



# Homes Strategy 2023-2026

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# Introduction

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 Connexus's corporate plan sets out the future view of the organisation centring on our guiding 'North Star' which is "Good Quality Affordable Homes for All". Underpinning the north Star are a series of corporate objectives focusing on how we intend to achieve and sustain our goal of good quality affordable homes for all throughout the life of the plan.
- 1.2 The Homes Strategy is the contribution that the Property and Development directorates will specifically make in achieving. The strategy outlines the values that drive the organisation, what we achieved and provided and, more importantly what we will be providing over the next three years.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 Good quality homes play a vital role in the development of neighbourhoods and communities as well as contributing to the economic development of the surrounding area.
- 2.2 Homes play a key role for both individuals and families helping them to grow and thrive therefore it is important that we at Connexus continue to play our part in the development and maintenance of good quality homes that are affordable and provide the necessary comfort and protection that our tenants have come to expect from us.
- 2.3 This Homes Strategy outlines and describes what our priorities will be over the next three years
- 2.4 Our priorities include, our approach to investment in our existing homes and in the development of new properties; how we meet our regulatory requirements and keep our customers safe in their homes and neighbourhood's through annual safety checks and inspections e.g. Gas safety Checks, Fire Risk Assessments; ensuring our repairs requests are responded to in a timely fashion and to a quality standard as well as improving and making it easier report a repair; how we will replace elements in homes that are beyond economic repair, for example kitchens and bathrooms.
- 2.5 We know that a significant issue facing the housing sector, and in Connexus homes, is damp, mould and condensation which can impact the quality of life experienced by our customers. Previously, and in coming years, we have invested in this important area and will be looking to build on our previous delivery arrangements and invest more in homes that suffer from the impact of condensation, mould and damp.
- 2.6 Our strategy will also outline our support to the environment including the significance of climate change and what we will do to improve the efficiency of homes, so they are more thermally efficient aimed at reducing the cost of heating, also improving the biodiversity of the environment surrounding our homes.

### 3. Our Values

- 3.1 It is important to remember that it isn't just what you do but the way you do it. As well as outlining what we propose to deliver over the life of the Homes Strategy we also need to consider how we deliver. It is important to us at Connexus that when we deliver services our values are front and centre and that they drive everything we do.

**Passionate:** We care about our work and our customers and take pride in serving people and communities. This shows in our energy, enthusiasm and commitment to going the extra mile, and to building for the future..

**Respectful:** We deal with people of all ages, all backgrounds, all needs and requirements and we treat everyone fairly, considerately and as equals.

**Involvement:** We develop services for people, making sure we listen to what they need and involve them all the way. We learn from our experiences and always look to grow and develop together.

**Determined:** When we start something, we see it through. We're decisive, focused, tenacious and work around challenges to find the best outcome.

**Effective:** We aim to get it right first time and to do the simple things well, because that sets the standard and everything else, we deliver.

### 4. Our Key Strategic Priorities

<b>Investment</b>	How we propose to replace key elements and improve the homes we are responsible for.
<b>Repairs</b>	The focus of our repairs programme including improvements in how repairs are reported and responded to.
<b>Health and Safety</b>	Through our safety checks and inspection regimes how we keep our customers and their homes safe and free from harm.
<b>Development</b>	How and where we build new homes meeting the needs of the local community,

- 4.1 As indicated earlier the Homes Strategy document is focused on the services and developments, we will bring forward over the next three years, however, we think it is equally important to reflect on what Connexus has provided and achieved previously in support of our tenants, their homes and other assets (for example garages) we have responsibility for, as well as our ambitions over the life of this Homes Strategy.
- 4.2 As well as reflecting on our direction of travel over the previous strategy timescale this strategy will outline our key objectives for the property and development directorate as well as joint strategic objectives with colleagues in the operational directorate and this document should be read alongside the Customer strategy particularly how the property directorate will engage and communicate with customers on repairs and investment decisions.

## 5. What We Will Be Doing

### Overview of Intended Achievements by 2026

- a) 68 million invested in our homes, including regeneration of our estates.
- b) 100 million in the development of new homes.
- c) We will have completed a further 8,000 stock condition surveys on our existing homes.
- d) We will have completed a further 4,500 energy performance certificates on our existing homes.
- e) We will have replaced a further 4,000 components (bathrooms, kitchens and boilers etc) to our homes.
- f) A further 2,571 of our homes will have achieved SAP C status.
- g) We will have completed the first phase of our warmer homes programme.
- h) We will have implemented our stock rationalisation programme which means greater estate regeneration and disposals alongside developing new homes, including the successful completion of Sandpits estate in Ludlow and our maisonette refurbishment in Hereford.
- i) We will have sustained customer satisfaction levels of 92%.
- j) 90% of our jobs will consistently be completed in target.
- k) First time fix will remain at 80%.
- l) We will have extended our repairs offer beyond standard office hours including a weekend option.
- m) Streamlined and improved the range of contact points for our customers to engage with us, including the availability of a customer portal.
- n) We will be able to demonstrate through customer feedback how their comments have influenced and shaped service provision.

### Investment: Making Improvements to our Homes:

#### 5.1 Customers

Between 2023 and 2026 we will commit to achieving the following: -

- Seek Customer views on how we shape the way we undertake investment works.
- Promote the investment programme with customers.

<b>To achieve these targets, we will: -</b>
Increase customer involvement in the Asset team by engaging with our involved customers and led by our Customer Experience team, this will ensure that customers help shape the decisions we take on our homes Increase customer involvement, ensuring customers help shape the decisions we take on our homes.
Agree how we communicate our investment programmes with all customers using a variety of communication methods for example, social media, newsletters, customer events, etc.
By the end of 2023/24 developed and implemented, in conjunction with operations colleagues, a holistic “case management” approach to dealing with complex cases such those involving damp, mould and condensation.

## 5.2 Data Knowledge

Between 2023 and 2026 we will commit to achieving the following targets: -

- Undertake EPCs/ Retrofit Assessments annually with a commitment to complete 1500 EPC's/Retrofit Assessments by 2024.
- Undertake 3,000 stock condition surveys per annum including collecting the minimum energy data set.
- Review and check the data held in our asset database.

<b>To achieve these targets, we will: -</b>
Undertake stock condition surveys of our homes to continually increase our knowledge of components.
Agree and undertake a targeted programme of EPC's to homes where our data is missing to improve our energy knowledge of our stock,
Undertake a PAS 2035 retrofit assessment of those properties to receive energy efficiency work to ensure that we are undertaking the right improvements and that there will be an improvement in the SAP score of each property to a minimum of SAP C.
Review the Parity energy model to establish a detailed programme of investment work to increase the energy efficiency of our homes and prioritise the programme starting with those below SAP D and then completing those below SAP C.
Create validation checks to ensure that the data we hold in MRI Assets is continually assessed allowing decisions to be based on reliable and accurate information.

## 5.3 Existing Homes

Between 2023 and 2026 we will commit to achieving the following targets: -

- All homes to meet the decent homes standard.
- Investing 68 million pounds in homes by 2026.
- During 2023/24 install 1261 components to homes.
- Completion of the first phase of the Warmer Homes Programme by 2026.
- Reduction in Damp, Condensation and Mould reported by customers by 2026.

<b>To achieve these targets, we will: -</b>
Set an investment programme annually to improve homes for our customers ensuring that components are replaced when required and meet the Connexus Investment Standard.
Across the life of the plan maintain a Decent Home Customer satisfaction target of 92%.
Work with the Repairs and Maintenance team to create teams to complete investment programme works and developing their skills to maintain and service components.
Procure external contractors to deliver the programmes, especially those that cannot be delivered by the repairs and maintenance team.
Review those estates and homes against the Asset Grading model where the cost of investment works to improve the energy efficiency is high especially where there is a link to damp, condensation and mould.
Produce a damp, condensation and mould strategy that ensures homes are free from damp and mould.

## 5.4 Improving Energy Efficiency

Between 2023 and 2026 we will commit to achieving the following targets: -

- SAP B trial completed on properties off gas by 2025.
- Receive more than £2,200,000 in energy grant improving homes to reduce fuel usage.
- Through the Warmer Homes project refurbishing 213 homes.
- Improve 335 homes to SAP C in 2023/24 by replacing components that increase energy efficiency and completed SAP C replacement components on (2,571 by 2026) 7-year profile).

<b>To achieve these targets, we will: -</b>
Undertake an SAP B trial on rural properties in Shropshire which are off gas, focusing on a fabric first approach with External Wall Insulation, new windows, re-roofing with increased loft insulation and where required renewable heating, PV and battery storage.
Follow the PAS 2035 framework to improve the energy efficiency of homes following a fabric first approach rather than installing a technological improvement to improve energy efficiency.
Continue to replace components within homes to take homes to a minimum of SAP C, for example boiler replacements, installing new windows, etc.
Following energy efficiency programmes demonstrate improvements to the energy efficiency level of homes by completing EPC's.
Seek and acquire grants to supplement our capital budgets when undertaking energy efficiency investment work and look to offset carbon to help reduce our carbon footprint.

## 5.5 Regeneration of Estates

Between 2023 and 2026 we will commit to achieving the following targets: -

- In 2023/24 refurbish 34 major voids.
- Implement the outcomes of our stock rationalisation to regenerate, dispose and develop new homes in our estates.
- Complete the regeneration of Sandpits estate in Ludlow by 2026.
- Create estate improvement plans.
- Update and transform Independent Living schemes.

<b>To achieve these targets, we will: -</b>
Improve voids properties with major investment works bringing them to an energy efficient and modern condition for customers. However, where properties are too costly to invest these are to be sold and receipts re-invested in existing homes.
Work with customers and our housing team to create both regeneration and estate refurbishment schemes, which are safe, damp free, energy efficient and meet modern requirements.
Work with our ILC team to develop investment programmes to create ILC schemes that customers are proud to live in. For 2023/24 we will be refurbishing three of our schemes (Bryngwyn court, Ballinger Court and Horsecroft).
Following intervention were damp is found agree resolution date with customer.

## Repairs: How We Look after Our Homes

### 5.6 Customers

Between 2023 and 2026 we will commit to achieving the following targets: -

- Increase customer satisfaction with the repairs service incrementally from 88% in 2023 to 92% in 2026.
- Throughout the life of the plan ensure we achieve and maintain 90% of repair jobs completed in target.
- Offer customers a range of methods to report repairs demand, including a customer portal by 2025.
- Work with customers to define and agree an 'opening up offer' of our repairs service, resource it and implement it, by 2025.

<b>To achieve these targets, we will: -</b>
In 2023/24, aligning the repairs scheduling function with the implementation of the new customer contact solution that will provide colleagues in CST with a single platform and customers with a wider range of channels to be able to contact us. To support this we will implement a repairs ICT system during 2024.
Transition to a managed stores approach during 2023, to support an increase in our first-time fix rate from 70% in 2023 to 80% in 2026, impacting positively on customer satisfaction.
In 2024/25 consult with customers and then open up our core service to meet customer's needs. This potentially means extending our repairs service beyond 4pm, appointing as standard on Saturdays and allowing customers via a portal to make and change repairs and compliance appointments.
Continue to listen to our customers, to ensure their feedback shapes the service which will be led by our Customer Experience team. Increase engagement opportunities by offering a menu of choice in terms of how customers can feedback and shape the service provided.
Meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of our customers in their homes.
Ensure, throughout the life of the plan, we have a resolution of condensation and mould cases within 6 weeks from point of reporting.

### 5.7 Data Knowledge

Between 2023 and 2026 we will commit to achieving the following targets: -

- Review and check the repairs data prior to moving over to the new ICT system in 2024.

<b>By 2024/25 use our repairs data to inform our asset investment strategy to achieve these targets, we will:</b>
Complete a full cleanse of repairs data in 2023 ready for transition to RIOT.
Proactively review properties with high repairs demand, and feed this intelligence into the asset investment strategy during 23/24 and subsequent years.

## 5.8 Voids Properties

Between 2023 and 2026 we will commit to achieving the following targets: -

- Turn our void properties around within predefined timescales, to ensure properties are ready to let ensuring our income is maximised.
- Refurbish our void properties to a consistent standard that new customers are happy with.

<b>To achieve these targets, we will: -</b>
Process map and standardise our repairs processes for voids during 23/24 to review where efficiencies in the process can be achieved.
Consistently achieve the voids standard, to ensure customers are happy with their new home 2023/24 and onwards.

## 5.9 Procurement

Between 2023 and 2026 we will commit to achieving the following targets: -

- Create a strategic partnership with a materials merchant, during 2023/24, to ensure materials are managed in a way that supports delivering an excellent service to customers.
- We will look for other opportunities to form partnerships to deliver specialist work for example damp, mould and condensation between 2023 and 2026.

<b>To achieve these targets, we will: -</b>
In 2023/24 create a strategic partnership to ensure materials are managed in a way that supports delivering an excellent service to customers, this means that our trades colleagues will have a tailored van stock enabling them to complete repairs right first time, we will enable our trades colleagues to have materials delivered direct to site.
We will have pop up locations, to allow our trades colleagues to access materials quickly, to ensure we are meeting customer demand. We will have a dedicated partner who will manage our plant hire, specialist materials, waste to enable our trades colleagues to spend more time working in our customers' homes.
Review services that are delivered by sub-contractors to ensure we are getting value for money during 2023-2026.
Review areas of inhouse provision 2024/25 and benchmark, to ensure that we are delivering services that are best value for our customers.

## 5.10 Delivery of Repairs

Between 2023 and 2026 we will commit to achieving the following targets: -

- We will continue to recruit trade apprentices, to future proof our workforce.
- We will continue to support and train our existing trades colleagues to ensure continuity of service.

<b>To achieve these targets, we will: -</b>
Actively recruit apprentices and build into our procurement a level of social value that supports local labour.
We will complete a skills assessment of our trades colleagues during 2023 to identify gaps and actively bridge them.
We will develop our heating engineers and electricians to maintain renewable technology present during 2024/25.



## Health and Safety: Keeping Our Customers and Homes Safe

- 5.11 We will ensure all our homes and schemes have a completed safety inspection, current safety certificate, risk assessment and inspection completed within statutory and agreed timescales.

<b>To achieve this, we will: -</b>
Each year we will ensure that annual and periodic safety checks and inspections are undertaken by our Repairs team and external contractors to Gas and Heating appliances, Electrical Installations, Water Systems, Lifting Equipment, Asbestos Containing Materials and Fire Safety Systems and Equipment.
In 2023/2024 we will implement a new repairs system that will provide robust data systems for recording and storing Compliance and Health and Safety information.
Each year we will continue to undertake annual Fire Risk Assessments, Water Hygiene Risk Assessments and Asbestos inspections.
In 2023/2024 we will work with colleagues to review our processes and make recommendations on how we can digitise our processes to work more efficiently and provide accessible digital reports and risk assessments for colleagues and customers.
Using external specialist auditors carry out regular audits to provide assurance that statutory and regulatory compliance is being maintained.
2023/2024. We will work with Customers through our customers panels and with colleagues to agree and publish advice and information on building safety for our customers (in non-technical jargon).

- 5.12 We will ensure all our Health and Safety and Compliance Policies and Procedures are reviewed and updated and that staff have the training and skills to ensure Connexus meets its regulatory and statutory requirements as a Landlord and as an Employer.

<b>To achieve this, we will: -</b>
Ensure colleagues have the right Health and Safety Training specific for their roles and the required skill sets are up to date to undertaking works in customers' homes.
Work with Internal and External Auditors to carry out in depth reviews on our processes and procedures across our Health and Safety areas to ensure compliance with our Landlord and Employer responsibilities.
In 2023/2024 we will develop and embed a new Health and Safety Governance Structure across the business to embed a 'no blame, open and honest' safety culture.
In 2023/2024 we will introduce revised and updated policies and procedures for Contract and Contractor Management which will include an audit process to ensure all Contractors meet Connexus requirements for Health and Safety, have the appropriate accreditation and certification in place and follow Connexus Code of Conduct for working in our customers' homes and our neighbourhoods.

## Development: Building New Homes

### 5.13 We Will: -

- Continue to build up to 250 new homes a year to meet the needs of our customers, young and old. New homes to be provided through re-modelling and regeneration of existing sites and through new build.
- Aim to find new sustainable and smart ways to build our homes which will make them more affordable to live in which will include heat pumps and electric vehicle charging to design out future retrofit costs.
- Find new ways to work in partnership with our contractors, local authorities and in collaboration with other housing providers to find more efficient and cost-effective ways of working, including sharing the risks and meeting emerging needs.

NB: All of the above strategic priorities going forward are supported by detailed team plans over the life of the home's strategy.

All of the above activities going forward are supported by detailed team plans over the life of the homes strategy.