



Garage Policy

Policy	Garage Policy - APPROVED
Version number	4.2
Date effective from	01 April 2023
Policy Owner	Head of Neighbourhood
Policy Author(s)	Head of Neighbourhood
Approved by	Executive Director of Housing
Accountable Executive Director	Executive Director of Housing
Equality Assessment	Yes
Next Review of Policy due	01 April 2025
Policy grade	3

For the full version history of this Policy, see back page.

Please avoid referring to printed versions of this policy. Printed versions may quickly go out of date – the latest version will be on the Policy Hub, or contact the Governance Team. For support and advice regarding the policy, please contact the Policy Owner.

1.0 Introduction and Scope

- 1.1 This policy sets out our approach to the allocation and management of our Garages.
- 1.2 Gentoo will treat everyone equally and fairly whilst endeavouring to make the best use of available stock.

Gentoo Group	X
Gentoo Homes	X
Gentoo Developments Ltd	
Gentoo Genie	

It applies to:

General Needs rented properties	
Supported Housing	
Sheltered Housing	
Leasehold/Shared ownership	
Rent to Buy properties	
Market rented properties (domestic)	
Temporary Accommodation	
Stock owned but not managed by the Group	
Communal Areas, including those relating to Leasehold/Shared Ownership properties	
Commercial Property (offices, depots etc.)	
Stock managed by Gentoo on behalf of a third party	
Garages and outbuildings	X
Remote plant (district heating, electrical pumps etc.)	
Curtilage	

2.0 Our core purpose and vision and priorities

Our core purpose is to provide safe and decent homes for our customers of today and tomorrow.

Our vision is to provide great homes, strong communities, and inspired people for Sunderland.

The safety of our customers and colleagues will always be our number one priority.

We have identified six further priorities which will guide the delivery of our services.

We live our values in everything we do from the boardroom to the front room, to deliver our priorities for our customers.

- We know our customers.
- We provide great homes.
- We help communities to thrive.
- We are a great place to work.
- We spend our money wisely.
- We are well governed.
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Our values are what we stand for and what we want to be known for. They are what makes us, us.

- We care about people.
- We take accountability.
- We shape the future.
- We bring leadership.
- We deliver.

3.0 Regulation and Legislation

3.1 The Executive Director of Housing will ensure this policy has regard to all legislation, regulation and best practice.

4.0 Our Policy Statement

4.1 Gentoo aims to provide affordable garages for tenants and other persons living within our neighbourhoods.

4.2 We are committed to ensuring that garages are allocated in a fair way and as such all Garages will be allocated on a waiting list basis.

4.3 Garages can be used for garaging a car or for storage of goods. Gentoo may withdraw its consent for the storage of goods at its discretion by giving written notice.

4.4 Rent for the garage is payable weekly and is non-rebatable through housing benefit or housing element of Universal Credit.

- 4.5 Once a garage has been allocated, the tenant is responsible for the upkeep of the garage and must ensure it is kept in a good state of repair. Tenants of battery garages (i.e., blocks of garages located on land owned by Gentoo) must report any repairs promptly to Gentoo and allow access to the garage in accordance with their tenancy agreement. Tenants of site garages (i.e., garages which have been built on a piece of land that is rented from Gentoo) must keep the property and garage in good and tenantable repair and condition. Although tenants of site garages are responsible for their upkeep, it is the responsibility of Gentoo to ensure that the tenant is adhering to the agreement.
- 4.6 We are committed to the principles of diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation and aim to:
- Meet the needs and choice of people from all backgrounds
 - Ensure that our services are relevant, responsive and sensitive to the needs of our existing and future tenants
 - Ensure that all sections of the community in which we work have equal access to our services.
- 4.7 Our Garage Policy and Toolkit will ensure that tenants are treated as individuals with fairness and respect. An Equality Assessment has been completed on this policy.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Executive Director of Housing	Is accountable for ensuring effective implementation of this Policy
Associate Director of Housing	Is responsible for adequate resourcing and having effective processes in place to implement this Policy
The Heads of Neighbourhood	Is responsible for the day-to-day delivery of this policy
Neighbourhood Management Staff	Are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy and the associated toolkit

6.0 Monitoring and Review

- 6.1 This Garage Policy will be reviewed a maximum of every 3 years, or in line

with business need.

6.2 The accountability for this Policy lies with the Executive Director of Housing and responsibility for this Policy lies with the Heads of Neighbourhood.

6.3 This Policy may be subject to an audit in line with the internal audit plan.

7.0 Policy Outcomes

7.1 Our Garage Policy aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- To allocate garages in a fair and transparent way.
- To minimise void rent losses.
- To minimise disrepair that could arise from neglect, vandalism and misuse.
- To reduce parking problems in areas where the number of cars outstrips the spaces available.
- To manage and maintain all garages and sites effectively.

8.0 Records

8.1 All records relating to garages are stored on MRI Housing.

9.0 Definitions

9.1 Gentoo have various types of garages:

- Integral/in-curtilage garages: these are garages that are either integral to the property or situated within the boundary of a property. Tenants with this facility have no separate garage tenancy agreement.
- Battery garages: these are blocks of garages located on land owned by Gentoo. Gentoo is responsible for the maintenance of these garages. Tenants who rent these garages will be given a Garage Tenancy Agreement.
- Site garages: these are garages which have been built on a piece of land that is rented from Gentoo. In this case tenants rent the land from Gentoo but are responsible for the construction, maintenance and upkeep of the garage. Tenants who rent these garages will be given a Site Tenancy Agreement.
- Car spaces: these are spaces adjacent some multi storey blocks of properties across parts of the City and locations such as River Quarter, Sunderland where an agreement is in place for a tenant or owner to pay rent for the car park space.

10.0 Applications for Garages

10.1 Applications for garages should be made using the standardised garage application form which can be accessed by the Gentoo website or obtained from any Gentoo housing office.

11.0 Allocation of Garages

11.1 Please note the following points about Gentoo's garage allocations policy:

11.2 Anyone can apply for a Gentoo garage. Priority in the allocation of garages is given to current Gentoo tenants before other applicants.

11.3 Allocations are made according to date of application.

11.4 Applications for a Gentoo garage will not be registered on the waiting list whilst rent arrears against any current or previous tenancy or any other debt with Gentoo exists. Consideration will also be made if any applicant has current tenancy breaches, former tenant arrears or chargeable repair debt. Applicants will be considered for a garage once all monies owed, or any other issue has been resolved. The local area will assess each case on an individual basis.

12.0 Rent

12.1 Rent for the garage is payable weekly and is non rebatable through housing benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit. Tenants will be advised and recommended to sign up for paying their rent by direct debit or standing order which will be a more convenient and easier way to make the rent payments. The tenant will be advised that where rent is paid at an interval other than weekly it must be paid in advance to prevent the accrual of arrears.

12.2 The current range of charges for the either a garage or a car parking space can be found on Gentoo Groups website www.gentoogroup.com/garages.

12.3 Garage rents are decided annually through the rent setting plan which is approved by Group Board annually.

12.4 Garage rents will also have an increase in April each year which will reflect any refurbishment and improvement works completed to garages during the year.

12.5 The policy for garage rent increases is as follows:

- Brick built (battery garages), site and car spaces will increase in line with guideline rent increase levels i.e., CPI + 1%.

12.6 If the tenant falls into arrears, action will commence and the Garage Rent Recovery Procedure will be followed.

13.0 Use of the Garage

13.1 The garage must be used for the purpose of garaging your own private motor vehicle or for the storage of goods. The garage must not be used for any other purpose.

13.2 If the garage is to be used for the storage of goods the tenant must comply with the restrictions placed within the agreement, all relevant health and safety regulations and applicable planning control. Gentoo may withdraw its consent for the storage of goods at its discretion by giving written notice.

14.0 Responsibilities of Tenants

14.1 Garage tenants have certain responsibilities which are listed in the Garage Toolkit, if the terms of the tenancy are broken Gentoo has the right to end the tenancy by serving a Notice to Quit. After the expiry of this notice Gentoo will take back possession of the garage. Gentoo can make additional charges for any necessary lock changes or other works such as the removal of goods and items left in the garage.

14.2 In addition Gentoo reserve the right to serve a Notice and take back possession of the garage if the garage site is required by the Group for redevelopment purposes.

15.0 Management and Repairs

15.1 Gentoo is responsible for keeping integral/in curtilage and battery garages in a good state of repair. Each repair will have a priority allocated to it which reflects its degree of urgency.

- 15.2 Tenants must report repairs promptly and these can be reported through telephone, in person, email and online.
- 15.3 With regard to emergency repairs, Gentoo may only be able to 'make safe' or do a temporary repair until a timeframe has been established to complete the full repair work.
- 15.4 Gentoo will undertake the repairing of the garage including the roof, main walls, doors, lock, and outside paintwork, unless the repairs are because of carelessness, misuse, or neglect. Paintwork and certain brickwork repairs are likely to be completed through a programme as opposed to reactive maintenance.
- 15.5 Should investment plan or demolition works be required to any garage (including battery and site garages) tenants will be responsible, at their own cost, to empty the garage of all items (including rubbish) prior to any investment plan works commencing, including the termination of the garage tenancy.
- 15.6 Gentoo reserve the right to inspect the garage at any time and tenants must allow access to carry out inspections as and when required.
- 15.7 If a battery garage is deemed unsafe, Gentoo will look for a suitable alternative garage for the tenant and terminate the tenancy. The rent will be frozen until a suitable alternative garage is identified.

16.0 Ending the Tenancy

- 16.1 To end a garage tenancy, tenants must give one week's written notice. The garage tenancy ends on a Monday and all keys must be handed in to the local office by 12 noon. The garage must be left in a good state of repair with fixtures and fittings intact and any rent owed paid in full. All rubbish or belongings must be removed from the premises before vacating the garage or the tenant can be charged for their removal.

17.0 Site Garages

- 17.1 Gentoo (from April 2022) will not accept any new applications for site garages to be constructed on land owned by Gentoo, which includes an existing site plot on

the land. Gentoo will not permit any construction if a site garage on land owned by Gentoo,

- 17.2 Tenants currently renting site garages are responsible for the maintenance, repair and upkeep of the garage. If the site garage is not of sound construction e.g., no doors or other sections are damaged or missing from the garage, then it is the responsibility of Gentoo to contact the tenant and advise them to rectify the issue.
- 17.3 The tenant will pay rent on the site garage on a weekly basis, or in advance if they want to pay at longer intervals.
- 17.4 The tenant must remove the site garage construction and make the site good following termination of the tenancy or the expiry of a Notice to Quit. Gentoo will inspect the site and should the site garage fail to be removed Gentoo may then remove the site garage construction and charge the tenant for the full works. Should the site garage remain, an assessment needs to be made by the Property/Asset team concerning the condition of the garage which will remain empty until a decision has been made concerning its removal.

18.0 Complaints

- 18.1 Complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the Group's Complaints Policy.

PROTECTED

Version Control

Version	Reason	Issuer	Date
2	Amended format	Alexandra Gibson	19.02.2018
2.1	Colin McCartney reviewed	Sarah Treadwell	04.02.2019
2.2	Amended	Sarah Treadwell	07.02.2019
2.3	Amended	Sarah Treadwell	15.02.2019
2.4	Amended as per customer's comments in CHAIN session	Sarah Treadwell	01.03.2019
2.5	Amended to clearly clarify rents for April 2019	Sarah Treadwell	18.03.2019
3.0	Approved by Michelle Meldrum	Sarah Treadwell	19.03.2019
3.1	Colin McCartney reviewed	Colin McCartney	07.03.2022
4.0	Approved by Susie Thompson	Colin McCartney	01.04.2022
4.1	Amended to include rent links to website/change from HOO to HON	Steven Gordon	01.04.2023
4.2	Updated core purpose and vision and priorities	Catherine Loftus	31.08.2023

