The Whiteley Homes Trust

Decant Policy

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July 2026	**Director of Operations**	**New Policy**	**RECC**	**6/8/26**	**1.0**

Introduction

At The Whiteley Homes Trust, known throughout this policy as the Trust, we're committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and transparent environment for everyone who lives, works and is associated with us.

This policy sets out how the Trust will manage decants.

We believe that transparency builds trust, so this document uses language that reflects the many roles and relationships within our community. Whether you are an employee, resident, volunteer, contractor, supplier, or third-party partner, this policy aims to guide and inform you in a way that's accessible, respectful, and representative.

Through clarity and openness, we aim to foster understanding, accountability, and confidence across our workforce and wider community.

Scope of Applicability

This policy applies to residents living in properties owned by the Trust, including beneficiaries, tenants in our private let homes and their households. Throughout this policy, these groups are referred to collectively as "residents" for clarity and ease of reference.

It does not apply to residents who live in properties within Whiteley Village that are let or sold by third parties.

The Trust is committed to communicating with openness and transparency. By clearly outlining who is covered by our policies, we aim to foster understanding, accountability, and trust within our diverse community.

Definitions

A **decant** is the temporary or permanent move of a resident from their home because it is not safe, reasonable or practical for them to remain there. This may be because of emergency damage, major repairs, planned improvement works, health and safety concerns, redevelopment, or other circumstances where the Trust must protect residents and maintain safe homes.

A **temporary decant** means the resident is expected to return to their existing home once the issue has been resolved.

A **permanent decant** means the resident will not return to their existing home and will be rehoused in another suitable home.

Main home is the resident's existing home that is not safe, reasonable or practical for them to currently live in. In the case of a temporary decant the resident will return to this home.

Temporary accommodation is the alternative short-term accommodation provided while their main home is not safe, reasonable or practical for them to live in.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a fair, transparent and consistent framework for managing decants. It aims to:

- Protect residents' health, safety and wellbeing where their main home cannot reasonably be occupied
- Ensure residents are treated fairly, consistently and with dignity during any move
- Set out how temporary and permanent decants will be assessed, approved and managed
- Provide clear information about communication, support, alternative accommodation and reasonable costs
- Ensure compliance with legal, regulatory, safeguarding, equality and health and safety requirements

1. Policy

The Trust will manage decants in a way that is safe, timely, compassionate and proportionate. Residents will only be asked to move where it is necessary to protect health and safety, complete essential works, respond to an emergency, comply with legal requirements, or deliver planned works that cannot reasonably be undertaken while the resident remains in occupation.

1.1 Policy Principles

- Resident safety, dignity and wellbeing will be central to every decant decision
- Residents will be given clear information about why a move is needed, how long it is expected to last, what support is available and when they may return
- Each resident's needs, vulnerabilities, household circumstances, pets, support networks and reasonable adjustment requirements will be considered
- Temporary accommodation will be suitable, safe and proportionate to the expected length and nature of the decant, as far as reasonably practicable
- The Trust will aim to ensure residents are not financially disadvantaged by a decant that is required by the Trust
- Accurate records will be kept supporting decisions, resident communication, costs, risk assessments and learning

1.2 Legal and Regulatory Framework

The Trust will comply with all relevant legislation, regulation and contractual requirements that apply to decants in England. This includes, where applicable, the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018, the Housing Act 1985, the Housing Act 1996, the Equality Act 2010, the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards, the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and relevant statutory compensation provisions relating to home loss and disturbance payments.

1.3 When a Decant May Be Required

A decant may be required where a resident's home is unsafe, uninhabitable, unsuitable for occupation during works, or where remaining in the main home would create an unreasonable risk or disruption. This may include fire, flood, structural issues, severe damp or mould, loss of essential services, major repairs, compliance works, planned improvement works, redevelopment, pest infestation, or other serious health and safety concerns.

The need for a decant will be assessed by the Head of Housing and Head of Property & Compliance and authorised by a member of the Leadership Team. The Trust will consider whether the works can be safely completed while the resident remains in their home, whether temporary arrangements can reduce disruption, and whether a move is necessary and proportionate.

Where an emergency decant is required, the Trust will act quickly to make the resident safe and provide immediate advice and support. Emergency accommodation may be short term and may need to be reviewed once the immediate risk has passed.

Where a planned decant is required, the Trust will give as much notice as reasonably possible, explain the reason for the move, set out the expected timescale and agree practical arrangements with the resident before the move takes place.

The Trust will carry out a needs assessment before a planned decant and as soon as reasonably possible after an emergency decant. This will consider mobility, care and support needs, medical equipment, communication needs, pets, transport, access to family or support networks, safeguarding concerns and any reasonable adjustments.

The Trust will identify a single point of contact where appropriate, so the resident knows who to speak to about the decant, the works, accommodation, costs, belongings and return arrangements. This is usually the Head of Housing.

Examples of decant options may include:

- A suitable vacant Trust property where available
- Temporary accommodation arranged through a partner organisation or local authority where appropriate
- Hotel or serviced accommodation for short emergency stays
- Staying with family or friends, where the resident chooses this and it is safe and suitable
- A permanent move to another suitable home where return is not possible or is not reasonable

The Trust will consider suitability on a case-by-case basis. This will include location, accessibility, safety, household size, care and support needs, duration of the stay, affordability, transport and the resident's individual circumstances.

Residents will be expected to cooperate reasonably with decant arrangements, provide information needed for the needs assessment, allow access for inspections and works, and follow reasonable rules linked to temporary accommodation.

1.4 Temporary Decants

Temporary decants will normally last only for the period needed to complete works, make the home safe, or resolve the issue that made the decant necessary. The resident will usually remain responsible for their existing occupancy agreement at their main home unless the Trust confirms otherwise in writing. Residents will continue to pay all charges for their principal home. The Trust will not charge the resident for the temporary accommodation.

The Trust will keep the resident updated on progress and any changes to the expected return date. Before the resident returns, the Trust will confirm that the home is safe and suitable for occupation.

1.5 Permanent Decants

Where it is not possible or reasonable for a resident to return to their main home, the Trust may require or agree a permanent decant. This may apply where a home is to be demolished, redeveloped, substantially remodelled, permanently withdrawn from use, or where works or safety concerns mean return is not appropriate.

1.6 Payments, Costs and Financial Support

The Trust will aim to ensure residents are not financially disadvantaged where a decant is necessary. Reasonable costs may include removals, storage, redirection of post, utility disconnection and reconnection, additional travel costs, temporary accommodation costs, and other reasonable expenses agreed in advance.

- **Temporary decants** – reasonable disturbance costs may be paid or arranged by the Trust where the move is required by the Trust
- **Permanent decants** – statutory home loss and disturbance payments will be considered where the resident meets the eligibility criteria (see the Trust's Compensation Policy)
- **Emergency decants** – immediate accommodation and essential support will be prioritised, with costs reviewed once the emergency position is clear
- **Resident choice** – where a resident chooses an option that costs more than a suitable alternative offered by the Trust, the Trust may limit its contribution to the reasonable cost of the suitable alternative

1.7 Access

During a temporary decant the resident will not have access to their main home. If a resident needs access, a supervised visit must be arranged through the Trust to ensure health and safety requirements are met while works are being carried out.

The Trust will retain keys for the unoccupied property and will provide access for contractors to carry out works and inspections.

1.8 Belongings

During a decant, a resident may choose to leave belongings and furniture in their main home. If this is not possible the Trust will arrange and pay for appropriate storage facilities and any removals.

The Trust will take responsibility for items of furniture left in the home or in storage and take all reasonable endeavours to protect these. We recommend residents take any individual items with high monetary or sentimental value with them to their temporary accommodation as these may be difficult to replace if damaged or lost. Residents should pack up other belongings that may be at risk of damage during the

works and safely store them in rooms which do not require work.

1.9 Returning to the Home

Following a temporary decant, a resident will return to their main home when the works have been completed.

Before a resident returns to their main home, an inspection and relevant health and safety checks will be carried out to ensure the property is fit for occupation. Any snagging issues will be communicated to the resident with a clear plan of action and timescales for resolution.

The Trust will arrange and pay for any reasonable costs incurred, including removals, decoration and reconnection of utilities and other services if applicable.

2. Communication, Consultation and Resident Support

The Trust will provide clear, timely and accessible information before, during and after a decant through the named point of contact. Residents will be told why the move is needed, what options are available, the expected timescale, what belongings or services may be affected, what costs may be covered, and who to contact with questions.

Where a planned programme of works or redevelopment may lead to decants, the Trust will consult residents in a way that is proportionate to the scale and impact of the proposal. The Trust will consider feedback and explain how resident views have informed decisions where appropriate.

The Trust will provide a support plan where appropriate and conduct a needs assessment considering any protected characteristics or vulnerabilities. Additional support will be provided where residents are vulnerable or where the move creates particular risks. This may include involving family, advocates, carers, support providers or statutory agencies, subject to the resident's consent unless there is a safeguarding or legal reason to share information.

If a resident is staying with family and friends, the Trust will reassess the circumstances regularly to ensure the accommodation is still suitable, particularly if there has been a delay in the expected completion of works.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Trust will seek to manage decants safely, lawfully and with appropriate oversight. Key roles and responsibilities include:

- The **Board** has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Trust has appropriate governance arrangements for safe homes, resident wellbeing and compliance
- The **Finance, Audit and Risk Committee** (FARC) will provide scrutiny of financial controls, risk, insurance, value for money and significant decant-related expenditure

- The **Resident Experience and Community Committee** (RECC) will provide oversight of resident communication, consultation, equality impacts and learning from feedback or complaints
- The **Director of Finance, IT & People** is responsible for financial oversight, budget arrangements, payment controls and ensuring decant-related costs are properly recorded
- The **Director of Operations** is responsible for ensuring the decant process is resident-focused, coordinated, clearly communicated and supported by appropriate operational procedures
- The **Head of Property & Compliance** is responsible for assessing property condition, health and safety risks, works requirements, contractor arrangements and whether a home is safe to occupy or return to
- The **Head of Housing** is responsible for communication with the resident, assessing residents' needs and any vulnerabilities and providing appropriate support before, during and after the decant

4. Resident Queries, Refusals and Complaints

Residents may ask the Trust for an explanation of a decant decision, the suitability of accommodation offered, expected timescales, support available or costs that may be covered. The Trust will respond clearly and within a reasonable timescale.

If a resident refuses a decant that the Trust considers necessary for health, safety or essential works, the Trust will explain the risks, consider the resident's reasons, review any reasonable adjustments, and seek to resolve concerns. Where necessary, the Trust may take legal or management action to protect residents, employees, contractors or property. Where a resident remains dissatisfied, they may use the Trust's complaints process as outlined in the Complaints Policy.

5. Monitoring, Records and Assurance

The Trust will maintain appropriate records to support decant decisions, including risk assessments, property inspections, needs assessments, accommodation options, resident communication, costs, approvals, complaints, safeguarding concerns and return arrangements. Decant cases, resident feedback, complaints, costs and timescales will be reviewed to identify learning and improvement. Records will be retained in line with the Trust's retention policy.

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if there are significant changes in legislation, regulation, case law, organisational structure or service delivery arrangements.

6. Equality, Diversity and Accessibility

The Trust will apply this policy fairly and consistently. Decant arrangements will take account of residents' individual circumstances, protected characteristics, vulnerabilities, care and support needs and reasonable adjustment requirements. Information will be provided in clear language and alternative formats where reasonably required.