Dear Councillor

**The scandal of empty homes in a housing crisis**

Your local authority like most in England, will have experienced another rise in empty properties. 2020 saw an increase of 19% in long term empty properties[[1]](#footnote-1), bringing the total nationwide to over 265,000. Despite sterling work done by some local authorities[[2]](#footnote-2), failure to meet housing need is stark. There are currently 100,000 families in temporary accommodation, often living in poor quality private dwellings, invariably overcrowded despite the public health implications during a pandemic. This inferior accommodation is costing the community £ 1.2 billion per year.

In the lead up to the ‘Empty Homes Day of Action’ on Saturday April 17th, we local campaigners are writing to councillors and MP’s about the failure to deal with empty homes by both national and local government. A proposed national strategy must include more funding and powers for local authorities[[3]](#footnote-3), to facilitate and where necessary oblige owners of empty properties to bring them into use.

We are concerned that local authorities often rubber stamp grand development projects that don’t address housing need, while encouraging “wealth investment” which leaves newly built flats empty. There are 125,000 of these “build to leave” homes in London alone. Short term lets such as those on Air B & B, take up a further 120,000 homes nationwide. The meaningless category “second homes” hides more long term empty properties and short term lets. Homes without residents are mushrooming, not just in run down terraced streets, but also in new blocks of flats. On ‘Empty Homes Day of Action’ we will be photographing examples of housing stock which is empty or underutilised. Many of these will be in developments primarily for private sale, the result of local councils planning decisions and central government pressure.

We will continue to oppose plans which build the wrong housing, and demanding that empty properties, both older existing stock and new build, are filled up. As we come out of lockdown we call for your support on this issue of vital importance to us all.

Regards

1. Those empty for more than 2 years. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.actiononemptyhomes.org/blog/empty-homes-week-2021-demonstrated-local-councils-work-and-calls-for-national-government-action> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.actiononemptyhomes.org/News/massive-20-rise-in-empty-homes-up-over-42000-to-268385-while-100000-families-are-stuck-in-temporary-accommodation> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)