



COUNTY SPOTLIGHT

Housing and Planning

Building better homes, building
better lives



About County Spotlight

At the County Councils Network (CCN) one of our core objectives is to showcase the innovative work our councils are doing on a daily basis to provide vital frontline services, support local economies, and create thriving communities.

This regular publication seeks to shine the spotlight on the most recent best practice and innovative solutions being put forward by our member councils across a range of different policy areas. Alongside this, it provides an update on the national policy landscape and commentary from our lead members and strategic partners.

To find out more about future themes, or to recommend a case study, please contact ian.burbidge@local.gov.uk.

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CCN View



Cllr Richard Clewer CCN Housing and Planning Spokesperson

A council's planning and housing department influences much of our daily lives, even if we don't realise it: from the roads we travel on, the homes we live in, and even where we spend our downtime.

It's therefore no surprise that whenever the government of the day proposes reforms to housing and planning they generate some of the most hotly-contested national debates. We have seen this over the last 12 months, as the Labour government has sought to introduce a raft of changes to the planning system.

Whilst some elements of these reforms have support from the County Councils Network (CCN), such as the re-introduction of strategic planning, there are others that are concerning. England's counties are being asked to do much of the heavy lifting in terms of housing delivery, and some of the proposals strengthen the position of developers whilst simultaneously weakening councils. Equally, there has been nothing yet put forward to enable the level of infrastructure required to mitigate large-scale development.

This summer the CCN convened a roundtable of housing and planning experts from its member councils across the country to discuss the implications of these changes, as well as giving them the opportunity to outline any local challenges they were facing, and to share best practice.

The roundtable came at an opportune time and the CCN will be using the experiences of those at the housing and planning coalface to inform its advocacy.

Alongside these insights, this report profiles several best practice examples from across the CCN membership, including both unitary and county councils' efforts to provide diverse types of housing (such as extra-care) and their own programmes to increase delivery.

Alongside these, we profile the good work going into homelessness and temporary accommodation departments, criss-crossing different service areas to try and prevent individuals from becoming homeless, or to assist them to move on from temporary accommodation. Finally, we take a look at how CCN members are trying to improve their existing housing stock, spending significant sums to upgrade homes and provide energy-efficient improvements to keep costs down for residents.

Despite the numerous changes – and challenges coming through the planning system – there remains brilliant work being carried out by CCN member councils across the country. This County Spotlight aims to champion their efforts.

Latest Policy Landscape

Since the government was elected in July 2025, very few areas of policy have seen such sweeping changes than in housing and planning.

First came the Chancellor’s pledge to build 1.5m homes followed swiftly by proposals to re-introduce nationally imposed housing targets. Then came plans to re-introduce strategic planning and a new National Planning Policy Framework: all within a six-month period.¹

For the County Councils Network’s (CCN) member councils, these changes could be best summarised as the good, the bad, and the ugly. Whilst the return of strategic planning – a long running CCN ask – is positive, there have also been concerns raised over the deliverability of 1.5m new homes by the end of the Parliament. Equally, many county and unitary councils believe their new housing targets are excessive.

On top of these, there are already numerous challenges that councils are grappling with: the inexorable rise in homelessness and temporary accommodation, significant

infrastructure gaps within county areas and the limitations of the current developer contributions system. To discuss these challenges in more detail and to explore how best to mitigate them, the CCN convened a roundtable this summer featuring planning, housing and policy experts from its member councils across the country, chaired by the network’s strategic partner Capita.

This also allowed the sharing of best practice and innovation in planning and housing services. Further examples are outlined in this report.

The housing delivery challenge for counties

The roundtable began by asking participants what their main concern is: perhaps unsurprisingly, several participants said housing targets. County areas will do the heavy lifting in the government’s housebuilding drive: expected to deliver almost 64,000 extra homes per year, larger than other parts of the country.

Table 1 - New housing targets compared to old housing targets

Council Type	Old target	New target	Increase in number	Increase in percentage
CCN	115, 617	179,611	63,994	55%
Metropolitan Boroughs	48,805	52,195	3,390	7%
London Boroughs	98,882	87,992	-10,830	-11%
Unitary (Non-CCN)	42,180	50,610	8,430	20%
England	305,425	370,408	64,983	21%

Source: CCN analysis of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government data

1. Sky News: [New Chancellor announces mandatory housing targets](#), July 2024

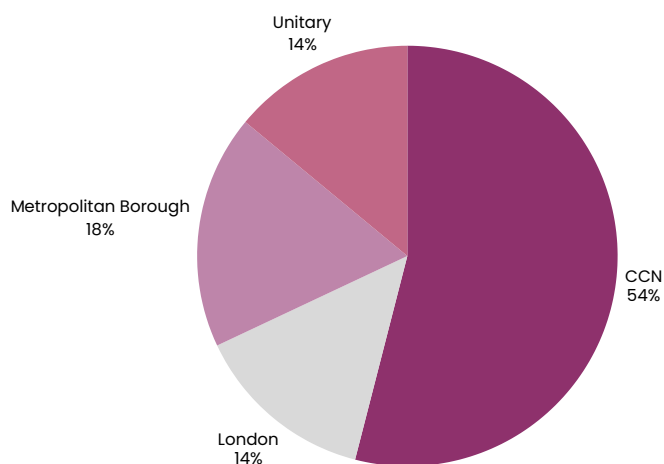
2. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: [Housing targets increased to get Britain building again](#), July 2024

3. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: [National Planning Policy Framework](#), January 2025

This is a 55% increase compared to targets that were imposed by the previous government and is also larger than other parts of the country.

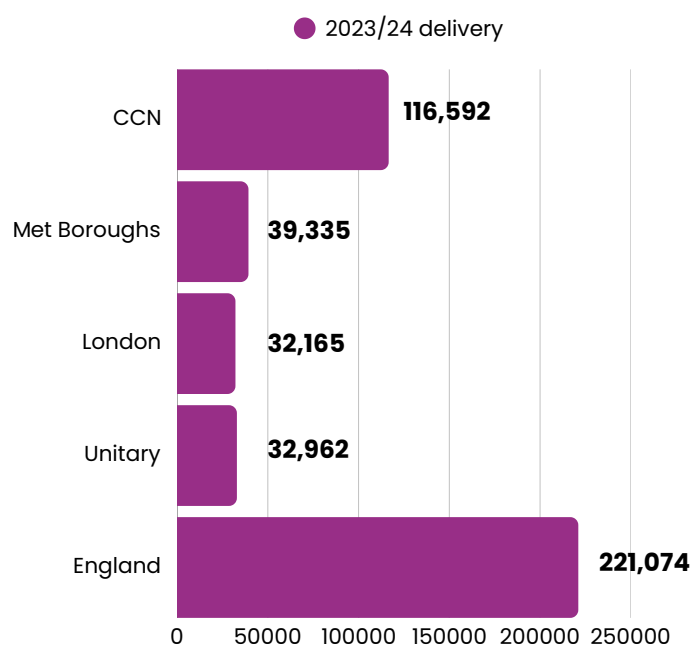
This is a 13% rise on the preceding five year and is the highest increase in England, both in numerical and percentage terms.

Figure 1: The number of homes delivered by each tier of council as a percentage of the total in 2023/24



Of the 221,000 extra homes delivered in England in 2024, 54% were built in areas covered by CCN members.

Figure 2: Total additional homes delivered - 2023/24



Latest housing delivery data does show that county areas have ramped up their delivery of new homes – and more so than other parts of the country. Over the last five years, county areas have overseen an increase of 603,174 homes.

Table 2 - Net additional homes delivered between 2014/15 to 2018/19 compared with 2019/20 to 2023/24

Council Type	2014/15 – 2018/19	2019/20 – 2023/24	Five year Increase in number	Five year increase in percentage
CCN	536,370	603,174	66,804	13%
Metropolitan Boroughs	174,441	192,257	18,086	10%
London Boroughs	173,954	190,160	16,206	9%
Unitary (Non-CCN)	165,774	167,790	2,016	1%
England	1,050,539	1,153,381	102,842	10%

Source: CCN analysis of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government data

Councils in county areas have also overseen the largest delivery of affordable housing – with 30,700 extra affordable homes delivered over the last five years compared to the preceding five years. In percentage terms, only London has seen the largest percentage increase.

Figure 3: The number of additional affordable homes delivered by tier - 2023/24



Last year, the CCN carried out a survey on the raft of planning proposals. Seven in ten said they supported the principle of nationally set targets but nine in ten felt the proposed new targets from this government were excessive.⁴

One roundtable participant said that their target had quadrupled – and suggested this number may actually exceed demand: *“Generally, our number when we’ve topped out is 3,000 so how are we going to lift an extra 1,000 within that? It can only be through direct intervention that increases demand – and we don’t believe there are enough buyers in the market to deliver that.”*

Another raised concerns over the actual deliverability of these new housing numbers: *“...for rural counties we’re very restricted in the number of developers that we’ve got operating in our patch, and most of them have snapped up the land.”*

“So whilst we may need to substantially ramp up our delivery, our ability to do that is constrained by the number of players in the market and their appetite to deliver maximum profit rather than deliver maximum numbers.”

Table 3 – Net affordable homes delivered between 2014–19, compared with 2019–24

Council Type	2014/15 – 2018/19	2019/20 – 2023/24	Five year Increase in number	Five year increase in percentage
CCN	122,286	153,067	30,781	25%
Metropolitan Boroughs	37,472	39,302	1,830	5%
London Boroughs	47,481	61,787	14,306	30%
Unitary (Non-CCN)	37,345	43,267	5,922	16%
England	244,584	297,423	52,839	22%

Source: CCN analysis of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government data

Despite these concerns over deliverability, build-out rates have increased over the last decade and should increase further due to the government's reforms. However ministers have yet to outline how it will enable councils to deliver the consummate infrastructure to support and mitigate development, outside of large-scale schemes such as the Lower Thames Crossing.

Prior to the current reforms, CCN members said the pressure on their infrastructure was excessive and getting worse. Tellingly, no respondent to our ⁵ 2024 survey was confident the planning system is equipped to deliver the level of infrastructure needed to support the proposed increase in homes.

Arguably this breeds local dissent to development and our roundtable discussed the challenges 'selling' new housing numbers to not only residents but local politicians: *"...we're trying to see how we can meet those new numbers as much as possible. It is an enormous challenge for the politicians and they're having to think quite carefully about how they can possibly get it through.*

"(the new number) ...is now based on a sort of standard uplift over existing stock rather than claiming to be, in any sense, a need. I think if we had a number that was based more on understanding what it meant for the area and where the demand was coming from, that would help us sell it a bit better."

The CCN survey found that its members believe the changes to the planning system weaken local residents' voices within the planning system.

This is because of the re-introduction of the 'five-year land supply' whereby they will have to show evidence each year that they have a supply of deliverable sites to provide a minimum of five years' worth, against their housing target. The five-year land supply has proven to be more powerful than a council's Local Plan, as even once the plan has been agreed following public consultation and approved by the Planning Inspectorate, developers have been known to manipulate the land supply figures to get planning permission on less favourable sites. Often, the developer wins.

This penalises councils for something outside of their control, local leaders argue. Indeed, one local authority on the roundtable said they had as many as 30,000 unbuilt planning permissions in their area.

The CCN has been calling for the requirement to maintain a five-year land supply to be removed where the authority has an up-to-date local plan in place, and a grace period for councils who are having to update their plans following the revised National Planning Policy Framework. This would provide protection to sites allocated in local plans that are in the most sustainable locations and give more certainty to communities about where development will happen.

Unaffordability and growing rural homelessness

It is widely acknowledged that there is a housing crisis across the country, one which playing out in different ways – as both an affordability crisis and a crisis due to a lack of supply. This is compounded by population growth and, for some areas, by pressures from surrounding housing markets (i.e. people moving to the counties surrounding London in search of more space) alongside a trend of second home ownership. This pushes up prices and forces local people out of their area.

The CCN has carried out multiple analyses of house prices in county areas over the last decade, and the broad trend shows that property prices in counties are the most unaffordable outside of London. The average county property price is 11.1 times higher than annual average earnings.

Whilst renting is often characterised as an ‘urban’ issue, CCN analysis revealed that the number of households in private and social rent in county areas increased by over half a million: a higher rise than even London.⁶

One roundtable participant said: *“The private sector is becoming more and more unaffordable. We’re seeing people approach now for social and affordable stock that would not have come near the council a few years ago.”*



6: County Councils Network: [Number of rural renters increased faster than London over the last decade](#), March 2024

To fully tackle this, the CCN believes there needs to be a two-pronged approach: promoting and delivering a mix of tenures on all sites, particularly on larger sites, alongside continuing to significantly invest in social housing. The network also advocates for areas to have much greater controls over housing through the planning system, recognising that a range of housing is needed from general market housing, affordable housing through to to homes for those with care needs.

This could include a new planning use class for retirement communities that would send clear signals to the market for the delivery of this type of housing. In areas where there are high rates of second home ownership and holiday lets, councils should be able to require homeowners to apply for a change of use to allow a property to become a holiday let to limit the amount of holiday homes and provide relief to the general housing market and prioritise local need.

Roundtable participants agreed that increasing unaffordability and rising rents are putting significant pressure on

homelessness and temporary accommodation departments. This is borne out in the data: over the last six years, CCN unitary councils' spend on temporary accommodation has more than doubled from £27.3m in 2018/19 to £77.8m in 2023/24: a 184% increase which is, in percentage terms, higher than anywhere else in England.

Expenditure on homelessness services by CCN unitary councils has increased from £90.7m in 2020/21 to £144.6m in 2023/24: a 59% jump in just four years, higher than the national average (see Table 5 on the next page).

Clearly, the numbers are rising exponentially across the CCN membership - and the rest of the country. We asked our roundtable what they thought was driving this.

They said that the slow erosion of preventative and wraparound support services due to councils' funding pressures was a contributing factor, as was the rising unaffordability of private housing.

Table 4 - Expenditure on temporary accommodation 2018/19 to 2023/24

Council Type	2018/19 (£m)	2023/24 (£m)	Increase in spend in 2024 compared to 2019 (£m)	Percentage increase
CCN unitary councils	£27,381	£77,784	£50,403	184%
Metropolitan Boroughs	£71,848	£201,987	£130,606	181%
London Boroughs	£843,724	£1,316,236	£472,512	56%
Unitary (Non-CCN)	£95,434	£251,218	£155,784	163%
England	£1,038,387	£1,847,225	£808,838	78%

Source: CCN analysis of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government data

Table 5 - Expenditure on homelessness: 2020/21 to 2023/24

Council Type	2020/21 (£m)	2023/24 (£m)	Spend in 2024 compared to 2021 (£m)	Percentage increase
CCN unitary councils	£90,708	£144,660	£53,952	59%
Metropolitan Boroughs	£231,120	£417,378	£186,258	81%
London Boroughs	£1,229,301	£1,579,482	£350,181	28%
Unitary (Non-CCN)	£245,098	£416,949	£171,851	70%
England	£1,796,227	£2,558,469	£762,242	42%

Source: CCN analysis of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government data

One roundtable participant said: *“...the move from supported accommodation and all challenges that go with that, the debt, the antisocial behaviour... we’re looking at how do we work with partners to overcome some of those barriers in order to enable people to move on and free up accommodation.”*

Another added: *“Secondly, we talk about supply and we do need more affordable homes, but it is also sustaining tenancies that is really hard.”*

“We can do all the bricks and mortar bit but if there’s not the right investment around the supporting people... we’ve found governments of all colours have reduced that softer support.”

Alongside increased investment in social and affordable housing, CCN has also called for councils to be better funded to continue running preventative homelessness services and to fund temporary accommodation.

The previous government announced⁷ that that Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates would be raised to the 30th percentile of market rates meaning that the allowance reflects rising rents.

But unless this is kept under constant review, rental rates will quickly outstrip the LHA. The CCN has therefore called for a mechanism that permanently links LHA rates to rents to provide tenants with increased security. The network has also advocated that benefit subsidy rates to be reset to 90% of market rates to support local authorities in providing temporary accommodation, and this should be done alongside increasing the Homelessness Prevention Grant to reflect the current situation.

As shown later in this report CCN members are taking direct action by building or purchasing more properties for temporary accommodation, as one participant outlined:

“We are using every tool that we have to try mitigate additional costs, but the reality is that we are £1m overspent on temporary accommodation last year.”

7: UK Treasury: [Autumn Statement 2023](#)

Some councils are still facing pressure from other local authorities, which has been a long-running challenge within the sector, especially those close to large urban areas:

“We are sometimes competing with others for property within our county – we’re adjacent to some councils who have run out of options. They’re making arrangements with both hotels and landlords for temporary accommodation so it’s not quite straightforward for us to find what we need, even in our own boundaries.”

Of course, building more affordable housing is one solution. To do this councils must either incentivise the private sector and registered providers to increase their affordable or social housing, or build it directly. However, not only is this an option only open to stock-holding authorities, but as the National Audit Office recently outlined, registered providers are increasingly unable to take on these properties once built.⁸

Participants said this was becoming a growing issue, exacerbating wider problems within the system:

“We’ve got more and more development happening... and we’ve been approached by developers to say that no-one is picking up these units on these sites.”

One government reform that may increase affordable and social housing stock is the government’s amends to the Right to Buy scheme.

This has caused a shortage of homes through social rent as tenants are able to purchase them at a discounted rate and councils have consequently never been able to replace homes like-for-like. The government proposes to reduce discounts and increase the length of time tenants need to live at the property before they can access the discount. It is hoped that this will ensure these types of home remain affordable in perpetuity.

Strategic planning – why it is important we get it right

As touched on before, infrastructure shortages remain a significant concern for county leaders. Developer contributions are a vital mechanism to unlocking infrastructure, yet the CCN has long evidenced that they are not working effectively and has called for reforms⁹ that genuinely allow for an effective capture of funding. This is especially pertinent at a time when government wants to dramatically increase housebuilding but has yet to say how it intends to deliver all the extra infrastructure that councils say is needed.

In this sense, strategic planning will help – allowing councils to plan for both housing and infrastructure over a larger geographical canvass and offering the option to pool resources.

8. National Audit Office: [NAO identifies need for improvements to the developer contributions system](#), June 2025

9. CCN and Pragmatix Advisory: [Improving infrastructure funding and delivery](#), January 2023



But until these strategic planning changes and other reforms are brought in, the CCN's members are coming up with their own solutions:

"We've developed our own standard for what we would take Section 106 for. So we're saying to developers 'actually, unless you build to this for Section 106' you're going to struggle to get anything over the line. And as the planning authority, we might push back if they're saying it's not viable."

Strategic planning (called Spatial Development Strategies – or 'SDS') will be re-introduced into the planning system via the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, which is currently going through Parliament. Whilst the CCN is broadly supportive of the Bill, the legislation as it stands sets out that SDS' will be prepared by mayoral strategic authorities and before they are introduced in specific areas, the upper-tier authority.

However, the CCN is concerned that an incoming mayor could effectively rip up a relatively new SDS, as approved by the preceding council – undermining the principle of setting a long-term vision for housing and growth. The CCN is currently working on trying to amend the Bill and allowing for more protections for the first plans coming through the system prepared by upper-tier authorities.

Big changes on the horizon

Of course, another key component of the government’s devolution agenda and its ambition to undertake local government reorganisation in the remaining two-tier county areas. Ministers have said they want to see all remaining two-tier areas reorganise by the end of this Parliament with a phased delivery over the coming years.

For unitary participants in the roundtable, the amalgamation of housing and planning functions through reorganisation at scale and the ability to plan for both over a larger spatial geography has been a real benefit, especially for recently-formed councils: *“If you talk to our housing and planning officers, there’s such a buzz over being able to plan over a large spatial geography and deal with some of those hard boundary issues.*

“...By becoming a larger area and having more specialist posts and deeper roles and structures, we’ve been able to really focus in on some of the key areas that we want to tackle. We’ve got a really good relationship now with the government rough sleeper and homelessness team now.”

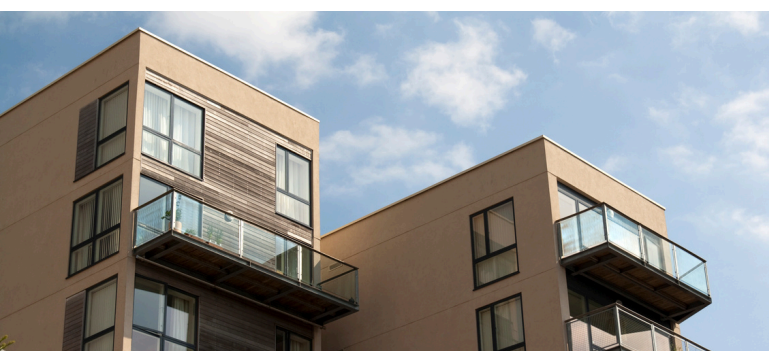
Another participant said that they believed unitarisation – and planning over a larger scale – could help alleviate infrastructure challenges.

They told the roundtable: “Because there is a real need to think about how you provide infrastructure and housing more strategically. ...we have a issues where neighbouring authorities want to put a lot of housing right on our boundary nowhere near any facilities or infrastructure.”

CCN is working to support its member councils and their local partners to put forward ambitious LGR proposals that can deliver the benefits of the fusion between housing and planning alongside the wider growth agenda. Our network believes this is best achieved through new councils having the necessary size and scale to plan across a sensible economic geography, with populations in excess of 500,000.

Alongside this, a major focus on the network will be seeking to secure amendments to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill on strategic planning, working with MPs and Lords to do so. The network will also continue to highlight the challenges within the government’s wider planning reforms on behalf of its members, whilst simultaneously calling for policy that ensures a range of housing is delivered – with a particular emphasis on affordable homes.

As the roundtable’s participants concluded, there is rarely a dull moment when it comes to planning and housing. With so much change planned over the course of this Parliament, the CCN will continue to strive to ensure the views of its members are heard on the national stage.



Accelerating delivery: getting homes built

For years, successive governments have pledged an increase in housebuilding in a bid to ease affordability.

Whilst concerns remain over the present government's housing targets, particularly from CCN members, this theme shows that county and unitary councils members *do* have a strong track record in turning and overseeing planning permissions into delivery. This includes the delivery of affordable homes.

Increasingly, it isn't just unitary councils operating in this sphere. As this section shows, several county councils are setting up housing development companies to intervene directly in their housing markets.

The CCN members profiled are:

- **Essex County Council**
- **Wiltshire Council**
- **Kent County Council**
- **Warwickshire County Council**
- **Cheshire East Council**
- **Norfolk County Council**

Below image: a refurbished property in Folkestone, carried out by Kent County Council



Essex County Council

In-housing developer to deliver over 1,000 homes

Essex Housing is the county council's-house development company – and will deliver over 1,000 new properties across the county.

Half of these homes are specialist: for older people, those with disabilities, or for affordable. First set up in 2016 so Essex County Council could take a proactive approach in the housing market to deliver a balance of affordable, private and specialist homes, Essex Housing has built around 150 properties and has secured or submitted planning applications for over 700 more.

Current projects include the council's first net-zero development in Chelmsford, the construction of 120 new homes on the former Essex County Hospital in Chelmsford, and 26 affordable and specialist properties in Waltham Abbey. The company also builds community assets, including the recently-opened Shenfield Library, paid for by new homes built above it. The developer won 'Best Development Team' at the Inside Housing Development Awards in 2022.

[Read more here](#)

Wiltshire Council

Taking the initiative to deliver affordable housing

Wiltshire Council has an ambitious target to provide 1,000 additional affordable homes across the county – and has already delivered 200 homes in previous phases.

The unitary council has now delivered over 200 homes against its 2020 target, with a further 610 properties in the pipeline. The council is investing in this multi-million-pound programme and utilising Section 106, Right to Buy, developer contributions and Homes England funding to build the new, energy efficient council homes. Many will contain an energy rating of B or above and each development will contain rented homes or will be purchasable via shared ownership.

Recently, two planning permissions were achieved for two developments that will be built using innovative 'modern methods of construction' (MMC), where the homes will be built offsite to exact specifications and then delivered to location for installation. A total of 19 properties have been built using this method, with a further 200 in the pipeline.

[Read more here](#)

Kent County Council

Thousands of empty properties brought back to life

Almost 9,000 empty properties across Kent have been brought back into use over the last two decades under the county council's 'No Use Empty' programme.

Kent County Council's scheme is the longest-running of its kind in England and operates by offering loans for people who have a long-term empty property and wish to renovate it and sell it. Delivered by the county council in partnership with district authorities, over 8,800 properties have been brought back into use since 2005, with the council loaning over £60m. As soon as loans are repaid the fund is replenished and can effectively be "loaned" again.

This year, the scheme helped bring back to life an infamous Folkstone property, vacant for over 20 years and which was inhabited by pigeons and had most of its five floors missing. A local developer used the council's loan to purchase the property, which has now been converted into five flats.

[Read more here](#)

Warwickshire County Council

Joint venture delivers major projects and unlocks infrastructure

A landmark joint venture comprising of Warwickshire County Council and property developers aims to deliver 2,000 homes across the county.

Progress is already well underway: work is taking place on a major development for 1,700 homes in Nuneaton, alongside smaller schemes across the county. They are being built by Develop Warwickshire, a partnership between the county council, Warwickshire Property and Development Group (WPDG) and Vistry Group.

Develop Warwickshire started work on the Nuneaton scheme last summer, beginning the first 51 homes and delivering a 1.5km link road which unlocked a £30 million Department for Education secondary school. In December 2024, plans for 479 homes in the second phase of delivery were approved which has now commenced onsite with the sales office opening in May. WPDG was formed in 2021 by Warwickshire County Council to develop the council's development sites, commercial buildings and mineral rights across the county.

[Read more here](#)

Cheshire East Council

Leading the way on garden village plans

Plans to create a 1,680 home garden village in Cheshire East, including extra care, are advancing with work scheduled for September 2026.

Cheshire East Council has achieved hybrid planning permission for Handforth Garden Village for the development of a new village between the existing settlements of Handforth and Bramhall in Stockport. The village will include both high-quality design homes (with 30% of them affordable) and have a significant 'place-making' focus too.

It will include an 800-place through school, employment space and a village centre, alongside an extra-care accommodation for older and disabled residents. Around 40% of the site will be managed green space – including a village green and country park. The council is currently exploring the potential of forming a joint venture with the MADE Partnership. This would see the two organisations work together as the master developer to bring forward the village centre, public amenities, and all infrastructure, to enable house builders to concentrate on building homes on the land.

[Read more here](#)

Norfolk County Council

Development company yields over £1.7m in dividends

A county council's wholly-owned housing company has completed hundreds of homes, including those for affordable rent and shared ownership, whilst generating much-needed funds for the local authority.

Repton Property Developments, Norfolk County Council's development company, has completed substantial developments in Acle, Caister-on-Sea, Hopton-on-Sea and Attleborough. Together, these schemes total over 300 homes with more in the pipeline.

Established in 2017, the property company generated a £1m dividend to the county council after a successful 2024/25 financial year, following a £735,000 dividend paid out last year. Repton was created with the aim of unlocking the value of underutilised council-owned land and buildings, while generating financial returns to ease the pressure on the public purse. The housing company focuses on building high-quality and environmentally conscious housing developments across Norfolk.

[Read more here](#)

Opening doors: housing for all

As highlighted in the previous chapter, making housing attainable and accessible extends well beyond building affordable homes.

When place-making, councils are increasingly taking a broader approach. This includes focusing on other types of housing beyond 'typical' properties, ones that focus on the health and wellbeing of residents, linking in with the preventative agenda.

Examples here include ramping up the delivery of extra-care housing for people with health needs, a senior living development, and investment in children's homes to keep young people in care local.

The CCN members profiled are:

- **North Yorkshire Council**
- **Central Bedfordshire Council**
- **Lancashire County Council**
- **Surrey County Council**
- **Gloucestershire County Council**
- **Northumberland County Council**



North Yorkshire Council

Pioneering extra care housing developments

North Yorkshire Council's extra care housing programme has helped thousands of people to remain living independently over the last two decades.

The council's programme was first launched in 2003 and there are now 28 extra care housing schemes across the county, offered as an alternative to the care home route for certain individuals: a key plank of the authority's preventative agenda in adult social care.

More than 6,000 older and disabled people have benefited, enabling people with care needs to live independently and within their local area. They offer purpose-built housing alongside on site care support and some even contain a library, shop and café. North Yorkshire Council has invested £9m into its extra care housing over the last few years, realising savings of £15m. Accommodation varies from site to site, offering homes for outright purchase, shared ownership or rent, in different combinations.

[Read more here](#)

Central Bedfordshire Council

£54m senior living village begins to take shape

A major development of a £54m senior living village in Bedfordshire is well underway and will offer modern accommodation for older people and those with learning or physical disabilities.

The Steppingly Road development, Red Kite Meadows, is situated in Flitwick and is Central Bedfordshire Council's fourth major development to be built to support its strategy for older people and people with a learning or physical disability, offering more accommodation choices to them. Farrans Construction is delivering the development.

The scheme includes a 72-bed care home, 88 independent living apartments for the over 55s and an 8-bed short stay unit for people with a disability. On-site facilities will feature a café, medical rooms, a hairdresser, and a community space. Built to Passivhaus and dementia-friendly standards, the building will be operated by Care is Central, a council owned company, who will also deliver care services on site.

[Read more here](#)

Lancashire County Council

New children's homes aim to keep young people local

Vital new children's homes in Lancashire are providing local accommodation for young people in the council's care.

Like many other CCN members in recent years Lancashire County Council saw a sharp increase in children in care, and a related reliance on agency accommodation. In response, the council launched its 'Where Our Children Live' programme of work last Autumn and has already introduced two additional homes with a further two planned for later this year. In addition, Phase Two of the Programme will see an introduction of an additional 15 new children's homes across the county.

The council says the programme will not only reduce reliance on agency providers but ensure that young people in care are placed closer to their family, friends and schools.

The phased programme is expected to cost under £13m in total.

[Read more here](#)

Surrey County Council

Work begins on first in series of extra care housing developments

Building work has started this year on an affordable rent extra care housing development in Surrey – the first of many planned by the county council.

Surrey County Council is collaborating with Places for People and Homes England on the £23m scheme, called Meadowcroft Lodge, on a disused council-owned site in Guildford.

Extra care housing is designed to support older and disabled people to live independently for longer, and Meadowcroft Lodge will not only contain care support and assistive technology but also a café and gardens, reducing the reliance on residential care. It will provide 59 one and two-bedroom apartments, all for affordable rent. It is the first in a series of affordable extra care housing developments that the council is planning for Surrey, with an ambition to deliver 725 apartments across the county by 2030 as part of its 'Right Homes, Right Support' Strategy. A further seven sites have outline planning permission. Separately, the council is also progressing plans for supported living accommodation for adults.

[Read more here](#)

Gloucestershire County Council

New database allows people to check accessibility of homes

Gloucestershire County Council has introduced a new resource which will allow people with disabilities to check how accessible social homes are.

The county council has worked with local authority and health partners to launch its Accessible Housing Register this year, with every home on the register assigned a category from A (most accessible) to G (not yet assessed). These ratings will be displayed on Home Seeker Plus, the county's housing allocation service and aim to make it easier for people living with disabilities to find homes that provide the support they need to live comfortably and independently.

The first area to launch the resource will be in Gloucester, with Gloucester City Homes gathering information on the 5,100 properties it manages and working with the county council to collate this information. The register will be launched by district councils and social housing providers across the county later this year.

[Read more here](#)

Northumberland County Council

Dementia-friendly and affordable bungalows

An innovative Northumberland County Council-led scheme has seen the authority build over a dozen dementia-friendly affordable homes in Blyth.

The 13 specialist bungalows and have been designed to specifically support residents who are living with dementia and Alzheimer's, including level access wet rooms and specialist technology, enabling them to live independently in their own homes with support from their family or carers. The bungalows will be available at affordable rent.

They will be equipped with wall mounted touch screen devices for phone calls, meaning residents and their carers can see each other and the properties come with smoke and heat detectors that can alert carers and emergency services. The bungalows have been constructed using an innovative energy efficient method called Insulated Concrete Formwork which will keep homes warmer in winter helping to reduce heating bills and has more soundproofing.

[Read more here](#)

Transforming lives: Tackling homelessness

Across the country there has been a steep rise in homelessness and temporary accommodation use over the last few years. Once seen as mainly an urban issue, county and unitary councils have seen a major increase in both demand and expenditure.

This theme looks into some of the ways those councils are seeking to address these challenges with an emphasis on turning the tide via prevention, health-related help, and individualised support to help people transition to stable lives.

This chapter also explores how CCN members are taking an increasingly proactive role by buying and refurbishing properties to help alleviate housing pressures related to homelessness and the increased need for temporary accommodation.

The CCN members profiled are:

- **North Northamptonshire Council**
- **Herefordshire Council**
- **Dorset Council**
- **Devon County Council**
- **Somerset Council**
- **Oxfordshire County Council**

Below image: Modular flats in Weymouth provided by Dorset Council to help former rough sleepers transition to stable lives



North Northamptonshire Council

Programme helps individuals to transform their lives

North Northamptonshire Council's 'Never Give Up' team supports long-term rough sleepers to transform their lives and has won a national award.

The unitary council's 'Never Give Up' programme was launched in 2023. It offers accommodation across 16 self-contained flats throughout North Northamptonshire and a team that provides tailored individual support ranging from help with setting up utility bills, assisting with recovery, and liaising with mental health services. It has supported 26 people to date, reducing the number of individuals rough sleeping long-term from 13 last April to six at the end of 2024. They were named Team of the Year at the Housing Heroes Awards 2025 in June.

The programme goes beyond basic support, such as offering art therapy and accompanying residents to the supermarket. They help individuals understand finances, set up savings accounts, and more. Those people have subsequently moved into permanent accommodation and have secured employment.

[Read more here](#)

Herefordshire Council

Buying properties to address homelessness expenditure

Herefordshire Council is taking proactive steps to address rough sleeping and homelessness by buying and managing properties.

The unitary authority has allocated up to £5m for purchasing properties across the county, reducing the council's reliance on temporary accommodation. In 2023/24, the authority spent £3m on hotel accommodation for those at risk of homelessness or rough sleepers.

With the council warning over limited supply and rising costs and with 300 people a year being added to its waiting list, the authority is also looking to address the issue by exploring the potential for an in-house development company. This could lead to a company being established within twelve months.

The authority has said it has identified 17 council-owned sites that could be redeveloped.

[Read more here](#)

Dorset Council

'Moving on' flats help individuals transition to stable lives

A project in Dorset is providing micro-flats to former rough sleepers to help them move onto independent lives and has been hailed as 'life-changing'.

Dorset Council and charity The Bus Shelter Project have this year unveiled five self-contained modular flats on the outskirts of Weymouth, adding to the 12 already there. These flats are for former rough sleepers who have been in temporary accommodation. These 'moving on' units give tenants an opportunity to manage their everyday life in their own home, including cooking in their own kitchen, paying bills and maintaining the property.

Funded by Dorset Council and the government, the project was called 'life-changing' by councillors, as it offers tenants the opportunity to start the next step of their journey towards independent living after rough sleeping. The units were constructed offsite using modern methods of construction by manufacturer, Newspace.

Watch a video of the new flats [here](#).

[Read more here](#)

Devon County Council

Devolution deal unlocks money to prevent homelessness

A county devolution deal has helped secure vital funding for a council to repurpose housing for those at risk of becoming homeless.

West Devon Borough Council has repurposed an old council building to provide three temporary accommodation homes, part-funded through a £16 million capital funding pot. This has been secured through the devolution agreement spearheaded by Devon County Council and Torbay Council to create the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority. The renovation cost £625,000 in total, with half of this coming from the Devon and Torbay County Combined Authority via its funding pot.

The borough council is taking a proactive approach to homelessness by refurbishing the building, which opened in July. It is designed to offer accommodation to those at risk of becoming rough sleepers and other households. The refurbishment has been carried out to green standards, maximising energy and carbon savings.

[Read more here](#)

Somerset Council

Programme improves homeless healthcare in Somerset

Since 2021, Somerset Council, the NHS and other partners have used evidence led, insight-driven, service design to reframe their approach to homeless health.

A commitment to integrated health and social care for people experiencing homelessness has seen Somerset use several funding streams to develop a multi-disciplinary team including 15 nursing staff and a county-wide outreach GP offer.

The approach, which aims to increase the uptake of preventative healthcare (wound dressing, infection control, testing and screening) and reduce unplanned or emergency admissions, was the overall winner in the Health Equalities category at the NHS Parliamentary Awards in 2023. Between 2020 and 2024, people experiencing homelessness in Somerset attended 28,888 outpatient appointments, 35 per cent of which were delivered by the specialist homeless healthcare service. The LGA recently published a case study detailing the key features and outcomes of the approach.

[Read more here](#)

Oxfordshire County Council

County council's first-ever homelessness prevention strategy

Oxfordshire County Council set up its first-ever homeless prevention strategy back in 2021.

The county council committed £3.8m to the strategy, which was introduced at a time when homelessness and rough sleeping was on the rise in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic and at the beginning of the cost-of-living crisis.

The strategy, prepared in partnership health organisations and district councils, moved beyond homeless legislation in terms of support. The council used data to proactively identify those who may be at risk of losing accommodation, or of being discharged from health settings without accommodation already in place. The strategy also introduced specific plans for individuals to get back on their feet and a 'Housing First' approach, which delivered around 50 units per year of self-contained accommodation with intensive support. Wherever possible, the strategy proposed to keep people in their local area.

[Read more here](#)

Homes fit for the future: raising standards

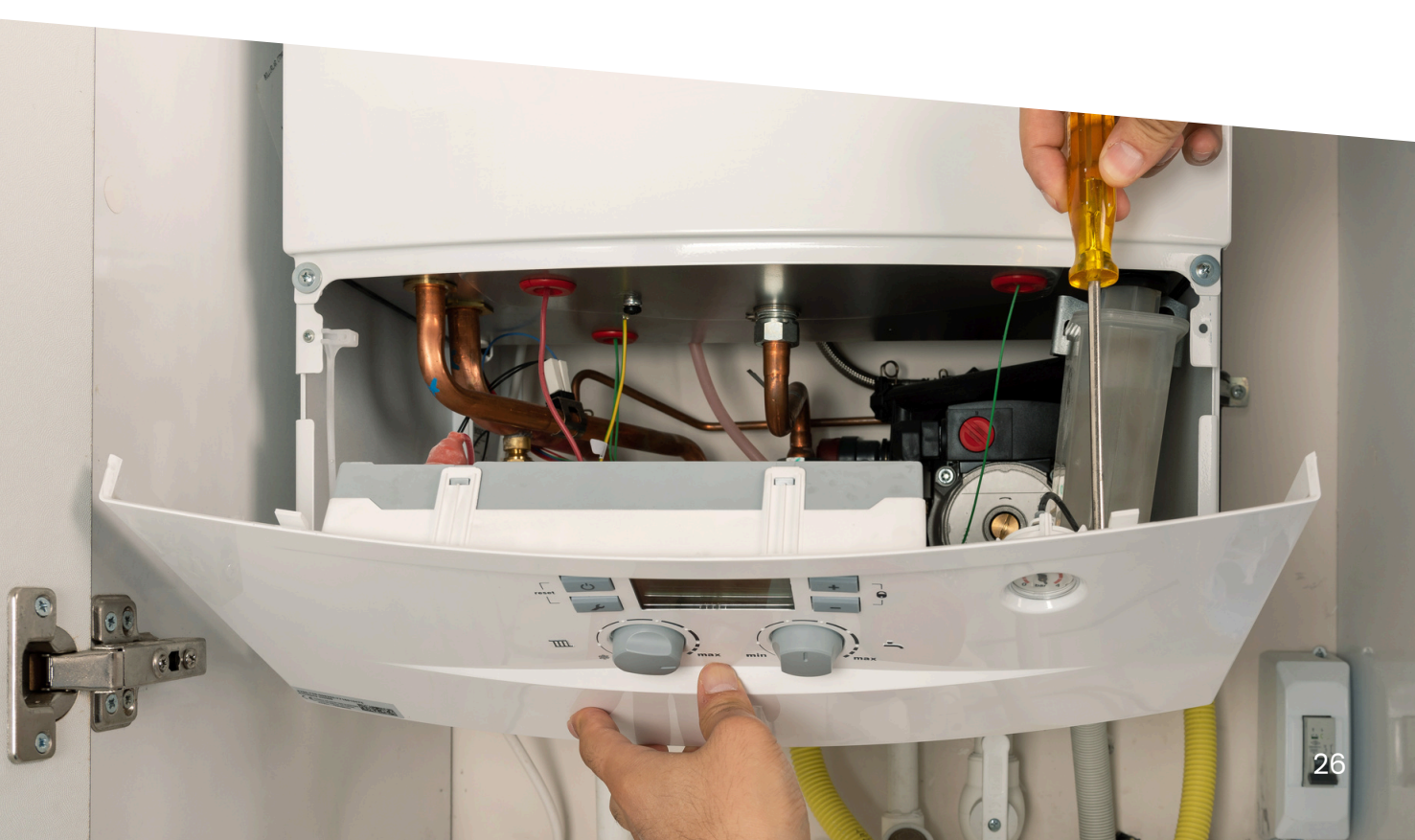
With thousands of homes in each county area – with a sizeable amount under direct local authority oversight – county and unitary councils play a crucial role in maintaining standards and improving housing.

This is essential not only for residents' health and wellbeing—across both private and social housing—but also to keep energy costs down for residents and ensuring those social homes comply with current legislation.

Using their size and scale, CCN members have a strong record of unlocking funding to deliver large-scale improvements. These include upgrading council-owned and private homes, with a focus on low-income households and older properties through better heating and insulation.

The CCN members profiled are:

- **Shropshire Council**
- **Westmorland and Furness Council**
- **Staffordshire County Council**
- **West Northamptonshire Council**
- **East Riding of Yorkshire Council**



Shropshire Council

Major programme to lower energy bills and cut emissions

The energy efficiency of over 1,300 affordable council-owned homes in Shropshire will be improved, thanks to a £20m package of works.

The project will see private and social housing in the county to implement retrofit decarbonisation measures such as energy-efficient heating, enhanced insulation, and solar panels. These should lower residents' energy bills and reduce their carbon emissions.

Shropshire Council is committing £11m to the project, with the rest secured from a successful bid to the government. Administered by the unitary authority's arms-length management company, Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing.

The project began this summer and is scheduled to finish by 2028. Residents affected will receive direct information about the improvements and benefits from this summer.

[Read more here](#)

Westmorland and Furness Council

Council approves ambitious new housing strategy

Westmorland and Furness Council has this year rubber-stamped an ambitious housing strategy for the next five years, which sets out plans to improve existing properties.

The plans include initiatives to upgrade council-owned homes to address issues such as damp and mould. At the same time, all new council homes will meet Future Homes Standards and net-zero carbon goals, while existing homes will be retrofitted for improved energy efficiency to reduce fuel poverty and contribute to climate targets. Efforts will focus on addressing the rural housing crisis, regenerating neighbourhoods, and providing tailored support for vulnerable groups, including veterans, care-experienced young people, and the elderly.

The council has already made significant progress: awarding £570,000 in Affordable Housing Grants to deliver 20 new homes and investing over £3m in Disabled Facility Grants.

[Read more here](#)

Staffordshire County Council

Delivering energy-efficient improvements to almost 1,500 homes

The Staffordshire Warmer Homes scheme has saved residents money by providing free heating and insulation measures for thousands of low-income households, using funding from government grants with targeted advertisements on social media and through local partners.

The £13m scheme, run by Staffordshire County Council in partnership with district councils, has been running since 2019 and has delivered improvements to over 1,450 homes across the county.

It focuses on households who need help to heat their homes, and improvements offered include loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, external wall insulation, air source heat pumps and solar panels.

To date, the programme has seen over 2,400 measures installed in homes, and 92.4% of these properties have seen their energy efficiency improve by at least one EPC band. Residents said it was particularly invaluable during the recent cost-of-living crisis.

[Read more here](#)

West Northamptonshire Council

Plans to deliver better value for money in housing services

West Northamptonshire Council is consulting on whether to bring housing services back in-house.

In June, the unitary council's cabinet approved a 'minded to' decision which seeks to follow a phased approach to bringing services provided by Northamptonshire Partnership Homes (NPH), which manages around 11,500 homes, back under direct council management. The authority is currently consulting with residents and has said it will ensure their voices shape the future of these housing services. The consultation closes in September.

The proposed changes would be delivered over a transition period to minimise disruption and allow for collaboration, and provide time to embed any new changes. The proposed changes also aim to deliver better value for money by reducing duplication between the unitary authority and NPH, allowing for improved integration across council services, and ultimately leading to improved outcomes for residents.

[Read more here](#)

East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Working with landlords to address mould and damp issues

East Riding of Yorkshire Council is attempting to proactively address issues in private accommodation – and has been selected to pilot a government scheme to work with landlords and tenants of the issues with damp and mould in properties.

The unitary council is working alongside neighbouring Hull City Council and has launched a campaign to highlight the risks of leaving damp and mould untreated, including social media and physical advertising on bus stops in the area.

In total, 27 letting agents have now signed up to the initiative, pledging to signpost landlords and tenants to the council's and government's damp and mould guidance. They have also pledged to encourage tenants to report issues in the first instance to the agent, to enable investigations to prevent damp and mould in the properties. Recent legislation means that landlords are legally mandated to take steps to address damp and mould issues, and failure to do so can result in enforcement action.

[Read more here](#)



CCN

THE VOICE OF COUNTIES

Capita

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County Councils Network



County Councils Network

Founded in 1997, the County Councils Network is a network of 20 county councils and 17 unitary authorities that serve county areas.

The network is a cross party organisation, expressing the views of its member councils to the Local Government Association and to the government.



COUNTY SPOTLIGHT