

In the past, the council could rely on sufficient turnover of its own and RP tenancies, to which it has nomination rights, to help meet the demands of both homelessness and the Housing Needs Register. However, as the number of council homes has dwindled because of the Right to Buy, the supply of relets has reduced.

The council wants to encourage household mobility that makes the best use of the existing homes by:

- An effective Housing Allocations Scheme.
- Relaxing the minimum age threshold for accommodation in sheltered, Sheltered Plus or designated older persons' accommodation if there are insufficient applicants.
- Relaxing the property size eligibility criteria for hard to let properties.
- Carefully managing successions and assignments.
- Encouraging and facilitating mutual exchanges.
- Enabling transfers through the Housing Needs Register.
- Consider establishing an Assisted Moves Scheme.
- Providing advice about private sector housing options during the review of Introductory Tenancies.
- Addressing tenancy fraud to ensure council housing is available only to those that qualify and in greatest housing need.

5.4 Improving the quality of existing council homes

Many of the council's homes are over 50 years old and need significant investment to address important priorities, such as health and safety compliance, Awaab's Law, much-needed improvements to the condition and quality of existing homes, decarbonising the housing stock and preparing to meet the new Decent Homes Standard.

It is more efficient and better value for money to address these issues through a planned maintenance programme, which relies on good quality data about the condition of the housing stock that is not yet available.

The Safety and Quality Standard requires landlords to have an accurate, up-to-date and evidenced understanding of the condition of their homes that reliably informs the provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for tenants and to ensure that tenants' homes meet the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard (DHS). The Regulator identified serious failings in relation to this outcome in the recent inspection.

The council does not have accurate or up-to-date information on the condition of most of its homes. The last stock condition survey was undertaken in 2017/18 and did not include an internal inspection of every home. At the time of the regulatory inspection, only 27.5% of homes had been surveyed and the council does not know the number of homes that meet the DHS, which is a serious failing.

The stock condition surveys have therefore been outsourced, and the council has been assured that the data will be available by July 2026. It will then be analysed and turned into a costed programme of works, which is likely to have a noticeable impact on the housing budget from 2027/28.

The cost of reactive maintenance is high, so it is proposed to continue to prioritise health and safety, sustainability (insulation, for example), compliance, including the cladding of tower blocks, and the treatment of damp and mould. Awaab's Law requires the council to ensure that all homes meet the Decent Homes Standard, to be aware of any which do not meet the standard and undertake rapid remedial works within set timescales.

A costed, proactive, planned approach to maintenance, modernisation, improvement and retrofitting council homes is the primary aim, once the stock condition data is received and analysed.

Policy DS3 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan will inform any programmes to improve the quality of existing council homes that may involve elements of Estate Regeneration.

5.5 Increasing the number of council homes

Housing need is growing, emphasising the council's important role as the strategic housing authority and the largest social housing landlord in the district, owning about 8% of all homes.

The HRA Business Plan 2019 commits the council to maintaining current stock levels to counteract the loss of properties sold under Right to Buy (RTB).

The council is ambitious and is committed to increasing the number of council homes. However, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) has been under considerable financial pressure for several years. Rental income has been squeezed by previous Government rent initiatives and diminishing stock numbers because of RTB.

The guiding principles for the council's new homes programme are:

- The new homes programme is not for profit.
- All developments or acquisitions must be financially viable to ensure the sustainability of each development and to protect the overall integrity of the HRA.
- The programme will not put other services at financial risk.
- Income from government grants and other sources of funding will be maximised.
- Existing council tenants will not contribute towards the cost of the programme.
- There will be no outward differentiation between new council homes and other tenures.
- New council homes are additional to those developed by other Registered Providers.
- New council homes will be energy efficient, achieving a minimum of EPC B, economical to live in.
- Thoughtfully designed with modern family life in mind.

5.6 Progress to date

RTB has reduced the number of council homes by 311 since 2010/11. With considerable effort, the council successfully acquired or built 232 homes since 2010/11 in the HRA, a net loss of 79 social homes.

Five flats were also bought by the General Fund in 2023/24 as temporary accommodation (TA). A further programme to acquire 20 homes as TA in the General Fund began in 2025/26. The business case shows that this is better value for money than sourcing expensive nightly-paid accommodation in the private rented sector and a more stable housing option for affected households.

The council has also been pursuing opportunities to develop its own land, but these sites tend to be small and constrained. The most cost-effective way to significantly increase the number of council homes is to purchase homes direct from developers and more s.106 housing.

Efforts to increase the number of council homes

Date	Location	Project	Outcome
2010/11	St Francis Close, Whitstable	New build on HRA land with grant funding.	6 x houses
2015/16 to 2017/18	Canterbury	£10m acquisition programme using RTB receipts, commuted sums & HRA working balances.	28 x flats 1 x 2-bed bungalow 3 x 2-bed houses 14 x 3-bed houses 1 x 4-bed house
2018 to 2020	Parham Road, Canterbury	£23.1m purchased and remodelled a portfolio of former student accommodation.	61 x permanent homes 20 x studio flats for TA
2019 to 2021	District-wide	230+ HRA plots assessed for development potential. Most too small for a dwelling. Some opportunities for sales to neighbours for modest capital receipts or single dwellings. Garage sites most suitable for 4 to 6 terraced houses. Capacity & viability issues. Capacity & viability studies commissioned for clusters on Hales Place estate.	0 to date

Date	Location	Project	Outcome
2022	Canterbury	16 garage sites with potential for redevelopment identified by small sites project & garage stock condition survey. All constrained with challenging viability.	0 to date
2023	Kingfisher Close, Canterbury	Bought from the General Fund as on-site affordable housing contribution.	5 x houses
2023/24	Canterbury & Herne Bay	Acquisition programme with grant from LAHF Rounds 1 & 2.	8 x 2 & 3-bed houses 1 x 2-bed bungalow 12 x 2 & 3-bed flats
2023/24	Canterbury	TA x 10 project funded by General Fund.	4 x 1-bed flats 1 x 2-bed house
2024	The Woodlands, Broad Oak	Acquisition of new homes for affordable rent built as part of the developer's s.106 on-site contribution for affordable housing.	10 x 1-bed flat 24 x 2-bed flat 4 x 2-bed house 29 x 3-bed house
2022 to 2024	Older Persons' Accommodation Review. District-wide	Phase 2 recommendation to commission options appraisals for every site. No proposals exist at present. Long-term project.	0 to date
Total number of additional homes built or acquired 2010/11 to 2024			**232**
Total number of RTB sales 2010/11 to 2023/24			**311**
Net loss of council homes 2010/11 to 2023/24			**79**

In 2025/26, a further 14 homes were purchased as temporary accommodation by the General Fund for households to whom the council owes a duty to provide accommodation under the homelessness legislation.

5.7 Reform of Right to Buy

The government confirmed in April 2026 that it will reform RTB to better protect and rebuild depleted housing stock while maintaining a responsible route into homeownership for longstanding tenants.

Reforms will include:

- Increasing the minimum eligibility period from three to ten years before tenants can apply to buy their home.
- Amending discount rules so that discounts start at 5% of the property value and increase by 1% each year up to the maximum discount of 15% of the property value or the cash cap (whichever is lower).
- A 35-year new build exemption period so new social homes cannot be sold under Right to Buy for 35 years after they are built.

The government has also been undertaking further policy development and analysis to explore more effective fraud prevention to mitigate vulnerable tenants being pressured into buying and reviewing how RTB applies in rural areas.

The government had already taken steps to give councils more confidence to ramp up the delivery of new social homes, including reducing maximum cash discounts. Councils can also retain all the receipts from sales and combine those receipts with grant funding to build and buy more homes.

The ‘cost floor’ protection has been extended from 15 to 30 years, meaning the council can limit discounts so that the sale price does not fall below the amount spent on building, repairing and maintaining the properties. The government has been exploring further reforms to the cost floor to better protect council investment in existing homes.

The changes will be brought forward when Parliamentary time allows.

5.8 HRA development opportunities

The HRA is supporting the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan 2042/43 by responding to the call for sites with eight of the most promising.

HRA sites included in the Regulation 19 Draft Canterbury District Local Plan 2042/43 as draft allocations

Local Plan site ref	Address	Current use	Yield
Policy C20	Land at Sussex Avenue	Garages 69-70 & neighbourhood centre	21
Policy C21 (SLAA369)	Suffolk Road, Canterbury, CT1 1SA	Garages 164-183	5
Policy C24 (SLAA371)	Whitehall Close, Canterbury, CT2 8BJ	Garages 1-14	7
Policy C25 (SLAA370)	St Stephen's Road, Canterbury, CT2 7JN	Beverley House residential flats with associated garden & garages	12 additional homes + 6 existing
Policy C26 (SLAA362)	Long Meadow Way, Canterbury, CT2 7DF	Garages 177-196	5

Policy C27 (SLAA363)	Bawden Close, Canterbury, CT2 7DW	Grassed area	5
Policy C28 (SLAA364)	Copinger Close, Canterbury, CT2 7DJ	Grassed area	6
Policy C29 (SLAA365)	Jesuit Close, Canterbury, CT2 7DB	Garages 37-46, 47-56, 57-66, 67-76	6
Total	8 sites		67

HRA sites with existing planning permission

Address	Current use	Yield
Warwick Road, Canterbury, CT1 1RQ	Garages 42-54	11
East Street, Canterbury, CT1 1EE	Former Social Club, now derelict land	11
Total	2 sites	22

All the HRA sites included in the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan as draft allocations or with planning permission are small and all but two are brownfield sites.

There is an ongoing project to identify potential development sites on council-owned land, which may come forward as windfall sites.

The primary purpose of identifying council sites suitable for housing development is for affordable housing, particularly new council homes. If any are assessed as unsuitable for affordable house building or if a capital receipt could be generated and reinvested in a more appropriate project, then the site will be disposed of at full market value, and one option may be as sites for self-build.

5.9 Urban Area and Estate Regeneration Opportunities

Many of the council’s homes are over 50 years old. They need significant investment to improve and modernise them, to eliminate issues of damp and mould and improve energy efficiency. They are usually situated on housing estates built to low densities that do not make best use of the land.

Area regeneration is one of the options in the council’s approach to building more council homes in volume on brownfield land near existing local facilities, amenities and transport links.

However, area regeneration is not a quick fix. It is complex, expensive and has a long lead-in time. Preparatory work needs to begin within the next three years. Tasks include:

- Identifying sources of funding. The Affordable Homes Programme normally provides grant for only for additional affordable homes.

- Increasing the organisation's capacity and recruiting staff with experience of this type of projects across services such as Property and Regeneration, Housing and Community, Case and Locality.
- Appraising appropriate delivery vehicles and opportunities for partnership working.
- Understanding issues of financial viability and modelling the financial implications.
- Procuring a range of consultants.
- Mapping the pattern of land ownership across multi-tenure estates.
- Engaging with a wide range of stakeholders.
- Valuing the privately owned land, homes and businesses.
- Negotiating with private owners to purchase their property.
- Modelling site capacity and master planning the area.
- Deciding on the preferred mix of tenures, property types and sizes.
- Understanding the costs and implications of large-scale demolition and site clearance.
- Considering issues such as flood risk, subsidence risk and decontamination.
- Quantifying home loss and disturbance payments.
- Preparing to use powers of compulsory purchase, if necessary.
- Sourcing acceptable alternative accommodation for both council tenants and owner occupiers, including practical assistance with removals.

Policy DS3 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan establishes principles for estate regeneration. Policy C33 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan also identifies potential areas, such as Craddock Road Estate and Spring Lane Estate in Canterbury, but does not identify specific allocations or delivery requirements. Instead, it outlines areas that could come forward and opportunities on these sites will be proactively explored. Work is underway to identify more areas that would benefit from regeneration.

5.10 Supporting strategic development at Wincheap Commercial Area

The Wincheap Commercial Area is one of the key proposals (Policy C18) in the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan as a strategic site with an allocation for 1,000 dwellings. The council is committed to the proposal, and this Housing Strategy fully supports it.

The area is an important commercial centre. The opportunity for redevelopment and expansion of retail floorspace at the Wincheap estate was identified in the adopted Canterbury District Local Plan (2017). The Canterbury District Retail and Leisure Study (2020, 2022, 2025 Update) has since identified a significant reduction in the amount of retail space required compared to the 2017 adopted Local Plan. Therefore, the Regulation 19 draft Local Plan 2043 can take an alternative, more flexible approach to the redevelopment of Wincheap.

As a sustainable brownfield location, the site presents new opportunities for redevelopment and has been identified as a broad location for mixed-use development, retaining the existing level of business, commercial and leisure floorspace and for residential development which should be compatible with the primary commercial function of the site.

The council, as majority landowner, will work with promoters, key stakeholders and the local community to prepare a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to support the re-development of the estate and to determine the detailed site requirements including development mix.

Across the site, the proposed development mix is likely to include:

- Approximately 1,000 new dwellings including affordable housing, older persons housing, accessible housing, self- and custom-built housing and an appropriate mix of property types and sizes in line with Policies DS1 and DS2 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan (or as updated by a Supplementary Planning Document).
- Non-residential development:
    - Reprovide an equivalent level of business, commercial and leisure floorspace to that currently available.
    - Community and utilities infrastructure.
    - Consider the suitability of re-providing other existing appropriate uses (such as the waste depot)
- Proportionate contributions to community infrastructure.
- Open space.

The design and layout of the site should:

- Coordinate with proposals for neighbouring sites where appropriate, including Site C32 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan (Land at Wincheap Park and Ride), which is viewed as an essential part of the Canterbury District Transport Strategy to reduce the number of vehicles entering the city centre.
- Provide a high-quality built environment in line with Policy DS13 of the Regulation 19 draft Local Plan at an appropriate and optimal density and scale, which makes efficient use of land and has a distinct identity.
- Incorporate views to the city and World Heritage Site.
- Sustain and enhance the significance of nearby heritage assets including the World Heritage Site, Listed Buildings on Wincheap and the Canterbury Conservation Area.
- Ensure that residential development is carefully designed and located to ensure any potential conflicts with neighbouring commercial uses are minimised.
- Ensure that for any residential development recognises any flood risk.
- Protect and enhance landscape and green Infrastructure to protect the amenity and privacy of future residents and existing neighbouring residents on Wincheap.

The access and transport strategy for the site should:

- Provide safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle connectivity through the creation of new and improved routes including:
    - Connections to A28 Wincheap and Great Stour Way.
    - Connections to Canterbury East station.

- Connections between neighbouring streets.
- Improvements to the public rights of way network crossing and around the site.
- Facilitate delivery of the Wincheap one-way gyratory scheme with a dedicated bus lane to provide access to the city centre; and
- Minimise the need for use of private cars.

Wincheap provides a unique opportunity to provide a considerable number of homes in a variety of tenures close to the city centre.
Given its scale it is likely that some form of partnership or joint venture will deliver the project.

The council's HRA will support the development by acquiring affordable homes for rent under s.106 agreements or direct from developers which would help to provide investors with a degree of certainty about the deliverability of the site and the council's commitment. It is also possible that some of the council's larger RP partners may wish to become involved.

Preparatory work, like that described in the previous section on urban area regeneration is already underway.

5.11 Delivery vehicles for new council homes

The HRA is the primary mechanism for the council to provide homes for social/affordable housing and is a requirement of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. It is a ring-fenced account for income and expenditure arising from the provision of housing accommodation under Part II of the Housing Act 1985, which cannot be funded from or make contributions to the General Fund.

Other ways to develop housing perform complementary roles, such as the council's powers of redevelopment by the General Fund, the council's property company, partnerships and joint ventures or acquiring temporary accommodation through the General Fund. These may boost to the HRA's core provision but must be balanced against their administrative complexity, additional costs and resource requirements.

Mechanisms to deliver more council homes

Delivery vehicle	Project type	Advantages/disadvantages
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	Social/affordable housing.	Established legal & financial framework. Established systems for housing management & maintenance. Rents are highly regulated, limiting financial options. Capacity can be boosted by working in partnership with

Delivery vehicle	**Project type**	**Advantages/disadvantages**
		consultants, RPs, developers etc.
General Fund (GF)	Regeneration of non-HRA council assets & acquisition of temporary accommodation.	Established legal & financial framework. Appropriate for delivering certain types of projects. Not for ongoing housing management & maintenance.
Canterbury Local Property Company	Commercially oriented housing or property ventures	Need to act commercially. Requires agility, flexibility & quick decision making. Complex legal arrangements, different from LA norms. Set up & running costs. Resources. Full financial risk.
Canterbury Lettings	Social lettings agency managing rented properties on behalf of private landlords	Established legal & financial framework. Brings vacant properties into use. Provides reassurance to landlords. Improves standard of housing management & maintenance of private sector homes. Minimal risk. No additional homes generated.
Joint ventures and partnerships with Community-based social housing organisations RPs Developers	Infill/brownfield sites may suit community based social housing organisations or Larger scale area regeneration that requires expertise &/or investment.	Issues of trust between partners. Need to act commercially. Requires agility, flexibility & quick decision making. Provides additional expertise, capacity & resources. Longer lead-in time to ensure projects are attractive to the market.

5.12 Proposed approach to increasing the number of council homes

The table below summarises the proposed approach to increasing the number of council homes. However, the timetable for the restructuring of local government proposed in the English Devolution White Paper of December 2024 demands a focus on projects that are deliverable within the next two to three years, such as increasing temporary accommodation, rationalising poor performing properties and reinvesting capital receipts to acquire better quality homes, such as larger s.106 sites and new homes from developers.

With limited capacity and resources, the council is aiming for the maximum number of affordable homes of the right size and type, at the best price for the least effort and lowest risk as quickly as possible. It may be beneficial to engage a partner social housing organisation to provide extra capacity and skills.

Proposed approach to acquisition and development

Timescale	**Option**	**Delivery mechanism**
Immediate	Acquisition: • s.106 new homes • Non-s.106 "off the shelf" new homes	HRA
	Acquisition of existing market housing for temporary accommodation	GF
	Promote the Social Lettings Agency	GF
	Infill/garage sites for modular TA on short term basis	HRA/GF with social housing development partner
Medium term (2 to 5 years)	Acquisition: • s.106 new homes on strategic Reg. 19 Draft Local Plan sites non-s.106 homes on strategic Reg. 19 Draft Local Plan sites Favouring CCC-owned sites e.g. Wincheap	HRA HRA with partner of Homes England
	Infill/garage sites for permanent housing	HRA with social housing development partner
	Phase 2 recommendations of the Older Persons' Accommodation Working Group	HRA, CCC property company or joint venture
Long term (5 to 10 years)	Area and estate regeneration	HRA, CCC property company or joint venture

5.13 Funding new council homes

Every development or acquisition must be financially viable to ensure financial sustainability and protect the overall integrity of the HRA. Recently acquired financial viability assessment software facilitates this process, supported by an RICS valuation of each project's open market value, its value as affordable housing and a market rent valuation to enable the calculation of affordable rents.

Borrowing. The amount of debt and other liabilities the council can incur is no longer capped by an upper limit. Instead, borrowing must conform to the Prudential Code which requires that borrowing be affordable and prudential.

Rent generated by new homes is the HRA’s primary source of income to repay the loans required to build or buy them. Government rent policy permits the council to charge either social rents, which are calculated according to a strict formula and are approximately 40% to 50% of market rents, or affordable rents, which are between 60% and 80% of market rents inclusive of service charges. It limits rent increases to CPI + 1% per year with the possible addition of rent convergence, if it is reintroduced.

It is a basic principle that the rent paid by existing council tenants is not used to subsidise new council homes. Nearly all existing tenants pay social rents, which barely cover the management, maintenance and modernisation of their homes. They might consider it inequitable if they were asked to subsidise new modern homes that provide other tenants with better facilities and higher standards of accommodation than their own.

The council would like to keep rent levels as low as possible to ensure that they are affordable for every household, but even with capital subsidy, recent projects are viable only because the council could charge affordable rents. Approximately 75% of the council’s tenants receive either full or partial Housing Benefit or a contribution towards housing costs via Universal Credit, which cushions them from the higher cost of affordable rent. The Government would like more new homes built for social rent, but this is not financially viable without higher subsidy.

Capital subsidy, normally in the form of grant from Homes England or other government grant schemes, such as the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF), without which affordable housing is not financially viable.

The Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP) 2026 to 2036 - GOV.UK provides grant funding to support the capital costs of developing affordable housing in England.

Affordable housing is defined as ‘housing for sale or rent for those whose needs are not met by the market’ in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Homes England has at least £27.3 billion of government funding, including £1.2 billion in bridge funding announced in March 2025, to deliver new social and affordable homes outside of London, but is already oversubscribed.

The funding has 2 national strategic priorities to maximise the delivery of:

- Social and affordable homes, supporting the government's commitment to delivering 1.5 million homes in this parliament.
- Homes for Social Rent, with at least 60% of the total homes to be delivered as this tenure.
- SAHP also seeks to support an increase in:
- Council housebuilding, either directly from councils or in partnership with registered providers or developers.
- Specialist and supported housing.
- Community-led and rural housing

To receive grant from Homes England the council must be a qualified Investment Partner. The council used to have Investment Partner status, but this was downgraded as no development programme existed. Partners are expected to demonstrate how their bids will contribute to these priorities.

Grant cannot be used to buy s.106 schemes.

HRA working balances or surpluses are just returning to prudent levels of £1.5 million and are not currently a realistic funding option.

Planning Obligations (commonly referred to as 'Section 106' or 's.106' obligations after Section 106 of the Planning Act) are planning tools that can be used to secure financial contributions or contributions in kind for affordable housing. On-site contributions are homes built as affordable housing and sold to an RP, usually at about 60% of open market value. s.106 schemes are not eligible for grant under the AHP.

Since the interest rate rises that were triggered by the mini budget of September 2022, RPs have been reluctant to commit to buying s.106 properties, instead preferring to develop their own sites. Without a willing RP, there is a risk that developments may stall.

Commuted sums are off-site s.106 developer contributions for affordable housing and should equate to the purchase price of a fully serviced site for the number of affordable homes that could have been provided on site. These contributions are ringfenced for the provision of affordable housing in the district, subject to the terms of the s.106 agreement between the developer and the council. They may be used towards s.106 purchases or acquisitions and developments that do not attract AHP grant. On 17 February 2025 there was £1.45m available.

Retained RTB receipts. Their use is currently limited to 20 acquisitions per annum and cannot be used to:

- fund expenditure related to a s.106 agreement
- or be combined with other forms of grant i.e. from Homes England and certain other funding sources but
- may be used with off-site s.106 contributions (commuted sums).

However, the Government has just announced that local authorities will be permitted to keep 100% of RTB receipts, although details are awaited. The HRA capital budget for 2025/26 contains RTB receipts of £2.82m.

Other capital receipts such as from the sale of land or homes that are not fit for purpose and/or cannot be brought up to standard at reasonable cost. Proceeds from the sale of HRA homes and land are ringfenced for reinvestment in the HRA.

Savings on private sector temporary accommodation. Year on year the cost of providing temporary accommodation is rising. In 2022/23, the council spent £2,067,671 on private sector accommodation. In 2023/24 it rose to £2,634,815, and in 24/25 it is predicted to be £2,961,889. Income is collected to offset some of these costs but last year the total net expenditure exceeded £1.7 million and is predicted to be around £2 million this year. It is cheaper for the council to acquire properties to provide temporary accommodation than to use private sector alternatives. As this is revenue expenditure, it cannot be used to fund capital acquisitions, although the revenue that is freed up could contribute towards funding an acquisition and development team.

Cross-subsidise rented homes with other tenures such as shared ownership or market housing. However, it is not risk-free and imposes additional administrative burdens, requiring knowledgeable staff, marketing, legal and financial resources to support it, which the council does not possess. At present, it is recommended that the council focuses on providing rented accommodation. In relatively strong housing markets, such as Canterbury, it may be possible to build mixed tenure developments and sell market housing at a profit to cross-subsidise affordable housing. However, successful delivery of multi-tenure developments requires resources and expertise, which the council does not currently possess in-house. The council would also be exposed to financial risk if there was a downturn in the housing market.

Summary of potential eligible funding streams

Funding stream	**Total at 7.2.25**	**S.106 on site**	**Non-s.106 purchases**	**Street purchases**	**Infill sites**	**Promote Social Lettings Agency**	**Stock renewal**
Capital subsidy/grant	Bid process	N	Y	Depends on additionality	Y	N	Y
Working balances	£1.5m	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Loans		Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Commuted sums	£1.45m	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
RTB receipts	£2.82m	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Other receipts		Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y

Funding stream	Total at 7.2.25	S.106 on site	Non-s.106 purchases	Street purchases	Infill sites	Promote Social Lettings Agency	Stock renewal
TA savings (revenue)	£100k p.a.	N	N	N	N	Y	N
Cross-subsidy	£0	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y

A £5 million reserve has been established in the draft budget 2026/27 to facilitate the development or acquisition of new council homes, regeneration and disposals, which should in turn generate income.

5.14 Community-led housing

Community-led housing is an alternative way to enable the provision of affordable housing. The primary forms of community-led housing are Community Land Trusts and co-operatives.

Community land trusts (CLTs) own land and develop homes as well as other assets, such as community enterprises, food growing or workspaces. CLTs act as long-term stewards of land and assets, ensuring that homes remain affordable.

CLTs may be established for a variety of reasons, such as encouraging downsizing, providing affordable housing, opportunities for self-builders, mutual home ownership and co-housing schemes.

For CLTs, the community is a geographic description. It is up to the members of the CLT to determine what area the trust will seek to serve. The community then means all the people that live and work, or want to live and work, within the defined geographical area.

Most CLTs are set up by local people. However, some developers and RPs also facilitate CLTs.

If they are not initiated by local people, the aim should be to develop a local membership and give control to the members as soon as possible. Sometimes this means partnership structures to protect and balance the interests of all parties.

To create affordability a CLT needs to receive initial subsidy in one form or another; be it free land or financial grants from government, charities, benefactors or the council.

When properties have been built, the land on which they are built is protected from fluctuations in land market valuations by a legal ‘asset lock’ that is a fundamental part of all CLTs’ structure.

Co-operative housing is owned and run by its members. It takes many forms - from tenant-led co-ops to mutual home ownership, but always centres on collective control, long-term affordability and a genuine commitment to people and place.

Community-led housing requires considerable commitment from its members in terms of energy and time. Obstacles often include lack of knowledge and expertise, land and money.

Information on Community-led housing is available on the council's website and invites applications for Government-funded grants towards initial set-up costs or project development.

The council has also sought to encourage CLTs by participating in joint events with neighbouring councils.

Any interest in CLT is signposted to external specialist support.

No CLTs operate in the district, but there are three co-operatives at Franklyn Road, Spring Lane and the bungalows managed by CDS Co-operatives at Elliott Close, which is adjacent to the council-owned site at East Street.

Experience indicates that promoting community-led housing is very time-intensive and produces limited results. It is very small-scale and is unlikely to provide a home for people in immediate need. Given the high level of local housing needs, the council must focus its limited resources on identified priorities that maximise delivery of good quality affordable homes as quickly and cost effectively as possible.

5.15 Self-build and custom building

Under the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 the council must maintain a register of individuals seeking self-build plots and must ensure sufficient permissions are granted to meet demand identified in the register.

It is unlikely that self-build will ever be a viable route to provide a home for most people. There are significant obstacles, such as knowledge, skills, the availability of development land, project management, and financial viability.

In July 2025, the Canterbury self and custom-build register had 19 entries. The Meeting Development Needs Topic Paper 2026 explains that since 2016, 46 self and custom-build homes have been permitted, averaging 6 planning permissions annually. Registration does not guarantee a plot.

Recent national data indicates a 34% decline in registrations and a 23% decrease in planning permissions granted, suggesting constraints on availability rather than reduced demand for self-build plots.

The government continues to promote self-build housing through initiatives like the Help to Buy equity loan scheme, which allows for lower deposit requirements. Amendments to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill specify that planning permissions must be expressly designated for self-build to count towards meeting identified demand, necessitating careful monitoring of these permissions.

Based on average permissions, there is an indicative need for around 247 additional plots over the 2024–2043 plan period.

Finding appropriate development sites in Canterbury district is challenging. The council has spent several years sifting through its land holdings to identify development potential. The primary purpose is for affordable housing, particularly new council homes. Those assessed as unsuitable for affordable house building may be sold at full market value and thus become available for self-build.

However, across the 2024/25 monitoring year there was an above average number of self-build planning permissions granted, with 15 applications being granted Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) self-build exemption. This suggests that windfall applications can make up a significant amount of the self- and custom build need over the Local Plan period.

As such, **windfall self-build proposals are supported by Policy DS5** of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan, which seeks to support these proposals where they accord with set criteria and the rest of the Draft Local Plan.

In addition, **Policy DS2 of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan requires development proposals for more than 300 dwellings to consider whether there is an identified need that could be addressed proportionately on site** for:

a. Self and custom-built housing; and
b. Build-to-rent housing.

Any provision would form part of the market housing, not affordable housing.

5.16 Converting commercial premises into homes

Recent years have been challenging for High Streets. The trend of converting shops and offices into homes has surged, driven by the need for homes and the desire to repurpose commercial spaces.

Conversion is facilitated by the introduction of Permitted Development Rights, which allow landlords to change the use of commercial properties without full planning permission. This has created opportunities for landlords and developers to inject life into empty high streets by converting vacant shops and offices into homes.

One outcome has been the conversion into flats of office blocks in business parks on the edge of towns with limited local amenities or facilities.

The council is keen to retain productive shops and offices to safeguard employment opportunities whenever possible.

There are challenges to repurposing commercial premises into residential accommodation:

- It is a very resource-intensive way for the council or RPs to try to produce affordable housing, and there are more cost-effective ways to produce good quality homes, such as purchasing on-site s.106 developer contributions.
- Conversion can be expensive.
- The layout of residential accommodation is often compromised because commercial premises are not designed with residential use in mind.
- Independent access from the street.
- Safe means of escape in case of fire.
- Parking.
- The relationship between the freehold landlord and leaseholders or tenants to avoid conflict between commercial and residential uses.
- Opening hours of neighbouring commercial premises.
- The nature and use of neighbouring commercial premises may have more of an impact on residents' quiet enjoyment of their homes, such as smells, noises or clientele 'hanging around' outside.
- Some commercial premises have a higher risk of fire, such as a restaurant, fish and chip shop or other takeaway or security problems, which may adversely affect insurance premiums.
- If a shop is sold or ceases trading or another takes over, a new lease may come into effect with different legal agreements.
- If part of a building is commercial premises, tenants and leaseholders may not qualify for the right to manage, lease extension or freehold purchase depending on the ratio of commercial to residential parts of the building.
- Service charges on commercial buildings are usually more expensive than residential properties.
- Some lenders are reluctant to lend on flats above shops

Projects to facilitate or enable the conversion of commercial premises require enormous effort, time and resources, which neither the council's General Fund nor HRA possess. Therefore, the council has adopted a strategic approach to facilitate the rejuvenation of town centres and commercial sites, which is explained in Policy SS4 and Policies C1 Canterbury City Centre Strategy, C8 Canterbury City Centre Regeneration Opportunity Areas, HB1 Herne Bay Town Centre Strategy and HB2 Herne Bay Town Centre Regeneration Opportunity Areas of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan.

6. Conclusion

This Housing Strategy was adopted by the council on 30 June 2026 and reflects the significant changes in national and local policy since the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 to 2023.

There is no statutory requirement for local housing authorities to produce a housing strategy. However, there is a statutory requirement for the council to have a Homelessness Strategy. Therefore, it has been decided to separate the Housing and Homelessness Strategies into separate documents.

This Housing Strategy recognises the crisis of housing affordability and aims to respond to the new opportunities to invest in more council homes to meet the housing needs of local people.

It recognises the challenges of improving services and the quality of peoples' homes, addressing health and safety issues and improving energy efficiency.

More than ever, the interdependency of the Housing Strategy and the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan is clear.

Local government devolution, which is expected within the next two to three years and will result in the reorganisation of the current two-tier arrangements for local authorities, brings new challenges and timescales.

This strategy seeks to ensure that the successor council inherits a portfolio of good quality homes with sound plans for improving existing homes and a programme of development opportunities to build new homes.