

Case for one bedroom homes in relation to development scheme App reference: 138185/FO/2023 (Former British Legion site) as part of WCHG's approach to rightsizing & best use of existing homes across Wythenshawe.

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The case for the majority of apartments being one bedroom homes on the site. The proposed mix of the 14 apartments is 3No. 2 beds and 11 No. 1 beds.

Executive summary:

WCHG is asking for this scheme to have the requested number of one bedroom homes to enable the group to focus the scheme's allocations for the following reasons :

- Allocations linked to current rightsizing – Allocating the homes to those older tenant(s) who are under occupying in their current 3 and 4 bedroom homes (WCHG tenancies) as part of the WCHG extended right sizing approach. This would require a local lettings policy to be agreed with Manchester City Council and the Housing Access Board (talks underway subject to planning consent).
- Preventing the need to put in aids and adaptations to existing large family WCHG homes if possible by encouraging and supporting tenants to transfer to one bedroom homes of a high quality and standard near local amenities, health services and transport links. Thereby saving Manchester City Council and WCHG aids and adaptations expenditure. This cost is increasing significantly as the demographics of Wythenshawe changes (See section on Understanding Wythenshawe report).
- This would free up much needed family accommodation to address demand and overcrowding in Wythenshawe and would assist in addressing overcrowding and lack of supply of larger homes, especially the parlour type homes which are highly sought after.
- This scheme would be the first of a number of specific schemes across neighbourhoods in Wythenshawe that would appeal to the more mature tenants and provide them with certainty about who their neighbours would be etc and would be general needs accommodation.

Please contact customer services on **0800 633 5500 | 0300 111 0000**

(Free from a landline | Local rate from a mobile)

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- This scheme would help address the issue of tenant(s) wanting to move but not to a sheltered scheme, extra care, High rise tower block or traditional cottage flats. This is a current barrier to the WCHG rightsizing approach.
- WCHG would meet the requirements of the emerging Regulator of social housing consumer standards by making best use of housing stock.
- The scheme would help to meet the Governance requirements made clear by the WCHG Board and Customer Experience committee with regard to best use of stock and doing more to address rightsizing alongside our current rightsizing commitment with Manchester City Council in relation to homeless families.
- WCHG intend to increase its budget to support its internal approach to rightsizing.

Detailed rationale:

Wythenshawe Community Housing Group currently has in excess of a 1000 homes under occupied in Wythenshawe, we believe this figure is larger and are trying to establish the exact details and numbers. This is predominantly larger homes of 3 and 4 bedroom homes that are under occupied. These homes are now under occupied by the tenant(s) as the family household and situation has changed over time and household and occupancy numbers have reduced.

Demand for these larger properties is increasing significantly and this is out stripping the supply of relets & indeed new build homes of this size. The last data from Manchester Move allocations systems highlights the following:

The 202/23 Allocations outcomes:

During this period 2022/23, there were 221,394 bids placed on WCHG homes advertised on Manchester Move, in comparison to last year of 159,997. This is a 72% increase in demand for WCHG properties. The bidding averages for last year were:

- 207 bids for 1 bed properties,
- 495 bids for 2 bed houses,
- 801 bids for 3 bed houses, in comparison to last year of 500 bids
- 490 bids for 4 bed houses, in comparison to last year of 313 bids

The average waiting time for a 3-bed house last year was 3 to 4 years, this has increased to 4-5 years for 2022/23. There has also been a 62% increase in demand for 3 bed houses and a 63.8% increase in demand for 4 bed houses.

Understanding Wythenshawe Census report (available via the WCHG website):

In September 2022, Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (WCHG) commissioned North Housing Consulting to build an evidence-based picture of how the area has developed; its challenges and opportunities; and also to consider how Wythenshawe may change over the next ten years to inform its corporate plan and long-term vision. This compared the data and changes as a result of information made available by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) from the 2011 and 2021 census outcomes.

The case for more one bedroom homes in this scheme is based on the following data and assumptions from the research:

Over time Wythenshawe is simultaneously ageing and getting younger as both ends of the age distribution take a greater share of population. This is consistent with child density increasing and a greater use of the stock by a growing number of families which is occurring in addition to ageing. The proportion of the population aged from 0–14 has increased from 20.1% to 21.6% while those aged over 65 has also grown from 12.7% to 13.5%. The absolute numbers behind the rise in those over-65 is modest in most parts of the area, but the data shows an increase in the total numbers which are masked when looking at proportions of a growing population. These increases in numbers will impact on services over time.

Of equal significance is the numbers of households who technically under-occupy their dwelling, which in this instance is 21,661 or 65.3% of the stock locally. Nationally the UK population under-occupies dwellings considerably and the rate for Manchester and Greater Manchester is 54.4% and 66.3% respectively.

Wythenshawe has become progressively more diverse over a twenty-year period, a process which is likely to continue over the next decade given the demographics of the city as a whole. The housing stock has become more intensively used and while overcrowding is an issue for some households, overall the stock is considerably under occupied when taking account of household and dwelling size. It is therefore nominally or theoretically possible to absorb more population growth in existing homes in future. Demand is significantly generated from within Wythenshawe, which is unsurprising given it is the size of a medium-sized town. However, the size of its social housing stock is such that part of the inflow will always reflect the economic and social conditions of the wider city.

As mentioned earlier in the report, disability is an acute issue in some areas of Wythenshawe and despite falls in neighbourhood proportions, there were 913 more residents reporting issues with disability in 2021 compared to 2011, but from within a higher population. This shows that 21.9% of the local population is categorised as disabled by virtue of the 2010 Equality Act. This level of disability is fairly consistent across the local geography with a low of 19.6% in Northenden and 23.7% in Newall Green. On this measurement of disability, Wythenshawe has a level of disability above Manchester, Greater Manchester and the national average for England and Wales. In total 39.6% of households in Wythenshawe contain at least one person with a disability recognised by the Equality Act.

Pulling together the information from across the evidence base it is clear that Public Health is a major public policy issue across the Wythenshawe area, but then the same is true across the geography of Greater Manchester, which is a disproportionately deprived area when compared to the rest of England. On some measures such as the self-reporting of poor health the area does not produce statistics which suggest a poor performance in relation to the national average, however, an objective measurement of the rate of disability does show a significant divergence from national scores. The big messages in this policy area are generated by the IMD measurement for health and disability. This more sophisticated indicator shows very poor health outcomes. The severity of the scores and their extensive distribution across Wythenshawe is a significant driver of the overall deprivation scores for area. These poor health outcomes are compounded by issues relating to food and fuel poverty.

The Expectations of the Regulator of Social Housing of Registered providers:

New Consumer Regulation & Code of Practice

- As part of the new proposed consumer standards regulations, the Tenancy Standard sets requirements for the fair allocation and letting of homes and for how those tenancies are managed and ended by landlords.
- The proposed standard recognises the importance of effective allocations schemes for providing fair access to those in need of social housing, specifically the need for joint working between local authorities and housing associations to ensure that social housing is being allocated efficiently.
- There are a number of specific expectations in the proposed new standard and these include:
 - Proposing clearer expectations of landlords that they allocate adapted and purpose-built homes to those that need them where possible.
 - Supporting the local authorities' strategic housing functions by assisting them to fulfil their duties to meet identified local housing need, as well as their homelessness duties, and through meeting obligations in nominations agreements.
 - Addressing under occupation and overcrowding in their homes. These services should be focused on the needs of tenants.
 - Providing a fair, reasonable, simple and accessible appeals process for allocation decisions.
 - Taking action and publicising our approach to preventing and tackling tenancy fraud.

WCHG Board & Committee response:

An Annual Review of Lettings for 2022/23 in accordance with the current WCHG Allocations Policy was presented to the Customer Experience (CX) Committee on the 7th November 2023. The CX committee commented as follows:

- It would like to see more done around rightsizing for existing WCHG tenants in addition to the scheme we operate with MCC that results in the vacancy going to a homeless family nomination. It is felt a campaign for freeing up 3 and 4 bedroom houses to solve some of the existing tenant issues would be a positive approach.
- WCHG needs to do more alongside Manchester Move to highlight the wait times and current rehousing situation through effective communication to existing tenants and applicants waiting for rehousing.

WCHG & Rightsizing & our approach moving forward:

In 2022/23 Joint work with the Manchester City Council, Rightsizing Officer has led to WCHG freeing up 7 large family homes throughout the year for homeless families with tenants benefiting from a cash incentive, plus support with their removal costs. This includes

- 2 x 4 bed parlour house
- 3 x 4 bed house
- 2 x 3 bed house

WCHG have also rehoused a further 20 applicants wishing to downsize due to under occupation directly via Manchester Move outside of the Rightsizing project.

Of these 20, 10 were WCHG tenants who have downsized from family type accommodation to non-family type accommodation within our stock. As WCHG have been working directly with our own tenants these 10 family type properties have since been re-let via Manchester Move to applicants in housing need, rather than a direct let via homeless

For 2023/24, it is proposed that WCHG consider adopting a similar approach to the MCC Rightsizing model and offer a cash incentive and support with furnishings and removal costs etc. to those tenants rehoused from larger family type accommodation into newly acquired and/or new build older persons type accommodation but accommodation which has a high provision of one bedroom properties and is not traditional sheltered housing as feedback from tenants is that they would like to live in a scheme with likeminded and age related neighbours but still want to remain independent and therefore not take up sheltered housing or Extra care support. For those tenants that do need this additional support – the WCHG sheltered housing and Extra care provision is being promoted to them.

If planning consent is given for the scheme and the requested number of one bedroom properties, WCHG will work with Manchester City Council and the Housing Access Board (HAB) to establish a local lettings policy for this scheme to enable the allocation specifically to existing WCHG tenants and over 55s who meet the rightsizing criteria.

The cost of which is anticipated to be the region of £45k to £60k if we were to rehouse 15/20 households in the 12-month period. This would represent a significant increase in the budget for rightsizing initiatives.

Request :

That Planning approve the requested number of one bedroom properties on the site/scheme to enable the rightsizing of larger homes which will then be made available to allocating to address the increasing demand for larger family accommodation.