

AP3.15 - WDC to clarify the relationship between vacant properties and the provision of affordable housing.

The Council has an Empty Property strategy which aims to bring long term vacant properties back into use – these tend to be properties vacant for more than 2 years. On the whole most properties come back into use within 6 months and are in private ownership. On average the Council brings about 10 units back into use every year, but there tends to be no net gain as other properties become void. The vacant properties also include empty properties managed by registered providers who will be proactively seeking to re-let properties. The Council works also with registered provider partners for those homes which are subject to long-term redevelopments, for example some of the former sheltered housing schemes.

Vacancies on the Council Tax Records relate to properties vacant for 6 months or more. Such vacancies can often be explained by short term issues such as probate or structural repairs being undertaken to properties. As such they are not genuinely long term vacant. Vacancies on these records are at a relatively low level and there is unlikely to be much scope for going much lower and clearly these relatively short term vacancies will fluctuate with market conditions which will vary over the plan period.

In conclusion there is no relationship between vacant properties and the provision of affordable housing.