

# Sustainability Strategy

2023 - 2025



Company registration number: 04015633  
Registered provider number: L4389  
Registered charity number: 1108779  
Registered office: 100 Hatherton Street, Walsall WS1 1AB

# Executive summary

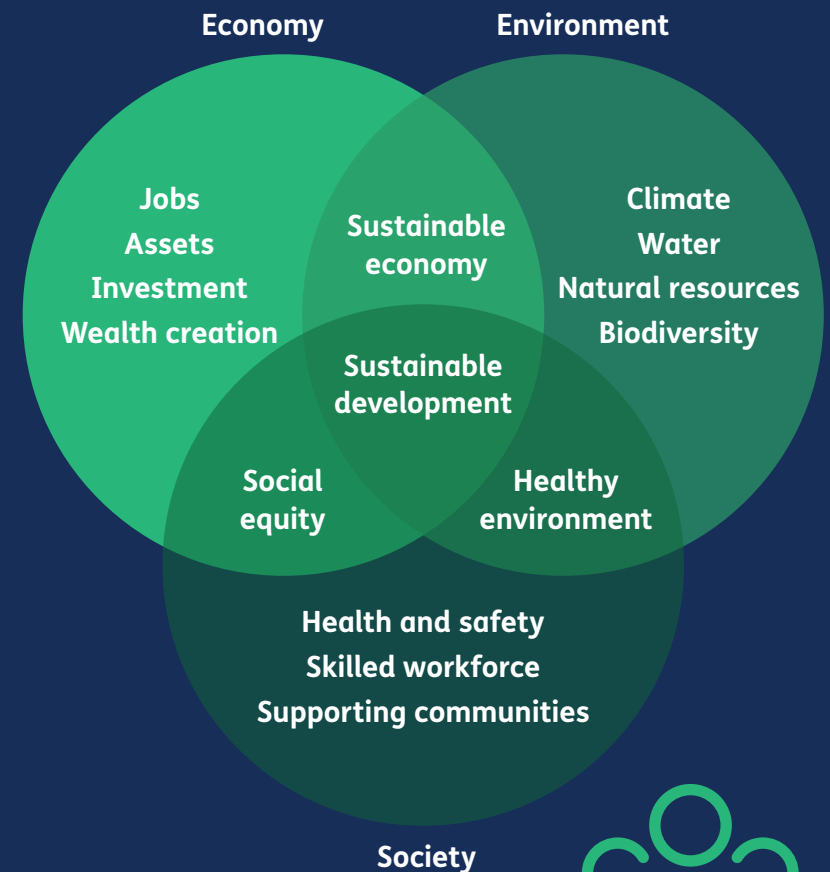
As a social landlord we believe that the right thing for the planet is the right thing for our customers and our communities. We are at the start of our journey to embed sustainability a core guiding principal for how we operate.

For whg sustainability is much wider than the protection of the environment, it is about enabling communities to flourish and endure, whether it be reducing fuel poverty or achieving net zero carbon by 2050. Through everything we do, the needs of each customer will always come first.

This strategy will enable us to create sustainable communities that support customers in their homes – homes which are happy, healthy, long-lasting and based in thriving communities.

To deliver this we have given careful consideration of the environmental, social and governance elements we plan to invest in. This strategy is aligned with, and supports delivery of, our other key business strategies.

## The three pillars of sustainable development



# Strategic context

This strategy responds to the increasing number of external drivers, as well as the social and ethical drivers that are the foundations of whg. A total of 39% of global greenhouse gas emissions come from the built environment and reducing our carbon emissions to net zero is a high priority moving forward.

This strategy brings together the environment, social and governance areas of whg in a cohesive way that embeds sustainability across everything we do.



- **Deliver high quality homes and services for our customers**  
Our whg design brief will continue to inform our new developments using the fabric first approach and create healthy and happy homes for customers.
- **Promote health and prosperity where we can make a difference**  
We will work to create more sustainable communities alongside decarbonising our housing stock. We want to enable customers by supporting and encouraging engagement with the environment to promote active and healthy lifestyles.
- **We are now a carbon literate organisation where colleagues and customers feel empowered to make change.**  
This ensures everyone at whg knows how to play their part in reaching net zero.
- **Deliver a strong business fit for today and prepared for tomorrow**  
The earlier we plan for climate change the more our customers and colleagues can thrive. This is now on the strategic risk register.



# Strategic context (cont.)

We have aligned our Sustainability Strategy with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.”

Aligning our strategy to the following 10 SDGs allows us to demonstrate how our business can help to advance sustainable development, both by minimising negative impacts and maximising positive impacts on people and the planet.

The SDGs were set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly. They address the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice.



We have chosen the ten most relevant goals to whg.





“Our life is frittered away by detail...  
Simplify, simplify, simplify! Simplicity  
of life and elevation of purpose.”

- Henry Thoreau

# Aim 1

## Transform our places to be fit for the future

### Actions needed to achieve this aim:

- **Climate change mitigation and energy efficiency**

Investing in the decarbonisation of our stock, new developments and operational practices, to reduce our contribution to green-house gas emissions, while also helping customers to reduce their energy use.

- **Biodiversity**





Designing and managing green space and other green features to enhance biodiversity and to provide climate change adaptation and mitigation solutions.

- **Circular economy**

Considering reuse and recycled content in our buildings, goods and services to ensure whole life costing, and supporting our customers to access reuse and recycling schemes.



# Aim 1: Action plan

Theme	SDG mapping	Material issue	Objective
Transform our places to be fit for the future		Climate change mitigation and energy efficiency	Review of the decarbonisation roadmap
			Sign off and adopt decarbonisation roadmap and action plan
		Circular economy	Develop and implement minimum circular economy standards in the design and construction process
			Working with local partners, explore introduction of re-use schemes such as library of things to customers, consider the set up of furniture re-use project
			Organise activities and create educational materials to promote re-use and recycling of resources and increase awareness
	 	Fire risk assessment	Understanding the potential of a fire risk to all assets and delivering a comprehensive risk assessment framework to mitigate any such occurrence

# Aim 1: Action plan

Theme	SDG mapping	Material issue	Objective
Transform our places to be fit for the future		Biodiversity	<p>Develop an open spaces strategy addressing both development and existing stock, covering biodiversity enhancement, open spaces access and engagement of local residents with nature. Recognise affordability for customers and commit to not increasing service charges</p> <p>Ensure new developments come with a biodiversity net gain and investigate opportunities to enhance biodiversity in the existing stock</p>
	 	Climate change adaptation and resilience	Undertake physical climate change risk resilience and adaptation modelling and assessment for all new developments and the high risk existing stock, e.g. flooding, subsidence
	 	Sustainable building design	Develop a sustainable design brief to ensure all new homes meet minimum design requirements factoring in passive design principles, low / zero energy technologies, specification of reduced water sanitary ware, rainwater / grey water opportunities, etc. to create healthy and efficient homes

# Aim 1: Action plan

Theme	SDG mapping	Material issue	Objective
Transform our places to be fit for the future		Waste management	Work together with and lobby local authority partners to influence and improve waste management practices and recycling services
			Engage local partners to promote awareness among customers on how to treat the different waste streams
			Set space and accessibility to all types of bins for all people within the minimum design brief
	 	Renewable energy	Procure 100% renewable electricity (REGO certification)
			Explore opportunities to use renewable / low energy technologies in all existing and new homes. Link with the minimum requirements of the sustainable design brief
		Begin to report emissions associated with embodied carbon in line with recognised methodology (i.e. one click LCA)	Review the already commenced embodied carbon assessment of traditional masonry, steel and timber frame, so as to inform assessments on future construction types

# Aim 2

## Inspire our people and influence our communities

### Actions needed to achieve this aim:

- **Community and customer engagement**





Always putting the community and customers at the forefront of our work and engaging with them on sustainability.

- **Local skills and employment**

Using our successful apprenticeship scheme to continue to create self-grown local talent and employment opportunities for customers in the green retrofit economy. Committing to becoming a carbon literate organisation supporting our colleagues and customers on their, and our, journey to net zero.



## Aim 2: Action plan

Theme	SDG mapping	Material issue	Objective
Inspire our people and influence our communities		Community and tenant engagement	Establish a customer sustainability forum
			Introduce a customer sustainability ambassadors scheme
		Anti-social behaviour (ASB) and designing out crime	Strengthen our approach to ASB to include broader training and engagement for colleagues to ensure knowledge and empowerment to deliver change
			Expand the housing model for place already in use to support customer satisfaction
	 	Placemaking and social infrastructure	Integrating and utilising outdoor green spaces and dedicated areas across residential developments to promote health and wellbeing / exercise for customers. Review current outdoor green space first
			Organise social events to promote engagement and inclusion

## Aim 2: Action plan

Theme	SDG mapping	Material issue	Objective
Inspire our people and influence our communities	 	Local skills and employment	Invest in local communities via educating our people, strengthening their skills and increase employability
	 	Building health and wellbeing	<p>Incorporate health and wellbeing minimum requirement into sustainable design brief e.g. minimum daylight requirements</p> <p>Conduct a high level strategic WELL and Fitwel certification gap analysis and determine applicability and appropriateness</p>
		Health and safety	Continue to implement a rigorous health and safety policy to ensure all homes provide a safe environment for customers with a continuous review by the Audit and Assurance Committee
		Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)	Maintaining coverage on EDI by the Governance and Remuneration Committee to ensure promotion both within the organisation and wider portfolio

# Aim 3

## Incorporating sustainability standards and strengthening regulatory compliance

### Actions needed to achieve this aim:

- **Regulatory compliance**

Ensuring our homes and operations meet all regulatory requirements and support the government's sustainability agenda.

- **Sustainable procurement**

Ensuring we put an appropriate framework in place to embed sustainable considerations into our supply chain, from contract to contractor management.

- **Sustainable finance**



Embedding sustainability considerations into finance decision making.




## Aim 3: Action plan

Theme	SDG mapping	Material issue	Objective
Incorporating sustainability standards and strengthening regulatory compliance		Regulatory compliance	Review of sustainability regulation to be formally added under the regulatory committee
	 	Sustainable finance	<p>Identify environmental, social and governance (ESG) metrics used in assessing finance from our investors and ensure we meet all requirements e.g. annual investor survey on sustainability</p> <p>Form and introduce a sustainable finance framework i.e. actively seek investment from like minded investors who share sustainability priorities with whg</p>
		Sustainable procurement	Develop a group wide procurement strategy to include sustainability considerations and a group wide sustainable procurement policy
		Benchmarks and building certifications	Explore certifications e.g. Home Quality Mark (HQM) assessment opportunities and establishing an appropriate minimum target to be achieved

## Aim 3: Action plan

Theme	SDG mapping	Material issue	Objective
Incorporating sustainability standards and strengthening regulatory compliance		Disclosure and transparency	Annually disclose our sustainability performance including reporting on scope 1 and 2 emissions as a minimum
		Alignment to (ESG) standards	Align ESG approach to the 'good economy sustainability reporting standard for social housing'



“The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.”

- Robert Swan



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