Dear MP

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

While increasing numbers of homeless people, particularly families, are being housed in expensive and often grossly inadequate private housing[[1]](#footnote-1), the numbers of empty homes are increasing. The latest figures are truly shocking. The total number of long term empties, empty for 2 or more years, has increased by 19 % to 265,385[[2]](#footnote-2).

As your constituent I am calling for a new national Government Empty Homes Strategy. This should include:-

* A £200m national fund to support councils in bringing tens of thousands of long-term empty homes back into use through a locally focused programme of grants and loans.
* New powers to allow local councils to bring empty homes back into use – principally an improved Empty Dwelling Management Order power and streamlining of Compulsory Purchase Order powers (a call backed by the Local Government Association
* Ensuring owners taking advantage of this programme agree nomination rights and fair rents with councils, so that homes brought into use can help alleviate local housing need and reduce the £1.2bn billion national temporary accommodation bill.
* Dedicate funding for local authorities to help local community-led housing projects which sustainably refurbish long-term empty homes and neglected buildings to create high quality, well-insulated, affordable homes, through an expansion of the Community Housing Fund.

As local campaigners across the country we endorse this strategy, and call for national and local government to acknowledge the failure of the current development model to provide for housing need. Action on Empty Homes [AEH] noted last April, in their report “Pretty Vacant”[[3]](#footnote-3), that many new flats are acquired as “wealth investment” and left empty. This is particularly stark in London, but not unique to the capital. It is estimated that there are 125,000 homes in London in this category. Added to these, are those 120,000 homes nationwide let on short leases, typically on platforms like Air B&B. Another housing “black hole” are so-called second homes, a meaningless category, which hides more long term empty and short term let properties.

As local campaigners we will be addressing our councillors, as well as our MP’s, leading up to our ‘Empty Homes Day of Action’ on Saturday April 17th. We are encouraged by councils that have given priority to these issue and get results[[4]](#footnote-4). However national and local government have often been deaf to local lobbies opposing grand development schemes, that don’t address the chronic housing need of our fellow citizens. We will continue to oppose plans which build the wrong housing, and demand 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. numbers on housing waiting lists and in council-provided Temporary Accommodation also rose to new heights with 127,000 children currently experiencing lockdown in such insecure accommodation. Local Government Association Media Release Jan 13th 2020: <https://www.local.gov.uk/around-450-primary-schools-worth-children-stuck-temporary-accommodation-during-lockdown> Quoted on <https://www.actiononemptyhomes.org/News/national-empty-homes-week-2021-starts-15th-feb-as-we-call-for-action-on-massive-rise-in-empties> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <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-2)
3. <https://www.actiononemptyhomes.org/pretty-vacant> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.actiononemptyhomes.org/blog/empty-homes-week-2021-demonstrated-local-councils-work-and-calls-for-national-government-action> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)