

**MEDIA RELEASE 30.03.22**

## **New Pretty Vacant report asks - is Manchester Building 'The Wrong Housing'?**

Action on Empty Homes new report, 'Pretty Vacant Manchester'<sup>i</sup> reports on work to examine vacancy levels and housing policy in Manchester and asks questions about the City's 'hidden empties', dominant development model and the impact of Airbnb on access to housing. Includes discussion with city councillors, council officers, academics and campaigners.

**To download the Pretty Vacant Manchester report: [CLICK HERE](#)**

### **Key findings include:**

#### **Official numbers of empty homes for the City disguise much higher levels of housing vacancy:**

City of Manchester official data on long-term empty homes records over 2,000 long-term empty homes

An analysis of actual long-term vacancy data adds around 6,000 so-called 'second homes', not housing anyone and withdrawn from primary residential use by their owners on a long-term basis.

These are protected from council tax penalties imposed on owners and landlords keeping homes vacant.

Prior to the imposition of a tax penalty regime official levels of long-term vacancy in the City appear to have included around 5,000 of these so-called 'second homes', which were then re-classified.

#### **In all 1 in every 30 homes in the City of Manchester is not in residential use on a long-term basis**

In Salford this number is 1 in every 40. While across Greater Manchester the number is lower at 1 in 54.

#### **The impact of Airbnb sucking homes out of residential use is largely unrecorded by official data**

Researchers suggest that growth of 'whole home lettings' on Airbnb is sucking thousands of homes out of use across the City of Manchester intensifying the City's housing crisis as 13,000 people wait for social housing with 1,500 families placed in Temporary Accommodation.

Airbnb and similar platforms have shifted from a sharing economy model to an exploitative multi-property management model designed to maximise investor returns at the expense of local housing supply.

The high levels of 'second homes' in development hotspots such as the City of Manchester and Salford suggest some housing in this category may be used as leisure investment and let on short-let platforms including Airbnb but the unregulated nature of the sector makes this impossible to clarify second homes may be let on Airbnb but as the sector is unregulated it is likely that many Airbnbs may be misrecorded as primary residences.

#### **High development 'hotspots' such as central Manchester and Salford feature unusually high levels of second homes by regional and national standards**

In the City of Manchester official vacancy levels appear to sit at less than 1% but once unoccupied second homes are factored in this vacancy level rises to one in 30 - or 3.3%.

In Salford official long-term vacancy is recorded as just under 1% - however, when 'second homes', are factored in this level more than doubles to 2.5% - or one in every 40 homes out of residential use.

The high levels of 'second homes' in development hotspots such as the City of Manchester and Salford suggest some housing in this category, particularly newbuild apartments, may be used as leisure investments and let on short-let platforms including Airbnb.

#### **The report also questions the dominant development model in Manchester and discusses this with Gavin White City Councillor with responsibility for Housing policy**

**Cllr Gavin White** is quoted in the report as saying that the City Council needs to better explain its policies and: 'to improve its communication of what it was what trying to achieve in growth areas such as the city centre and 'Eastern Gateway'. In response to reported criticism of what the City administration under Richard Lees had achieved in relation to land deals with investors, including Middle East consortia, the Councillor noted that while the city can't be seen to be giving land away as some critics alleged, but that there might be wider strategic objectives at stake in relation to both transport and housing.'

**Commenting on the report's findings**, Will McMahon, Director of Action on Empty Homes, said "It is time we had a frank conversation about vacancy levels. We need to stop pretending that a quarter of a million second homes in England, over 10,000 of these in Greater Manchester, are really homes at all.

We also have to ask why so many homes are allowed to be sucked out of residential use into the short-let or Airbnb markets as purchased off-plan leisure investments. It is time we stopped counting these as contributions to housing supply. We need to stop building the wrong housing to end the housing crisis and address the falling numbers of social homes available to those in desperate housing need."

He added, "[The Campaign Against Empty Homes](#) is a cross-party coalition calling for action and involving community organisations, trade unions and homelessness projects, as well as members of many different political parties - we hope that everyone concerned about the intensifying housing crisis in Manchester and across the country will call on local politicians to adopt the policies in its Manifesto for the upcoming local elections. This includes action to combat both current levels of wasted empty homes and new housing policies which will reduce the built-in vacancy that is caused by our current flawed investor-led development model. It is time we built homes to meet local need, not to maximise investor returns at the expense of local homeless families."

**For a detailed look at the figures behind our analysis of official vacancy data in Greater Manchester** [CLICK HERE](#)

**For a look at data on empty and second homes collected by every local council in England** [CLICK HERE](#)

The work leading to the report was supported by the Evan Cornish Foundation.

**Enquiries:** Chris Bailey on 07979 647 237 [chris.bailey@actiononemptyhomes.org](mailto:chris.bailey@actiononemptyhomes.org)

**Note to editors and data references:**

---

Action on Empty Homes is a national campaigning charity previously known as The Empty Homes Agency and provides the only independent analysis of official data on empty homes: see [www.actiononemptyhomes.org](http://www.actiononemptyhomes.org)

<sup>i</sup> **Report Download from website:** <https://www.actiononemptyhomes.org/News/our-pretty-vacant-manchester-report-asks-is-manchester-building-the-wrong-housing>

**Data sources:**

**Dept of Levelling Up Housing and Communities, Council Taxbase data collection:**  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/council-taxbase-statistics>

**Dept of Levelling Up Housing and Communities, Council Taxbase 2021:** Official Statistics: Council Taxbase 2021 in England:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/council-taxbase-2021-in-england>

**Dept of Levelling Up Housing and Communities, Council Taxbase 2021:** Local Authority Level Data  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1059478/Local\\_Authorities\\_Council\\_Taxbase\\_2021\\_Drop\\_down\\_v3.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1059478/Local_Authorities_Council_Taxbase_2021_Drop_down_v3.xlsx)

**AirDNA, commercial data on short lets and Airbnb:** <https://www.airdna.co/>