



Wythenshawe Community Housing Group Strategic Vacant Property Management Policy

Date of approval	27 May 2025
Owner	Paul Butterworth, Executive Director of Assets
Policy monitoring body	GLT & Development & Homes Committee
Resident input into policy	Customer Experience Committee
Date for policy review	July 2028
Linked strategies/policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development Strategy• Asset Management Strategy• Community & Neighborhood Strategy• Repairs and Maintenance Policy• Empty Homes Policy• Gas Maintenance & Safety Management Policy• Environmental Services Policy• Recharge Policy• Fire & Building Safety Policy• Value for Money Strategy• Data Protection Policy
Statutory and Legal Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neighbourhood and Community Standards – Consumer Standards• UK General Data Protection Regulation / Data Protection Act 2018
Version/date	May 2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (WCHG) is the largest Manchester-based housing association. We are responsible for almost 14,000 properties providing a home to almost 30,000 people – some 37% of the Wythenshawe community.
- 1.2 WCHG is committed to setting out the principles and guidelines for managing empty properties. This policy applies to the management of properties vacant pending option appraisal; demolition, remodelling, redevelopment or disposal. The Empty Homes Policy will apply when properties are subject to routine re-letting processes.
- 1.4 In accordance with the Consumer Standards, Neighbourhood and Community Standard, Registered providers must also co-operate with relevant partners to promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they provide social housing.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 The purpose of the Strategic Vacant Property Management Policy is to ensure properties that are retained vacant for strategic purposes are managed responsibly, safe & secure and help to improve the neighbourhood.
- 2.2 WCHG recognises that effective management of empty homes is important. It maximise the availability of affordable homes and avoids negative impact on communities and neighbourhoods.
- 2.3 WCHG is committed to meeting the local housing need and maximising rental income by having the lowest number of empty homes through operating an efficient empty homes and lettings process.
- 2.4 However, on occasion empty homes are an unavoidable part of the delivery of wider regeneration and redevelopment strategies. It is essential that we have an effective and efficient system in place to manage these empty properties and limit, (as far as possible), the length of time that they remain empty. This approach will minimise the impact these homes have on remaining customers, the wider community and environment.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to homes managed by WCHG that are excluded from the standard empty homes management and re-let processes and may include:
 - Properties held vacant pending an 'Option Appraisal' by the Assets or Development Team;
 - Properties classified as 'strategic empty homes' where a decision has been made to consider disposal, demolishing, remodelling or redevelopment.
- 3.2 WCHG's Repairs and Maintenance Policy and Empty Homes & Re-let Standards &

processes facilitate the efficient and effective repair of empty homes where they are to be re-let. These voids are outside the scope of this policy.

4. Policy

- 4.1 Tenant(s) are obligated to leave the property and garden areas in a clean and tidy condition in accordance with the tenancy agreement, (unless mutually agreed otherwise). This includes leaving the property clean and clear of all their belongings including external sheds, loft spaces, gardens and common areas. Where this does not occur – the Recharge Policy will apply.
- 4.2 WCHG's existing Gas Maintenance and Safety Management Policy, Repairs and Maintenance Policy, Environmental Services Policy and Fire and Building Safety Policy will be applied as necessary to ensure empty homes are maintained in a secure and safe condition.
- 4.3 WCHG will ensure the Group's insurance requirements for empty properties is fulfilled.
- 4.4 WCHG will undertake minimum monthly neighbourhood inspections to check that empty homes falling within the Strategic Vacant Property Management Policy remain secure, clear and in a tidy condition and their appearance is not negatively impacting the area or neighbours. Action will be taken if they do not adhere to this policy commitment and more frequent inspections may be put in place.
- 4.5 WCHG will risk assess each case to determine the appropriate level of security and routine inspections. WCHG will ensure that empty properties have minimal and non-intrusive security in place to minimise the impact of WCHG's empty properties on communities and neighbourhoods and this may include:
 - Installing alarms and remote monitoring devices (e.g. movement sensors, cctv)
 - Providing curtains and blinds
 - Undertaking routine/cyclical maintenance, e.g. gardening services
- 4.6 In the event that empty properties in a neighbourhood or block are attracting vandalism or anti-social behaviour then WCHG may consider:
 - Boarding or sheeting sensitively (as necessary) to prevent unauthorised access;
 - Providing mobile or static security arrangements;
 - Arranging temporary caretaking services
 - Removing appliances, (e.g. heating appliances)
- 4.8 WCHG may at its discretion; to mitigate vandalism and anti-social behaviour or to reduce the financial liability of vacant properties; seek to implement phased demolition in advance of the full regeneration or redevelopment plans. This will require consent from the Local authority and will be managed to minimise disruption and inconvenience to remaining residents.
- 4.9 The homes approved by D&H Committee to be 'strategic vacant homes' for demolition/disposal/investment, will not be reported under our empty homes monitoring or impact KPI's such as turnaround times, empty homes etc. They will

however remain as stock assets in systems and treated as units owned for SDR and accountancy purposes. They will be classed and treated in systems as '**vacant and permanently unavailable to let**' as aligned to SDR. They will not accrue rent loss once classified in this way. They will be treated as demolished units once they are handed over to and in contract with a demolition contractor.

5. Monitoring and Review

- 5.1 The Dev & Homes Committee will receive reports on the Strategic Vacant Property Management Policy in relation to schemes and estates subject to option appraisals and where holding strategic empty homes prior to investment, demolition or disposal. This will include the reporting and regular review to ensure homes do not impact upon neighbourhoods.
- 5.2 WCHG will enter regular dialogue with local police and relevant agencies; community and resident groups, local representative members as appropriate to responsively manage the local impact of vacant properties.
- 5.3 The Customer Experience Committee will review this Policy and our scrutiny group may be used to periodically review the effectiveness of its application as guided by our CX Committee.

6. Roles and Responsibilities


- 6.1 The Development & Homes Committee is responsible for setting and approving the Strategic Vacant Property Management Policy and they will formally review and approve it every three years.
- 6.2 The Executive Director of Assets will have overall responsibility for the policy.
- 6.3 The Head of Assets will be responsible for the implementation, application and review of this policy and will ensure all staff involved are trained in the implementation and any associated procedures.
- 6.4 The Head of Assets will engage Head of Neighbourhoods in ensuring monthly management of these properties and monthly inspections take place along with the appropriate resources to action and mitigate risks associated with this policy.

8. Complaints

- 8.1 Where a customer is dissatisfied with the way in which a strategic vacant homes has been managed, or about WCHG's administrative processes they will have the right to complain through WCHG's Complaints, Comments and Compliments policy a copy of which is available upon request.

9. Equality and Diversity

- 9.1 WCHG are committed to providing excellent customer services, which are fair, equitable and inclusive. We will make every reasonable effort to ensure that no-one is



discriminated against directly or indirectly because of any protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010 and in line with our reasonable adjustments statement.

9.2 We recognise that some protected groups may be disproportionately impacted and will take additional steps in the application of this policy and make reasonable adjustments to ensure compliance with the Act. If you require this policy in a different format, translated, large print, easy read, braille, or an audio copy, contact us by phone on: 0300 111 0000 or by email: inclusionanddiversity@wchg.org.uk

9.3 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed for this policy.

10. Data Protection

10.1. Any personal data collected under the Strategic Vacant Property Management Policy will be treated with respect and used in line with the data protection laws - the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018. For further information on how we handle your personal data, and how you can exercise your information rights, please visit our Group Privacy notice on the internet.