

Habitat for Humanity GB Empty Spaces to Homes Partnerships

How you can partner with Habitat for Humanity GB to transform vacant non-residential buildings into safe, decent and affordable homes.



Partnering with Habitat for Humanity GB

According to research published by Habitat for Humanity GB in 2025, there are over 175,000 non-residential buildings owned by local authorities or private owners that are sitting empty, with the potential to create more than 500,000 desperately needed homes.

With over 131,000 households living in temporary accommodation in England alone, including more than 169,000 children, Habitat for Humanity GB seeks to address the housing crisis by transforming empty buildings into safe, decent, affordable homes.

This guide sets out the ways in which we can partner with local authorities, charities, community groups and other housing partners to find, renovate and repurpose vacant buildings across Great Britain to support households facing housing insecurity.

We need more homes, particularly social and affordable ones. Empty non-residential buildings, such as commercial units, retail spaces, former offices, hotels or community centres, are an underappreciated part of the answer, often seen as too difficult or expensive to transform. Habitat for Humanity GB are experienced in turning vacant buildings into safe, decent and affordable homes that meet the needs of local residents, through community engagement, construction, consultancy, funding, stakeholder management and advocacy.

Converting empty buildings benefits:

- People in housing need - a good home is the basis for a good life. We need rapid and effective solutions to avoid the harm to health, education and livelihoods that comes with inappropriate and insecure housing
- The local area – bringing derelict sites back into use and revitalising town centres
- The environment – reducing waste, saving the embodied carbon that constitutes 20-50% of a building's lifetime emissions, and reduces the environmental impact of construction
- The public purse – reducing temporary accommodation and asset maintenance costs, freeing up funds for public services

We're interested in working with partners to deliver housing and community initiatives across Great Britain. If you have a vacant building or would like support from us to deliver an Empty Spaces to Homes project, take a look at our selection of partnership models below and contact us to discuss how we can help.

Contact us at es2h@habitatforhumanity.co.uk to share your project concept, outlining which partnership model(s) you're interested in exploring. You'll find these on pages 5-10.

How we deliver ES2H projects

Habitat for Humanity GB brings experience in delivering high-quality ES2H retrofit projects to support partners across GB, through providing community engagement, construction, funding or guiding partners through the process of converting empty buildings into affordable housing. We look at all aspects of project delivery to help get projects started all the way through to successful completion. Here's what we can offer:

Project Management

The economic, social, political and environmental case for converting empty buildings into homes is clear, but moving complicated sites forward at pace and taking local stakeholders with you can be challenging. We can work with you to design the project, develop a robust project plan and ensure the project meets its objectives.

Community engagement

Building strong partnerships with residents and the local community is crucial when implementing an empty space project. We can consult with local communities and partners to understand the need and design the housing best suited to the community. We can also host volunteering, awareness raising and other engagement activities.

Funding

Securing funding can be a major blocker to successful conversion projects. We can assess eligibility to determine which funding options may be available to help finance a project, such as grants and loans.

Construction management

We're experienced in delivering every stage of a construction project from a client brief through to feasibility and surveying, planning, construction, on site management and quality control. We also work closely with local contractors to maximise the retention of economic value and skill development.

Monitoring & Evaluation

We gather in depth data to demonstrate the impact of the project to the community and investors, such as surveying tenants and communities and impact assessments with partner agencies. We also measure carbon emissions using a lifecycle carbon assessment (LCA) tool, to support the incorporation of environmental data into decision making processes when considering the future use of a building and its design.

Advocacy

We aim to demonstrate to policymakers the value of converting empty buildings and advocate for policy change to make ES2H projects easier to carry out in future, helping it to turn into everyday practice. Through our coalition, media articles, campaigns, research and roundtables, we can showcase the project to encourage uptake of the model and share best practice.

Useful information for partners

To ensure that we are aligned, we look for opportunities that can deliver the following:



Projects that repurpose vacant non-residential buildings into housing. This could be a commercial unit, retail unit, hotel, community centre, post office or any other type of non-residential space.



Housing that will directly support vulnerable individuals and families at risk of homelessness or facing housing precarity and well connected to vital community infrastructure.



A clear role for Habitat for Humanity GB to play within the project, such as community engagement, project management, construction or advocacy, for example. We won't typically provide funding alone.



A building you will either own or lease for a minimum of 10 years to ensure that it serves vulnerable tenants long-term. We will be involved in the transformation of the building, but don't wish to own buildings ourselves or cover the costs of purchasing the building.



The opportunity to increase our impact across Great Britain. The type of support we provide may vary depending on location, but we can talk through the various options with you to see what's possible.



Strong partnerships, with charities, community groups, housing associations or local authorities, who share our commitment to support vulnerable communities.



Financially viable, where the cost of work would not exceed the cost of purchasing housing locally.

Interested in partnering with Habitat for Humanity outside of Great Britain? We're based in more than 70 countries worldwide - find out more [here](#).

What is the process of partnering with us?

Initial project scoping

Partner chooses their most suitable partnership model(s). We'll arrange a meeting with you to discuss the project concept, the building(s) you think would be suitable and how we can support you.



Evaluation

We'll gather more information about the building and carry out an assessment to determine whether we can move forward. We'll also arrange for an in-person visit to the site.



Agreement

If we agree to move forward, we'll scope out each partners' role and, if necessary, apply for funding. All partners will also sign an MOU.



Secure site

Take the necessary steps to get the site ready for construction, ensuring the sale or lease has gone through, and the relevant teams are in place.



Technical

Carry out the agreed project management, community engagement and construction activities.



Completion

Tenants move in, followed by monitoring and evaluation and case-studies to capture impact and learning.

Partnership models

This section outlines the different partnership models that Habitat for Humanity Great Britain offer. Each model includes different levels of technical support and funding, so please read through the criteria to see which one(s) might apply to your specific project.

1. Habitat for Humanity Charity contractor and consultancy
2. Habitat for Humanity Technical support and recourse to public funds
3. Habitat for Humanity Technical support and philanthropic funding
4. Habitat for Humanity Investment Fund*
5. Housing Fund*

- This model is currently under exploration and is expected to launch soon.

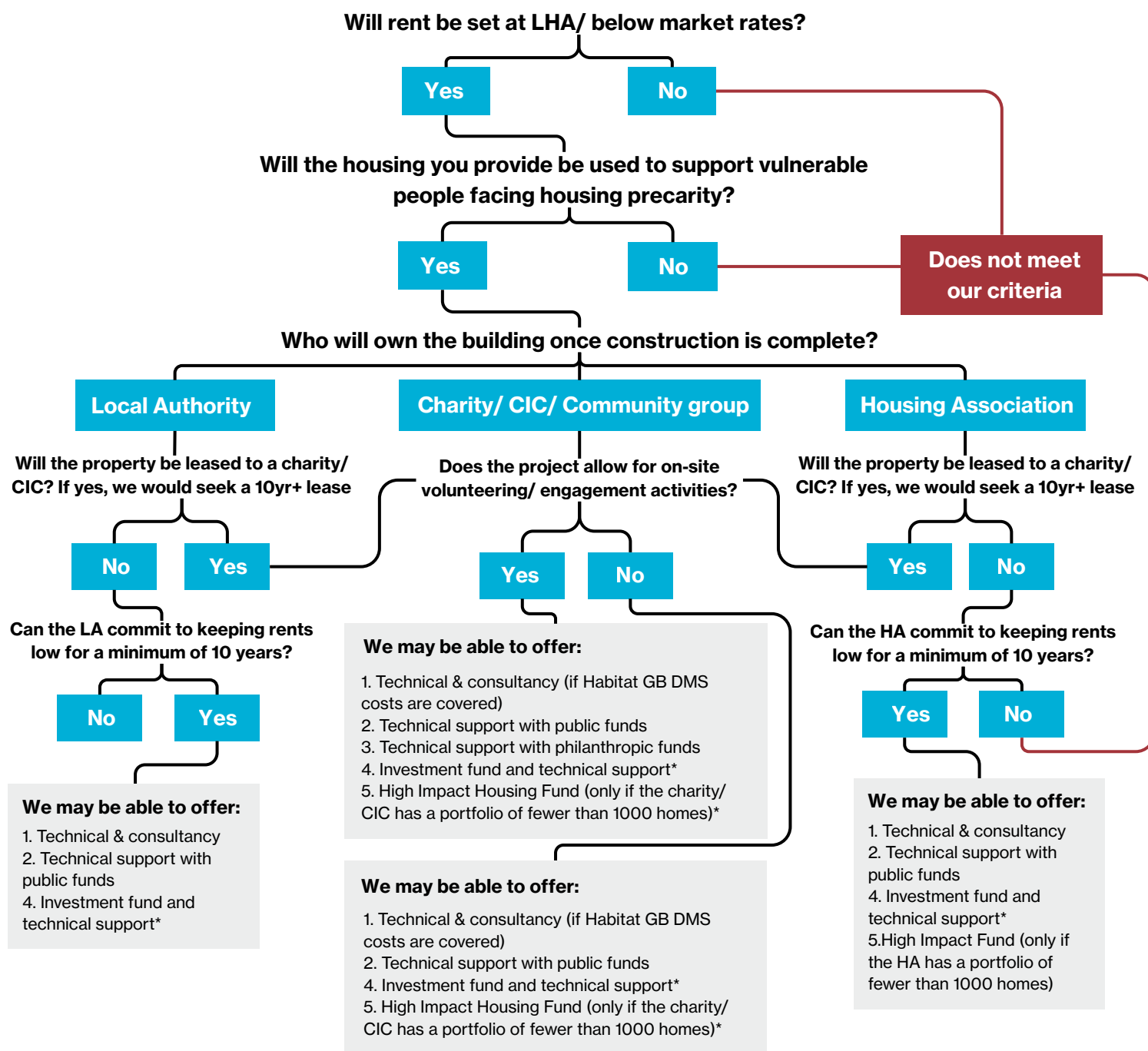
We're here to support you through the process of turning an empty building into affordable housing. Whether you have an empty building on your hands that you'd like to be put to better use, just want some general advice to help get things moving or have a fully formed project idea, we can provide support and project management for a range of projects that align with our mission.

You can find out more about the specific support we provide on page 2 of this guide.

Selecting a partnership model

We've created a tool to help you select which partnership model(s) might be suitable for your project based on ownership, tenant group and the type of support needed. Test it out below.

Please note that this tool is designed to act as a guide and does not guarantee that the selected partnership models will be possible.



**If the project meets the required financing terms outlined in the Investment fund/ Impact Fund criteria*

Interested in partnering with us?

We're always open to new partnership opportunities to help us deliver housing and communities projects across Great Britain. Contact us at es2h@habitatforhumanity.co.uk to share your project concept, outlining which of the five the partnership model(s) you're interested in exploring.

1. Habitat for Humanity GB

Charity contractor and consultancy

Habitat for Humanity GB has a long history of working with charities, community groups and faith groups to support their construction and house build projects. Our charity contractor and consultancy model sees us provide high value, lower cost options to support partners throughout the project design, community engagement and construction cycle (this can include project management, primary contractors, architects, and planning consultants).

Funding	With this model, Habitat for Humanity will deliver paid-for high value, low cost project management and technical support to ES2H projects. We do not provide funding or gift in kind in this model.
Support offered	Any technical support or guidance required ranging from end-to-end construction, to community engagement and consultancy.
Cohort demographic	We have a mission to support communities who are vulnerable to housing precarity, at risk of homelessness or would struggle to pay market-rate rent.
Geographic location	There are no geographic limitations to projects where our technical support is funded, but any travel expenses will need to be included in budgets.
Timeline	Any projects which are supported through paid technical support will be subject to the timeline of the project partner and any funders, or planning granters.
Ownership structure	We can work with any type of owner looking to create affordable social housing for vulnerable communities within the scope of this model .
Opportunities for volunteering and engagement	Volunteering and engagement activities can be part of your project if required.
Advocacy and research objectives	We value projects that support our advocacy, research and policy influence efforts.
Evaluation, qualitative and quantitative data gathering	We look to make robust evaluations of all of our ES2H projects, to contribute to the body of evidence which showcases the positive social, environmental, and economic impact of this model. We will incorporate evaluation, impact measurement and data management activities into all technical support projects.

2. Habitat for Humanity Technical support and public funding

Habitat for Humanity GB can use our long history of working with charities, community groups and faith groups to support construction and house build projects. Our technical support and public funds model sees us provide high value, lower cost options to support partners throughout the project design, community engagement and construction cycle (this can include project management, primary contractors, architects, and planning consultants), alongside working with project partner to secure Government funding pots (National, Regional, Local, other).

Funding	Within this model, we can explore and/ or apply for funding. Rents must be set at affordable rates and construction costs kept low, whilst maintaining quality, to ensure overall feasibility and repayment.
Support offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support with exploring available funds and writing proposals • Project management, community engagement and partnership building • Technical support and construction <p>Please note that we cannot provide funding alone. There must be a direct technical or support role for Habitat for Humanity GB to play within the project.</p>
Cohort demographic	We have a mission to support communities who are vulnerable to housing precarity, at risk of homelessness or low-income households in line with deprivation national standards.
Geographic location	Location will be tied to the specific funding being sought.
Timeline	Projects to be delivered within 2 years.
Ownership structure	The building may be owned by a Local Authority, Housing Association, Community Land Trust, private landlord or charity.
Opportunities for volunteering and engagement	Volunteering and engagement activities do not have to take place, but we can explore this if partner(s) or the local community would find this valuable.
Advocacy and research objectives	We value projects that support our advocacy, demonstrability and local political efforts.
Evaluation, qualitative and quantitative data gathering	We look to make robust evaluations of all of our ES2H projects, to contribute to the body of evidence which showcases the positive social, environmental, and economic impact of this model. We will incorporate evaluation, impact measurement and data management activities into all technical support projects.

3. Habitat for Humanity Technical support and philanthropic funding

Habitat for Humanity GB work closely with partners and donors who support our Empty Spaces to Homes programme, as they recognise the social, environmental and economic impact of delivering affordable housing for vulnerable groups. Our technical support and philanthropic funding model sees us provide high value, lower cost support throughout the project design, community engagement and construction cycle (this can include project management, primary contractors, architects, and planning consultants), alongside connecting the project to philanthropic donors.

Funding	The level of funding available will depend upon the property being renovated. Rents must align with LHA rates to be deemed affordable.
Support offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Philanthropic funding• Technical support (construction and Project management)• Community engagement Please note that we cannot provide funding alone. There must be a direct role for Habitat for Humanity to play within the project.
Cohort demographic	Vulnerable cohorts only, for example women fleeing domestic abuse or trafficking, young people leaving care.
Geographic location	Ideally large urban conurbations proximate to offices/employment hubs.
Timeline	Depends upon the size of the renovation project.
Ownership structure	The building must be owned by a local community group or charity. This excludes Housing Associations and Local Authorities (unless the LA provide a long-lease to a charity/ community group e.g. 10+ years).
Opportunities for volunteering and engagement	Habitat for Humanity GB will require all projects within this model to allow for volunteering and engagement opportunities, such as on-site unskilled activities.
Advocacy and research objectives	Habitat for Humanity GB will only partner on projects that align with our ES2H objectives.
Evaluation, qualitative and quantitative data gathering	We look to make robust evaluations of all of our ES2H projects, to contribute to the body of evidence which showcases the positive social, environmental, and economic impact of this model. We will incorporate evaluation, impact measurement and data management activities into all technical support projects.

4. Habitat for Humanity Investment Fund

This model is currently under exploration and is expected to launch soon.

We recognise the challenges in delivering affordable housing for vulnerable groups, particularly in regards to securing funding. Within this model, Habitat for Humanity GB can combine our charity contractor offer of high value, lower cost support throughout the project design, community engagement and construction cycle (this can include project management, primary contractors, architects, and planning consultants), with repayable grant finance. The Investment Fund model can support large-scale projects to get off the ground, if they produce a yield of 5%.

Funding	To qualify for the investment fund, projects must deliver a yield of 5% of more over a period of 15+ years. Partners will be required to repay capital investment through rental income (in line with LHA or below-market rates).
Support offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repayable Investment/ debt financing• Technical support (construction and project management)• Community engagement• Access to gift in kind.
Cohort demographic	Individuals or families eligible social housing or with particular vulnerabilities.
Geographic location	No geographic restrictions.
Timeline	Flexible.
Ownership structure	The building may be owned by any housing provider, including Local Authorities or Housing Associations.
Opportunities for volunteering and engagement	Not required.
Advocacy and research objectives	Habitat for Humanity GB will only partner on projects that align with our ES2H objectives.
Evaluation, qualitative and quantitative data gathering	We look to make robust evaluations of all of our ES2H projects, to contribute to the body of evidence which showcases the positive social, environmental, and economic impact of this model. We will incorporate evaluation, impact measurement and data management activities into all technical support projects.

5. High Impact Housing Fund

This model is currently under exploration and is expected to launch soon.

We recognise the challenges in delivering affordable housing for vulnerable groups, particularly in regards to securing funding. Within this model, Habitat for Humanity GB can combine our charity contractor offer of high value, lower cost support throughout the project design, community engagement and construction cycle (this can include project management, primary contractors, architects, and planning consultants), with repayable grant finance to be repaid over a pre-agreed period of time e.g. 10 years.

Funding	To access the high impact housing fund model, projects must qualify for repayable grant financing (and HFH support costs) over a period of 10 years. Partners will be required to set rent at genuinely affordable rates.
Support offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repayable Investment/ debt financing• Technical support (construction and Project management)• Community engagement• Access to gift in kind.
Cohort demographic	Individuals with background of housing precarity.
Geographic location	No geographic restrictions, but location must support independence of transitional tenants- e.g access to employment, work and infrastructure.
Timeline	Flexible.
Ownership structure	The building must be owned by small community groups, charities or Housing Associations with a portfolio of fewer than 1000 homes.
Opportunities for volunteering and engagement	Not required.
Advocacy and research objectives	Habitat for Humanity GB will only partner on projects that align with our ES2H objectives.
Evaluation, qualitative and quantitative data gathering	We look to make robust evaluations of all of our ES2H projects, to contribute to the body of evidence which showcases the positive social, environmental, and economic impact of this model. We will incorporate evaluation, impact measurement and data management activities into all technical support projects.