

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Empty Homes Strategy

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 22/01/26
Cabinet – Date – 17/03/26

Executive Portfolios: Executive Councillor for Resident Services & Corporate Performance and Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing

Report by: Private Sector Housing Officer – Sarah Hebblethwaite

Ward(s) affected: All Ward(s)

Executive Summary:

This report introduces the Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2026–2031. The draft strategy is set out at Appendix 1 and is submitted for consideration, review and scrutiny, with associated recommendations invited.

The overall aim of the strategy is to bring empty homes in Huntingdonshire back into use. The intention is to work with empty homeowners and our key partners to offer solutions and in turn increasing available housing across Huntingdonshire.

Huntingdonshire's Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2026-2031 focuses on residential properties in the district that have been unoccupied for 6 months or more and on those that are causing significant problems to the local community. Whilst adopting a preventative approach to those that have been empty for less than 6 months.

The council is committed to ensuring housing is available throughout the district and recognises the importance of making best use of existing resources alongside delivering new provision; bringing back in to use existing long term empty homes supports this ambition.

The Strategy builds on our commitment of tackling the issue of empty homes in a proactive, co-ordinated and strategic approach. Drawing on national guidance, including the Empty Homes Network 3-point plan (2025-2030), The Local Government Associations Practical Toolkit, and examples of good practice from other Local Authorities.

The strategy has five key objectives

- 1 To maintain accurate information on empty homes in the district
- 2 To raise awareness of empty homes and promote the strategy
- 3 To provide advice, assistance and guidance to landlords and property owners to prevent properties from becoming long term problematic empties.
- 4 Reduce the number of long-term empty homes in the district and return problematic empties back into use.
- 5 To maximise income opportunities including council tax and debt recovery.

Recommendation(s):

The Committee is recommended to:

- Consider the Draft Empty Homes Strategy (Appendix 1) and provide comments to inform the final version to be considered by Cabinet.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider, review and scrutinise the Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2026-2031 and make any associated recommendations.

2. BACKGROUND

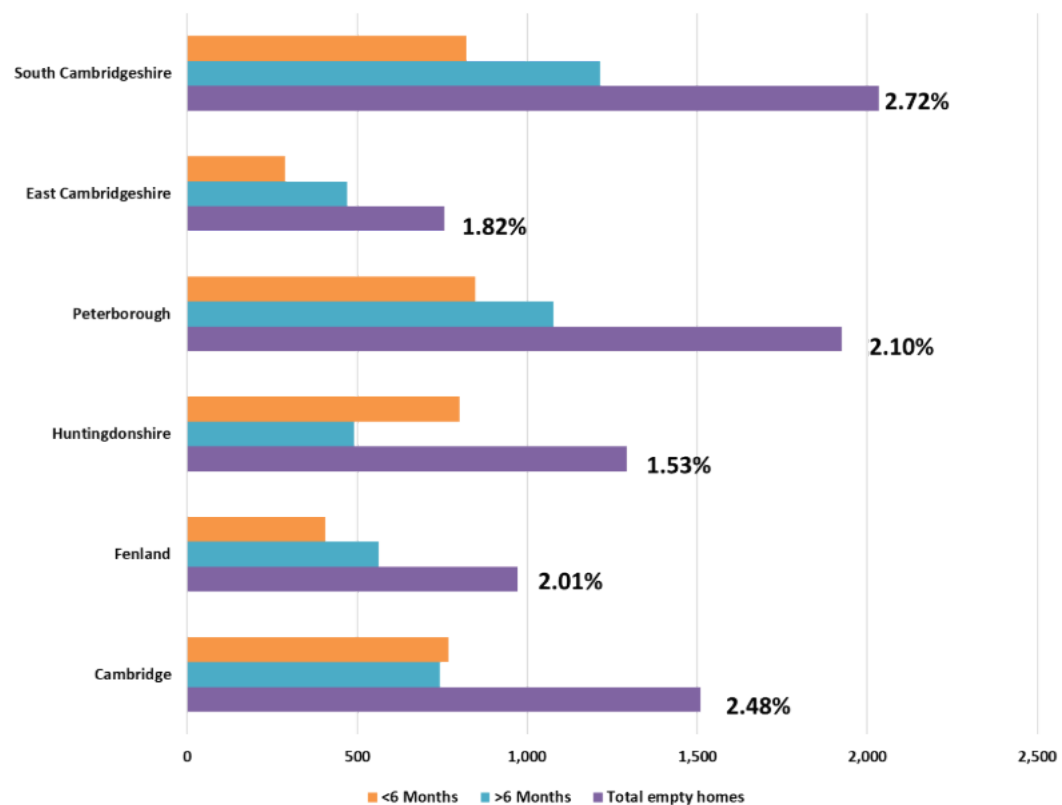
- 2.1 The Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2026-2031 details the current position with empty homes across Huntingdonshire and the tools available to the Local Authority to bring them back into use.
- 2.2 The strategy reinforces the Council's wider objective to maximise housing supply in the district encouraging more affordable, energy efficient and decent homes.
- 2.3 The Council recognises the importance of bringing empty homes back into use and the strategy aims to build on the work done by the Environmental Health team with long term empty homes.
- 2.4 In September 2025 the Council employed a Private Sector Housing Officer (Empty Homes) to focus on reducing empty homes across the district alongside maximising the opportunities to work with empty homeowners to bring their properties back into use.
- 2.5 Prior to September 2025 the Environmental Health team responded to service requests relating to empty homes within the district, however, their input was focussed around dealing with the impact the property was having on immediate neighbours and the local community e.g. requiring an overgrown garden to be cut back or a pest infestation to be treated. Typically, this would include taking action under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 or Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Their resourcing did not allow for further engagement with the property owner to discuss bringing the property back into use and there was no proactive management of empty homes. Therefore, there would often be repeated service requests about the same properties as, for example, gardens grew back and they caused an impact again.
- 2.6 In 2024/2025 the Environmental Health team received 3078 service requests of which 143 related to 'nuisance premises' or 'nuisance accumulations or deposits', and from 1 April 2025 to 31 August 2025 there were 64 of the same requests type recorded. Whilst it has not been historically recorded it is estimated that 10% of these requests relate to empty homes.
- 2.7 This work has provided a firm base for the development of the Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2026-2031 and the future work of the Private Sector Housing Officer. The development of an Empty Homes service alongside the Strategy will facilitate a fresh casework approach to bringing empty homes back into use alongside enforcement action when required whilst supporting the council tax premiums to encourage empty homeowners to utilise their properties as homes.

The National Context

- 2.8 Empty homes represent a critical challenge in a country facing a national housing crisis, with over 1 million (1,022,433) properties not in use in 2025, representing 3.96% of England's housing stock. This number includes homes left vacant for over six months, second homes, and properties under council tax exemptions.

The Local Context

- 2.9 In the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region empty homes present considerable challenges and opportunities, each district and both cities employ an Empty Homes Officer and there has been considerable success through various initiatives. The highest numbers of empty homes can be found in South Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- 2.10 Graph 1 Total empty homes in September 2025 in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough by time empty and percentage of overall housing stock



- 2.11 In September 2025 of the 84,172 homes in Huntingdonshire, of these 1292 were empty homes of which 801 were empty for less than 6 months, and 491 over six months.
- 2.12 This represents 1.53% of all housing stock, meaning approximately 1 in every 66 homes in Huntingdonshire sits empty or is used in part as a

second home. It is important to note that this figure includes homes that have been empty for less than 6 months.

- 2.13 The Empty Homes Strategy sets out five clear objectives that aim to facilitate bringing empty homes across the district back into use.

Objective 1 – To maintain accurate information on empty homes in the district

- 2.14 The ongoing development and maintenance of the empty homes database will be the cornerstone of the Council's approach to tackling empty homes across the district. This database will hold the essential information that enables targeted engagement and supports cyclical data cleansing exercises, ensuring records remain accurate and up to date.

Objective 2 – To raise awareness of empty homes and promote the strategy

- 2.15 With housing demand continuing to rise, the issue of empty homes is receiving growing attention. Having remained high on the political agenda for some time, recent developments, media coverage, and calls for stronger action have elevated its profile.

- 2.16 In response to this growing awareness, the Council is committed to maintaining visibility of the issue locally, using all appropriate and available channels to raise awareness. Internally, ensuring that staff and members understand the challenges posed by empty homes, and the support the Council can offer to empty homeowners.

- 2.17 Externally the council will continue to promote the benefits of bringing empty homes back into use, while also exploring new opportunities to enhance the support available to owners. The dual approach will help ensure that both awareness and action continue to grow.

- 2.18 The public, our partners and internal colleagues will be encouraged to report all empty homes and will be given advice of the tell-tale signs to look out for.

Objective 3 – To provide advice, assistance and guidance to landlords and empty property owners to prevent properties from becoming long term problematic empties.

- 2.19 We are committed to developing financial support that maximises the opportunities to bring empty homes back into use.

- 2.20 In the meantime, the Council will continue to develop, explore and implement non-financial forms of assistance. These will include signposting to relevant services, facilitating access to advice, or brokering partnerships with local organisation's and developing options that will ensure a swift and proportionate response, including the service of statutory notices if required. Whilst enforcement is viewed as the last resort, it remains a consideration throughout the investigation and support

stages to demonstrate that all reasonable opportunities for a voluntary resolution have been exhausted.

Objective 4 – Reduce the number of long-term empty homes in the district and return problematic empties back to use.

- 2.21 The process of returning empty homes to use and reducing the overall number of long-term vacant properties begins with the effective investigation and prioritisation of referrals, accurately recorded within the council's empty homes database.
- 2.22 To build trust and strengthen the reputation of the service, all complaints will be followed up, with complainants kept informed about the process and the priority status of the property in question. Following the initial information-gathering stage, the Council will maintain regular and persistent engagement with empty homeowners using existing resources, including tailored correspondence. This approach ensures owners are given every opportunity to respond and work collaboratively with the Council.
- 2.23 The strategy also aims to inform and align with wider Council policies and initiatives, encouraging cross-departmental support for efforts to bring empty homes back into use. The property database will be used to regularly assess enforcement options for all cases, with appropriate action pursued for priority properties, especially where urgent attention is required due to a referral or complaint.

Objective 5 - To maximise income opportunities including Council Tax and Enforcement Debt recovery

- 2.24 There are considerable opportunities for the development of the working relationship between council tax colleagues and private sector officer (empty homes). Through this developing partnership this strategy aims to identify and maximise debt recovery through council tax charges, arrears and land registry charges due to default works.
- 2.25 In circumstances that enforcement action has been carried out we will pursue these with the support of our colleagues and where appropriate recommend subsequent action in collaboration with legal services and consider enforced sales.
- 2.26 Working with Revenue and Benefits current empty homes with large amounts of council tax arrears should be evaluated using the scoring tool and prioritised accordingly.

Strategic Priorities

- 2.27 Huntingdonshire District Council recognises that empty homes represent a missed opportunity to deliver on key priorities within the Corporate Plan, Local Plan, and Climate Action Plan.

- 2.28 Under Priority 2 of the Corporate Plan, The Council aims for everyone to live in a safe, high-quality home while also taking positive action to reduce carbon emissions and become a net zero carbon council by 2040. Empty properties undermine these ambitions by wasting housing resources during a housing crisis and increasing pressure for greenfield development, which conflicts with sustainability goals.
- 2.29 The Climate Strategy commits to enabling communities to adapt to climate change, and bringing empty homes back into use supports this by reducing embodied carbon and promoting energy-efficient retrofits.
- 2.30 A joined-up approach between Climate, Place, and the Empty Homes Officer will raise awareness of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of empty homes, encourage owners to act, and promote available support, incentives, and enforcement options. This partnership will also engage councillors, developers, housing associations, and community groups, aligning housing delivery with climate objectives and ensuring that tackling empty homes becomes a core part of the Council's wider housing and sustainability strategy.
- 2.31 Whilst returning empty homes back in to use will not, in isolation, resolve the wider housing supply challenges, it can often be the quickest and most cost-effective way to increase the availability of good quality, safe, and affordable housing. By reducing the pressure to build on undeveloped land, supporting the regeneration of brownfield sites, and reinvigorating local communities, the reuse of empty properties plays a significant role in meeting the Council's broader corporate objectives. This approach delivers tangible benefits to residents and neighbourhoods across Huntingdonshire, contributing to a more sustainable and inclusive approach.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS

- 3.1 The Council has chosen to appoint an Empty Homes Officer to deal with the issue of long term Empty Homes, this strategy has been developed with the benefit of advice from the Empty Homes Network and other Empty Homes Officers Good Practice guidance.
- 3.2 The report asks that the Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2026-2031 be recommended to go out to consultation and that any changes from feedback received will be considered and taken to the Council's Cabinet in March 2026.
- 3.3 The Council could choose not to adopt an Empty Homes Strategy, but this would prevent the Council taking action on empty homes and using powers open to Local Authorities.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 4.1 The Overview & Scrutiny (Performance & Growth) Panel discussed the report at its meeting on 21st January 2026.

- 4.2 Councillor Pickering asked how much consideration had gone into measuring the success of the new Strategy and what this would be.
- 4.3 Councillor Gardener expressed concern regarding homes that would be empty due to a death of the owner and the Panel urged caution around these sensitive cases.
- 4.4 Councillor Catmur requested that a table of definitions be included in the Strategy for clarification.
- 4.5 Councillor Blackwell suggested that the Strategy not name the other Authorities the examples had been drawn from and instead, tailor it for Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC).
- 4.6 Councillor Taylor sought further clarification regarding consultation with homeowners on Point 8 of the Strategy, wondering if it would go beyond homeowners.
- 4.7 Councillor Martin raised concerns around the use of enforcement action and it was suggested that the Council hold off on this until they see the impact of the Premiums.
- 4.8 Further information regarding the target for empty homes was sought from the Panel, referencing Huntingdonshire as already having the second lowest amount of empty properties over 6 months in the County.
- 4.9 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for an informed decision to be made on the report recommendations

5. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 5.1 If the council do not implement this policy and continues without engaging with empty homeowners and when necessary, carrying out enforcement action there will be no incentive to owners to bring their properties back into use. This will result in a failure to utilise existing empty homes for households within the district.
- 5.2 The Council has opted to charge the maximum council tax premiums on empty properties and second homes to incentivise owners to bring them back into use

6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.1 The Draft Empty Homes Strategy will proceed with any amendments to Cabinet on 17/03/26.

7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 7.1 This strategy supports Priority 2 of the Corporate Plan, by creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations by bringing long term empty homes back into use.
- 7.2 It also supports Priority 1 by improving the happiness and wellbeing of residents by bringing empty homes back into use that are impacting the attractiveness of an area.
- 7.3 This strategy also supports the Council's Futures Strategy with the Pride in Place journey and our Climate Strategy in bringing existing property back into use.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 A consultation with empty homeowners will commence in January via the commonplace platform. The information gained from the consultation will be fed into the strategy.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There is no legal requirement to produce an Empty Homes Strategy although the council does have strategic housing responsibilities, and these documents support the continued delivery of statutory duties. The Council's power and duties to enforcement action are contained within various statutes including those detailed in Appendix B of the Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2026-2031.

10. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Private Sector Housing Officer for empty homes is funded through existing resources until September 2027. Allocated budget of £30k to support empty homeowners to bring their properties back into use.

11. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 We aspire for all our residents to live in homes that meet their needs and acknowledge that quality housing creates the foundation for good health, education, employment, and overall well-being.
- 11.2 The impact of austerity, covid 19, cost of living increases alongside a national housing crisis has resulted in this being a challenge for many households.
- 11.3 At the same time, we have empty homes throughout the district that could help alleviate some of the above pressures, or even house residents who find themselves threatened with homelessness. Therefore, bringing empty homes back into use is a critical element of responding to these challenges.

12. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Bringing existing homes back into circulation, uses between 50% and 80 % less embodied carbon than building new homes. Works carried out as part of the renovation of empty homes will make homes greener and more energy efficient.

13. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 Bringing empty homes back into use is a crucial opportunity to increase the supply of homes for our growing population. To maximise the impact that bringing empty homes back into use can have, options for bringing them back into use as affordable housing are being pursued.
- 13.2 Empty homes are not only a wasted resource – they also often cause significant negative impacts on the local community and environment, which are often made worse the longer a home is empty. We are committed to prioritising bringing those empty homes back into use, which are a blight on our neighbourhoods.
- 13.3 A draft Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is currently being created, and evidence is being gathered. We will collect further evidence and feedback as part of the consultation with empty homeowners. A full EqIA will then be completed ahead of adopting the full Empty Homes Strategy.

14. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 14.1 To ensure that we have a strategy that outlines our approach to dealing with empty homes across the district.
- 14.2 Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations.

15. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2026-2031



Huntingdonshire District Council

Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2026-2031





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Foreword from portfolio holders

We are delighted to introduce the new Empty Homes Strategy 2026-2031, as having a safe, high quality and secure home is essential to enable people to live healthy, happy and fully independent lives in their communities within Huntingdonshire.

We recognise the negative impact empty homes has on communities. Tackling empty homes is a key priority for Huntingdonshire District Council and the new Empty Homes Strategy sets out what the Council will do to bring homes back into use, to make best use of housing stock across the district and to reduce the negative impact empty homes can have on surrounding homes, neighbourhoods and communities.

This strategy, alongside our Housing Strategy, demonstrates our continued commitment to providing sustainable and thriving communities across Huntingdonshire.

We understand there is a variety of reasons that a property becomes an empty home and acknowledge the importance for the council to work proactively to engage, encourage and influence the owners of empty homes to support them to return them back into use.

The key focus on encouragement and advice to aid empty homeowners will be to provide support and guidance to facilitate the home being brought back into

use. However, we recognise that this approach will not work in every case and the council may need to utilise enforcement powers to ensure that empty homes do not remain wasted.

Only when a property is occupied does it truly become a home, allowing both residents and neighbours to enjoy comfort, stability and a shared sense of wellbeing within their community.

Sam Wakeford

Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing

Stephen Ferguson

Executive Councillor for Resident Services & Corporate Performance

Executive Summary

The overall aim of this strategy is to bring empty homes back into use. We will work with our key partners to offer solutions to facilitating bringing homes back into use and in turn increasing housing stock across Huntingdonshire.

Huntingdonshire's Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2026-2031 focuses on residential properties in the district that have been unoccupied for 6 months or longer and on those that are causing significant problems to the local community. Whilst adopting a preventative approach to those that have been empty for less than 6 months.

The Government acknowledges that bringing empty homes back into use can contribute to meeting projections of housing need and actively encourages local authorities to take the action required to tackle these wasted resources. Huntingdonshire District Council has embraced this challenge using identified good practice.

The strategy sets out five key objectives to enable long term empty homes to be brought back into use via a structured approach. Enforcement action is only to be used as a last resort, the focus of the strategy is to encourage and provide advice to owners, to facilitate them bringing their properties back into use without formal action being instigated. The Key Objectives are

Objective 1 – To maintain accurate information on empty homes in the district.

Objective 2 - To raise awareness of empty homes and promote the strategy.

Objective 3 – *Provide advice, assistance and guidance to landlords and property owners to prevent properties from becoming long term problematic empties.*

Objective 4 - *Reduce the number of long term empty homes in the district and return problematic empty homes back in to use.*

Objective 5 - *To maximise income opportunities including Council Tax and Enforcement Debt Recovery.*

Introduction

Empty homes represent a significant and often overlooked opportunity to meet wider housing need, support community regeneration, and make more effective use of existing housing stock. At a time of growing demand for affordable and decent homes, the presence of long-term vacant properties, often located in areas of high need, can undermine neighbourhood vitality, attract anti-social behaviour, and contribute to urban decline. This strategy outlines our commitment to tackling empty homes as part of a wider effort to create thriving, resilient communities and ensure that every home counts.

This Empty Homes Strategy 2026-2031 outlines our commitment to tackling the issue of empty homes in a proactive, coordinated, and strategic manner. It draws on national guidance, including the *Empty Homes Network's 3-Point Plan (2025–2030)*, the *Local Government Association's practical toolkit*, and good practice examples from other Local Authorities. [\[1\]](#)

Our approach is informed by the following principles of best practice:

- **Strategic Integration:** Empty homes work should be embedded within wider housing, homelessness, regeneration, climate and corporate strategies. This ensures alignment with local priorities and maximises the impact of interventions.
- **Data-Driven Action:** Maintaining accurate, up-to-date records of empty properties is essential. We recognise the value of robust data systems in targeting interventions effectively.
- **Investigate, Encourage, Enforcement Last:** While enforcement tools such as Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs), Enforced Sales, and Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) are important, the emphasis is on early engagement, advice, and support to property owners.
- **Tailored Interventions:** Recognising that each empty home has a unique context, we aim to offer a flexible toolkit of support and guidance alongside

a personalised approach and when these do not work finally - enforcement options to suit varying circumstances.

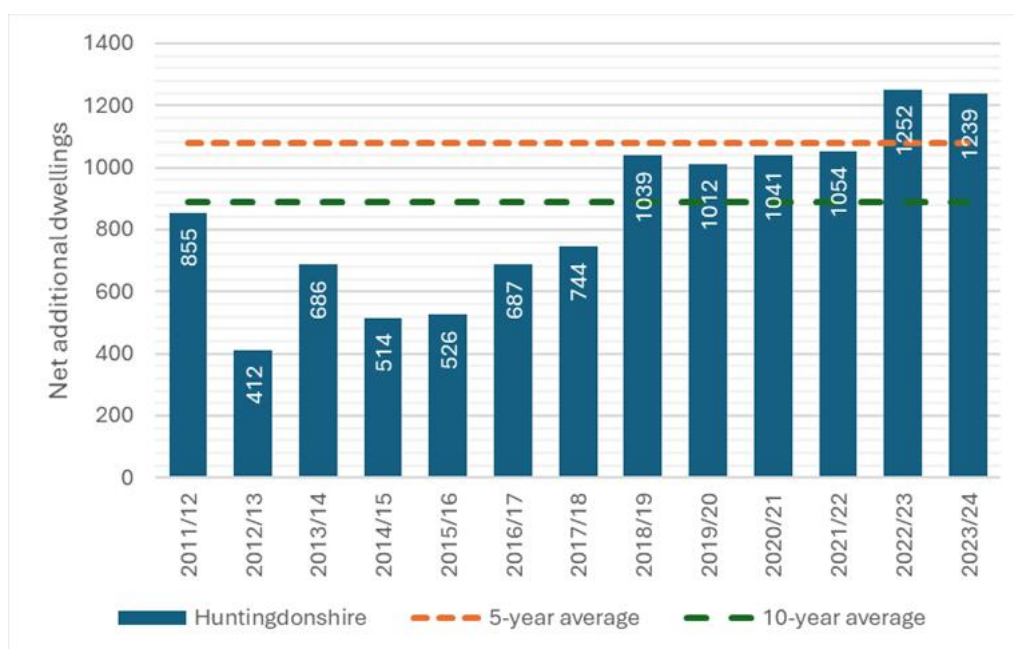
- **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** We will work with housing associations, community groups, and other key stakeholders to bring properties back into use, drawing on successful models of partnership working seen across the UK.
- **National Alignment:** We support calls for a statutory duty on local authorities to act on long-term empty homes and advocate for a national strategy that provides consistent guidance, funding, and accountability.

The following pages demonstrate our vision, objectives, and action plan for reducing the number of long-term empty homes across Huntingdonshire. It is both a call to action and a framework for delivery; ensuring that empty homes are no longer a wasted resource, but a vital part of our housing solution.

Understanding Empty Homes

Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to delivering affordable accommodation choices throughout the district. We recognise the importance of prioritising the use of current housing before considering new builds. Without tapping into the empty homes resource across the district we will put further pressure on housing need. The chart below shows the net housing delivery rate with 5 year and 10 year averages.

Chart 1 Net housing delivery rate in Huntingdonshire



Source – Huntingdonshire Local Housing Needs Assessment 08/2025

What is an empty home?

An empty home is defined as a privately owned property that is unoccupied.

A property is a long-term empty home if it has been unoccupied for 6 months or longer and adopting a preventative approach to those that have been empty for less than 6 months. Privately owned long-term empty homes are the primarily the

focus of this strategy, but concerns will be highlighted to public bodies and Housing Associations (registered providers) where an empty home they own is not let or requires repair.

Any property that is lying empty is a wasted resource, both for the person who owns it and those who need a home. In September 2025, the Home-link choice based letting scheme had over 3000 households registered seeking a home in Huntingdonshire. If left vacant for a considerable period, a properties physical condition can deteriorate, and the property can become a nuisance for those living in the neighbourhood. Where there are several empty dwellings in a neighbourhood this could discourage investment, in turn leading to economic decline.

The Empty Homes network uses 7 different council tax definitions to develop a full picture of empty homes nationally. These are defined as long term empty, empty for less than 6 months, long term premium, second homes, unoccupied exemptions and occupied empties and delisted properties.

Why do properties become and remain empty?

Most empty homes are privately owned. There are a variety of reasons for homes being left empty, some of which are more complex and multi-faceted, with owners having their own personal reasons for keeping their home empty. Some of the most common reasons for homes becoming and remaining empty include:

- issues with inheritance and/or delays with probate;
- lack of finance to carry out necessary repairs and/or refurbishment;
- perceived problems associated with letting of properties;
- owner unwilling to bring the home back into use;
- individuals requiring residential care or long term hospitalisation.

Challenges presented by Empty Homes

Dealing with an empty home is not always straightforward. Each property, its owner, their circumstances and intentions are all unique. The list below provides some examples of circumstances -

- A property may be used as a second home, and so not occupied on a permanent basis, but is still in use.
- A property awaiting planning permissions and work is unable to commence whilst this is being sought. This may include specialist permissions if they are a Listed Building or located in a Conservation Area.
- A property may be owned by a several different people or companies.
- A property may be subject to legal proceedings such as probate, divorce settlements or proceeds of crime restrictions.
- Although it is now compulsory in England to register any property which changes ownership or has a mortgage taken out against it for the first time, properties which have not changed ownership since that time may not be

registered with the Land Registry and information regarding the property ownership will not be available from this source.

- It may not be immediately evident who the owner of a property is or where they are, as they may have moved away with little information available to trace them.
- A property may be kept empty by the owner for specific reasons such as for their children when they leave home or elderly relatives who are in care. Some are kept empty until the owner feels the housing market is suitable to sell the property at the price they want.
- The emotional attachment associated with a property, formerly a family home or owned by parents, can often lead to the reluctance or reticence to act, or deal with a property immediately.

Some owners may be simply reluctant to engage with the Council and believe that as the property is privately owned the Council do not have the right to require action to return it to use. They may be unaware or have no concern for the effect the property has on the local area and surrounding properties. These are properties which are likely to be left empty for many years, fall into disrepair, and be the subject of future complaints and action.

Subsequently, it is considered that the Local Authority are best placed to tackle the issues that empty homes present. With a range of professional experience across departments, legislative powers and tools at their disposal, the Council can provide a vehicle for a solutions based approach that benefits all parties involved.

Why do empty homes matter?

The Council often receives complaints relating to empty homes from residents, who rightly object to unsightly disused properties. These provide implications for the Council's Environmental Health team who must use staff time and resources to investigate and take action to intervene, deal with pests, general dilapidation, overgrown gardens, damage to neighbouring properties, anti-social behaviour and other issues.

For the local community, empty homes can have a direct impact on adjoining properties through issues such as damp and structural problems. Alongside this, unsightly properties can be detrimental to neighbouring house prices and can result in a lack of pride and investment in the area. The possibility of empty homes attracting unwanted attention can cause anxiety and ongoing concern for residents. Empty homes undermine the communities' confidence in the area, resulting in problems for neighbouring properties, often leading to involvement from the Local Authority.

For empty homes owners, leaving a property empty can become costly and be a source of unnecessary anxiety. By remaining empty and increasing in deterioration, the additional risk of vandalism and crime can lead to a property

being difficult to insure, which could ultimately result in high repair costs or even mean a complete loss of asset.

Even the general deterioration of an unlive in property will result in costs. Deterioration by lack of maintenance, insurance, council tax and premiums, utility standing charges and mortgage payments, all increase the financial liability of leaving a property empty, and one which can often become insurmountable for the owners. By renting or selling the property, not only are the above issues resolved, but there is the added advantage of gaining regular rental income or the capital generated from the sale of a property.

There is also an environmental impact of leaving homes empty. It has been estimated that it would take the equivalent of about 75 acres of land to build 900 homes. This could be greenfield sites of open land that local people value, whereas it would be more efficient and sustainable to make best use of existing dwelling stock available. ^[2]

Empty homes returned to use as domestic dwellings increase the availability of homes across the district. Instead of being a source of concern these homes can be transformed from a wasted resource into a home for an individual or family in housing need.

In September 2025, 3005 households' applications were on the Housing Register. Of these households 169 had a homelessness duty accepted. Furthermore, temporary accommodation was being provided for 129 homeless households.

There are many individuals and families in housing need, and the utilisation of empty homes could prevent some of these people from facing issues such as homelessness and overcrowding or provide a first home for a local person.

Returning empty homes to use can help ensure that house prices in the neighbourhood are protected from preventable reductions. Improving an area can also encourage investment in the local economy, and a return of any lost pride in the community created by a single empty home.

The National Context

The latest Council Taxbase 2025 statistics published in November 2025, show that the number of empty and otherwise non-permanently occupied homes in England has continued to rise. Drawn from local authority council taxbase, these figures provide the most comprehensive snapshot of national housing occupancy available, and the 2025 dataset points to a housing system under increasing pressure.

Table 1 – Empty Homes data in England from 2021-2025

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
Empty Homes	542,276	502,263	480,485	478,928	468,070
Second Homes	268,153	279,870	263,318	256,913	253,357

Unoccupied Exemptions	212,004	217,207	218,281	197,376	184,955
Total Empty Homes	1,022,433	999,340	962,444	933,217	906,382
% of Housing Stock	3.96	3.89	3.77	3.69	3.62
Breakdown					
Less than 6 months	232,420	230,006	211,450	222,101	221,426
More than 6 months	309,856	272,257	269,395	256,827	246,644
Empty Homes Premium	152,932	119,606	75,803	72,341	71,630

Source: Empty Homes Network

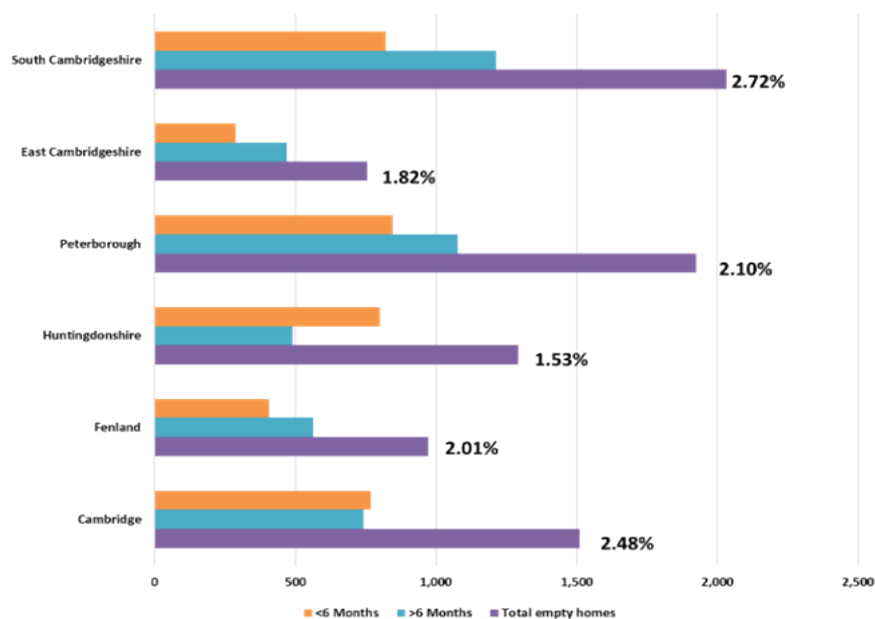
Empty homes represent a critical challenge in a country facing a national housing crisis, with over 1 million (1,022,433) properties not in use in 2025, representing 3.96% of England's housing stock. This number includes homes left vacant for over six months, second homes, and properties under council tax exemptions. [3] Furthermore, representing an increase year on year since 2020. Whereas the number of properties falling under an unoccupied exemption have reduced with a peak in 2023.

The number of properties subject to empty homes premium have continually risen since it commenced in 2013 reaching 119,606 in 2024 and 152,932 in 2025.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough context

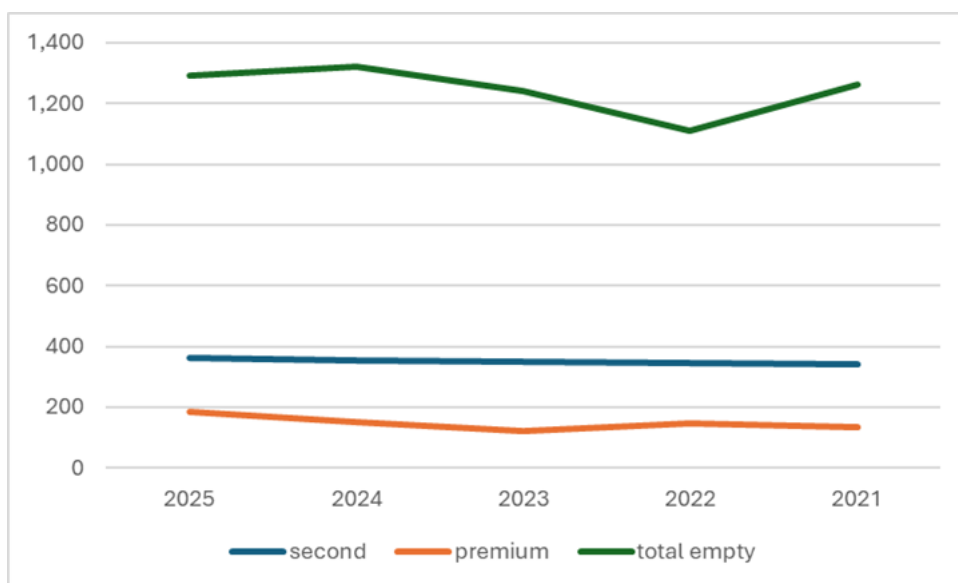
Empty homes across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough present considerable challenges and opportunities. There are empty homes officers employed within each of the districts, Peterborough and Cambridge City. There has been considerable success through various initiatives. The highest numbers of empty homes can be found in South Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Graph 1 Total empty homes in September 2025 in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough by time empty and percentage of all housing stock



Source- council tax dataset 2025

Graph 2 – Empty Homes in Huntingdonshire between 2021 and 2025



Source – Council tax data

Empty homes in Huntingdonshire have remained relatively stable between 2021 and 2025 with a small reduction during 2022. The number of second homes across the district has remained stable alongside the number of empty homes with premium council tax charges.

Local Context

In 2025 of the 84,172 homes in Huntingdonshire there were 1292 empty homes of which 801 were empty for less than 6 months, and 491 over six months in 2025 – a reduction of 191 from the previous year.

This represents 1.53% of all housing stock, meaning approximately 1 in every 66 homes in Huntingdonshire sits empty or is used in part as a second home. It is

important to note that this figure includes homes that have been empty for less than 6 months and provides a snapshot of a diverse situation. Based on the average property price of £309,000, these empty homes have an estimated combined value of over £391 million.

Empty homes can be found in all areas, wards and locations across the district, and are not necessarily semi-derelict, boarded up or causing a problem. There are also homes which naturally become empty for periods of time, often due to transactional processes, being between tenants, or when an owner passes away and the probate process delays a possible transaction. When a dwelling remains empty for a significant period, is attracting unwanted attention or is the subject of a complaint to the authority, it would be considered a high priority case in line with the rating system attached as Appendix A.

Whilst these properties are often recorded as empty through their council tax accounts, it is also often the case that second homes, those that qualify for an unoccupied exemption, or even where a property is reported as occupied, can be referred to the authority as empty and unoccupied. All referrals, complaints and notifications are recorded and investigated as empty homes.

Private Homes

On 1 October 2025 council tax records indicated that there were 203 empty homes throughout the district this does not include second homes or those with council tax exemptions.

Of the 203 empty homes the largest category 113 was those owned by private individuals. The most likely source of quick-wins, or where houses are naturally brought back into use, this category includes properties currently being charged some form of empty homes premium.

Second Homes

Second homes are often reported as empty homes. This results in the empty homes officer including these in the development of the database and working closely with the council tax service to share information. There are currently 363 second homes in Huntingdonshire.

Housing Associations and companies

On 1 October 2025 there were 90 properties showing as being owned by registered company, a housing association or registered provider. Of note the largest provider Places for People are conducting a disposal programme and had by 1 October 2025 disposed of over 170 properties.

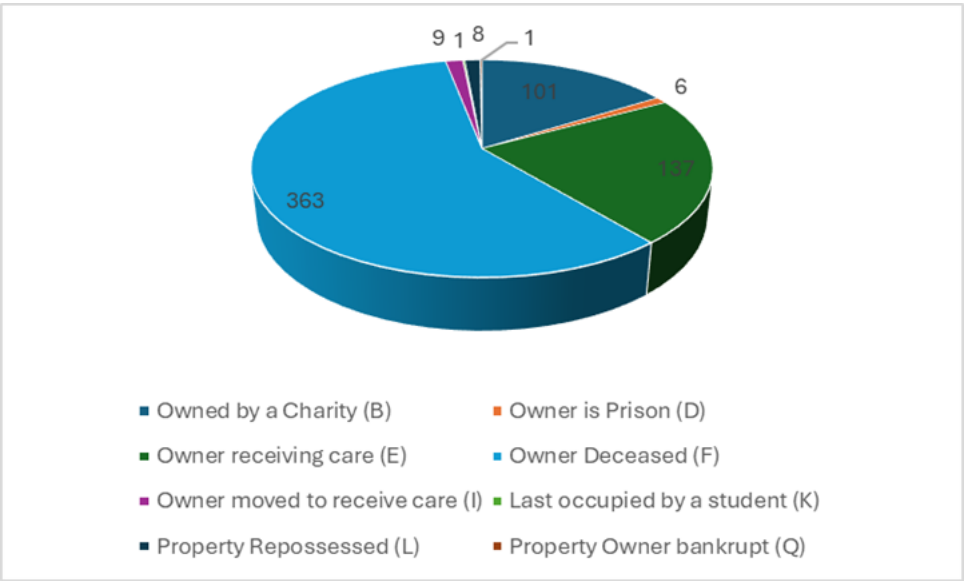
There are review meetings with key social housing provider - Places for People and the Private Sector Housing officer to maximise opportunities to bring these homes back into use.

Unoccupied Exemptions

Similarly to second homes, properties falling under an unoccupied exemption category (745 properties) may warrant a complaint and further investigation in the future. These include instances of properties that are currently going through

probate, where the owner is in prison or property has been repossessed, and in other cases such as where an owner has moved to provide or receive care.

Chart 2 – Empty Homes in Huntingdonshire with council tax exemption as September 2025 by reason



Source – Council tax 09/2025

Council Tax premiums

Huntingdonshire District Council has opted to charge the maximum council tax premiums on empty properties and second homes to incentivise owners to bring them back into use. Further details of the premiums and exceptions can be found on the website at [Discounts, Exemptions, Disregards and Premiums - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/Discounts%2C%20Exemptions%2C%20Disregards%20and%20Premiums)

Meeting strategic and corporate aims

Huntingdonshire District Council recognises that empty homes represent a missed opportunity to deliver on key priorities within its Corporate Plan, Local Plan, and Climate Action Plan.

Under Priority 2 of the Corporate Plan, the Council aims for everyone to live in a safe, high-quality home while also taking positive action to reduce carbon emissions and become a net zero carbon council by 2040. Empty properties undermine these ambitions by wasting housing resources during a housing crisis and increasing pressure for greenfield development, which conflicts with

sustainability goals. The Climate Strategy commits to enabling communities to adapt to climate change, and bringing empty homes back into use supports this by reducing embodied carbon and promoting energy-efficient retrofits. A joined-up approach between Climate, Place, and the Empty Homes Officer will raise awareness of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of empty homes, encourage owners to act, and promote available support, incentives, and enforcement options. This partnership will also engage councillors, developers, housing associations, and community groups, aligning housing delivery with climate aims and ensuring that tackling empty homes becomes a core part of the Council’s wider housing and sustainability priorities.

Whilst returning empty homes to use will not, in isolation, resolve the wider housing supply challenges, it can often be the quickest and most cost-effective way to increase the availability of good quality, safe, and affordable housing. By reducing the pressure to build on greenbelt land, supporting the regeneration of brownfield sites, and reinvigorating local communities, the reuse of empty properties plays a significant role in meeting the Council’s broader corporate objectives. This approach delivers tangible benefits to residents and neighbourhoods across Huntingdonshire, contributing to a more sustainable and inclusive approach.

This strategy, its aims and actions link with several council documents, strategies and plans. The diagram below outlines the key Strategies that it directly links with.

Diagram 1.0 Empty Homes Strategy and links to other strategies



Working Collaboratively to Bring Empty Homes Back into Use

Regardless of the reasons a property has become and remained empty, and irrespective of the owner's current circumstances, the Council's primary approach is to engage constructively with owners wherever possible. The aim is to support them in achieving their intentions for the property and, where necessary, to facilitate appropriate action.

It is essential to recognise that each empty home presents a unique set of circumstances. The reasons for long-term vacancy, the personal situation of the owner, and the condition of the property can vary significantly. As such, the Council is committed to treating each case individually, based on the information available, while remaining focused on the overarching goals of the Empty Homes Strategy.

Some cases may involve sensitive or complex issues, but the Council must remain committed to the strategic principles. Empty properties can have a detrimental impact on neighbouring residents and the wider community and addressing them is a shared responsibility.

Property owners need to be aware that while the Council prefers to work in partnership to help realise their plans, prolonged inaction is not acceptable. Ownership of an empty home carries responsibilities, and owners are expected to take appropriate steps to bring their property back into use.

The accompanying Action Plan (Appendix D) outlines the key objectives for this strategy 2025-2030. It reflects the use of personalised tools, support, and guidance available to owners. The Plan sets out five strategic priorities aimed at reducing the number of long-term empty homes across the district and maximising the use of existing housing stock.

The order in which the priorities are presented does not reflect the value that the Council will place on the activities described.

Investigate, Encourage, Enforce: A Tiered Approach

The Corporate Plan calls on the Council to enable more, partner more, and empower people to reduce demand for traditional public services. This is embedded in our Do, Enable and Influence approach in our Corporate Plan and adopted in our structured and proportionate approach to tackling empty homes, built around three key principles: **Investigate, Encourage, and Enforce**.

Our priority is to provide advice and guidance to all empty homes owners and then moving to the softer options including options such as selling or renting to mitigate the impact of the empty homes premium, advice regarding renovation, followed by financial assistance with discount VAT schemes to support with bringing properties back into use.

Investigate

The Council will proactively identify and monitor empty properties using a range of data sources, including council tax records, public reports, and internal

referrals. Each case will be assessed using a risk-based scoring matrix to prioritise action based on factors such as property condition, location, and impact on the community. This intelligence-led approach ensures that resources are directed where they are most needed.

Encourage

An engagement-first and personalised approach is fundamental to the effective delivery of an Empty Homes Strategy. By prioritising early, empathetic, and tailored communication with property owners, we can gain a deeper understanding of the individual circumstances contributing to a long-term empty home. This enables us to offer bespoke support, advice, and interventions that reflect the specific barriers and motivations of each owner. These include financial, emotional, or practical support. Best practice across the UK demonstrates the value of this approach.

In the first instance, it is always the Council's aim to provide help and advice to the owners of empty homes. The Council offers tailored support to owners of empty homes to help bring properties back into use. This may include advice on refurbishment, sales, legal considerations, lettings, tenant-finding, health and safety compliance, and improving energy efficiency. Where appropriate, we work in partnership with internal teams and external organisations to ensure owners are fully informed of all available options before making decisions about their property.

In addition, the Council can provide a 'Reduced VAT' letter for qualifying properties that have been empty for over two years. This enables owners to benefit from a reduced VAT rate of 5% on eligible refurbishment works, and in cases where a property has been empty for over ten years, a 0% VAT rate may apply. We can assist by verifying the length of time a property has been unoccupied, typically using Council Tax records or our own knowledge of the property. A charge will be levied at the homeowner for this service.

The aim is to remove barriers and promote voluntary action, recognising that many owners may face genuine challenges in bringing properties back into occupation.

Enforce

In cases where engagement is unsuccessful or where properties pose a significant risk to the community, the Council will consider formal enforcement action. This may include the use of statutory powers such as Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs), Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs), or enforcement under housing and planning legislation. Enforcement will always be a last resort, used proportionately and in line with legal and policy frameworks.

Enforced Sale

The Law and Property Act 1925 enables local authorities to recover charges through the sale of the property. This option can only be utilised where there is a debt to the local authority registered as a charge on the property and this can be in the form of Council Tax debt or works in default following notices being served to remove accumulations or carry out improvement works. This option is more attractive than compulsory purchase as it does not require the local authority to take ownership of the property and sell it on and therefore requires no capital outlay.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

When all other options to bring an empty property back into use have been exhausted, the Council may consider the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs). These powers are available under Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985, and enables the acquisition of land or property to increase housing supply or improve the quality of existing housing stock. Alternatively, Section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) allows for acquisition where redevelopment would deliver social, economic, or environmental benefits.^[4]

The initiation of a CPO can often prompt owners to act voluntarily, avoiding the need for formal proceedings. However, pursuing a CPO is resource-intensive and involves significant legal and administrative costs. It also results in the transfer of ownership, which is a serious step. Therefore, CPOs are only considered when all other engagement and enforcement options have failed, and where there is a compelling case in the public interest to justify such action.

Nationally, Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO's) on empty homes have increasingly been successful, with the outcomes having proven popular with the public. In addition to enhancing housing availability, the anti-social and criminal activities with which empty buildings can so often attract are also addressed because of such enforcement.

Unclaimed CPO/Enforced sale money

When a property is sold through enforced sale, the Council may deduct the following from the proceeds:

- Works in default costs
- Legal and conveyancing fees
- Marketing and auction costs
- Officer time related to the sale
- Outstanding Council debts

Any remaining funds are paid to the former owner, subject to existing charges or mortgages, or paid into Court if necessary.

Additional Statutory Powers

Where an empty home is causing a specific problem to a neighbourhood or is dangerous or ruinous, a range of enforcement powers are available. The timing and extent of the action taken will be dependent upon the individual circumstances encountered at the property. A detailed list of these measures is listed in Appendix B.

Maximise Income Opportunities

This strategy seeks to strengthen the Council's approach to debt recovery through targeted empty homes work and an evolving partnership with Council Tax colleagues. The focus will be on maximising the recovery of outstanding council tax charges and arrears, as well as reclaiming costs associated with works in default via registered land charges.

Where enforcement action has been undertaken, all cases will be actively pursued in collaboration with relevant departments. Where appropriate, further legal action will be considered in partnership with legal services, including the use of Enforced Sale procedures.

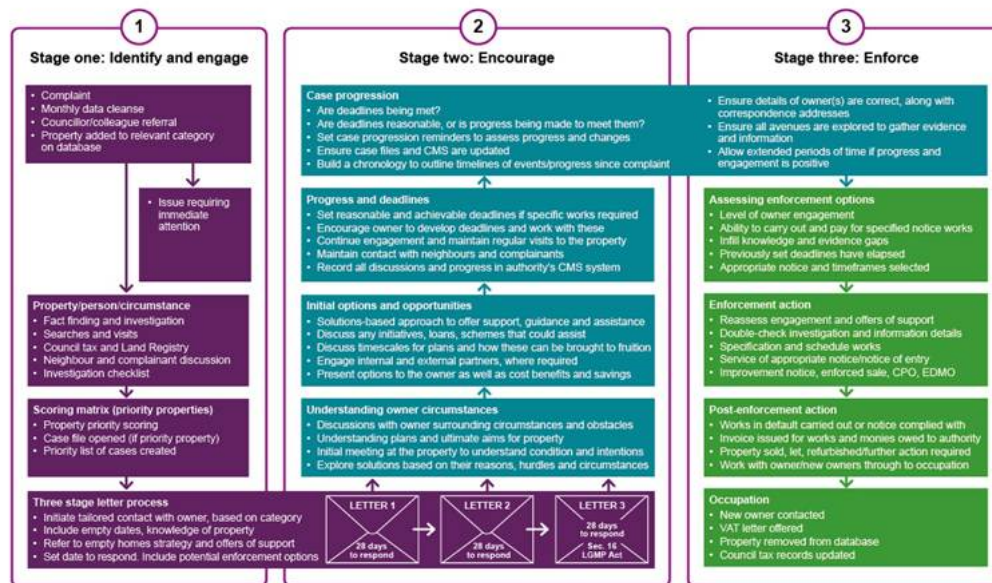
Working closely with Revenues and Benefits, properties with significant council tax arrears will be promptly identified and prioritised for intervention. Maintaining an accurate and up-to-date empty homes database will be essential to support this process.

Good Practice and aspirations

The Local Government Association Publication - A practical approach for councils when dealing with empty homes provides a blueprint of an approach to engage, encourage and enforce with a three letter process. The Figure below illustrates the process.

Figure 2 – Three Stage Process for dealing with empty homes

Image showing the three stages of an empty homes case, progressing from identifying and engaging with an empty home owner, through encouragement and on to enforcement, resulting in the property becoming occupied



Source - [A practical approach for councils on dealing with empty homes | Local Government Association](#)

The above document details best practice by developing a proactive approach to maximise opportunities to bring empty homes back into use. The council plans to adopt this approach and has set out below how this will be achieved.

A dedicated officer or team

- *In September 2025 Huntingdonshire District Council employed a Private Sector Housing Officer to bring empty homes back into use*

Regularly and proactively engage with empty home owners

- *The Private Sector Housing Officer has commenced engagement with empty home owners in December 2025 and developed a fact sheet to assist them in bringing homes back into use.*

Carry out regular, cyclical data cleansing

- *A database has been created and will be cleansed monthly from January 2026 utilising the cycle in Figure 3 below.*

Stand alone Empty Homes Strategy

- *A draft strategy has been created from 2026-2031.*

High levels of corporate support

- *The Empty Homes Strategy has a high level of corporate support.*

Enforcement work is encouraged, often led by a dedicated officer whose focus is to build casework through to formal action

- The Private Sector Housing Officer will focus on casework and where appropriate consider enforcement.

Statistics actively monitored using a stand-alone database

- A database has been created and is being actively monitored by the Private Sector Housing Officer.

Policies and procedures in place to provide a definitive cycle of case progression

- A procedure flowchart has been developed.

Grant Schemes

Lendology is a community interest company that works with several local authorities including Bristol City Council as a consortium of 10 councils to offer low interest loans for bringing long term empty homes back into use, installing energy efficient measures and supporting adaptations for disabled residents.

Lendology administer the loans and offer up to £20,000 per flat and £60,000 per property with a fixed interest rate of 4% and repayment term of up to 10 years. There are two types of loans – a letting loan includes capital and interest repayment, and a selling loan is an interest only loan, repayable within 2 years or on the sale of the property.

Greater Manchester has recently launched a £11.7m scheme encompassing 10 local authorities to tackle empty homes. The aim is to tackle the current housing crisis and pressures on temporary accommodation by turning long term empty homes into secure housing for families in need. It acknowledges that rising demand, a shortage of affordable homes and escalating costs have left council's increasingly reliant on expensive alternatives and places significant pressure on council budgets.

The aim is to refurbish or lease up to 400 properties out of the 12,700 long term empty homes identified across the area. There is £900,000 to employ empty homes officers. Landlords who join will be required to sign up to the Good Landlord Charter.

Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to developing a small grant scheme to assist with facilitating bringing empty homes back into use. This will be developed during the strategy. Long term there is a desire to join with other Local Authorities to operate an enhanced loan scheme post local government reorganisation.

Tenant matching services

Gedling Borough Council alongside other local authorities offer a free Property Matchmaker service. The aim is to match empty homeowners who wish to sell their property with people who wish to invest or buy an empty home. This type of scheme has had considerable success throughout the UK and would be a scheme that Huntingdonshire District Council would like to replicate.

Leasing Schemes

Durham County Council offer a leasing scheme to empty homeowners to house vulnerable persons. The rates are set at Local Housing Allowance and take account of repairs offers. The lease is subject to a monthly fee based on 20% of the rental rate.

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Other local authorities offer empty property owners the opportunity to match homeless households or households threatened with homelessness to provide them a home. This includes payments of deposits and rental income set at Local Housing Allowance. Huntingdonshire District Council will be considering this as an option in the future.

Property Appraisals

Rushcliffe Borough Council and the Empty Homes Network recommend offering free property appraisals to help to judge the cost of a renovation of the property's current value. Huntingdonshire District Council would like to develop a similar scheme as a tool to bringing empty homes back into use.

High Street Rental Auctions

The government has introduced High Street Rental Auctions to help local authorities increase the occupation of high street properties and improve local economies.

The High Street Rental Auction (HSRA) provides Local Authorities with the power to ensure that landlords rent out persistently vacant commercial properties to new tenants, including local businesses and community groups.

Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to bringing all empty properties back into use and acknowledges the opportunities created by residential properties within commercial settings.

Action Plan

The Action Plan for progressing towards the overall aims is included at Appendix D and acts as a commitment to further develop the tools available, enhance the support and guidance Huntingdonshire District Council offer, and make progress in bringing empty homes back into use across the district. The Action Plan identifies 5 key objectives for this strategy period.

Objective 1 – To maintain accurate information on empty homes in the district

The creation and ongoing development and maintenance of the existing empty homes database will be a cornerstone of the Council's approach to tackling empty properties across the district. This database holds essential information that enables targeted engagement and supports cyclical data cleansing exercises, ensuring records remain accurate and up to date.

All complaints and referrals concerning empty homes will be logged systematically to ensure they are investigated, prioritised, and risk-rated using the scoring matrix outlined in Appendix A. While the matrix score will generally guide the order in which cases are addressed, exceptions may be made based on local context, the severity or nature of a complaint, or where urgent intervention is required.

A key source of intelligence can be found in the regular monthly review of Council Tax data. The continued development of strong working relationships and data-sharing protocols have been established with council tax colleagues and the private sector housing officer (empty homes). This collaboration ensures timely access to account information, enhancing the effectiveness of both departments.

Looking ahead, this partnership is expected to strengthen further. In particular, the sharing of information and support to help ensure that nationally reported data is as accurate and current as possible.

Objective 2 - To raise awareness of empty homes and promote the strategy

With housing demand continuing to rise, the issue of empty homes is receiving growing attention. Having remained high on the political agenda for some time, recent developments, media coverage, and calls for stronger action have further elevated its profile in the public domain.

In response to this growing awareness, the Council is committed to maintaining visibility of the issue locally, using all appropriate and available channels to raise awareness. Internally, ensuring that staff and members understand the challenges posed by empty homes, and the support the Council can offer to their owners.

Externally, the Council will continue to promote the benefits of bringing empty homes back into use, while also exploring new opportunities to enhance the support available to owners. This dual approach will help ensure that both awareness and action continue to grow.

The public, our partners and internal colleagues will be encouraged to report all empty homes and will be given advice on the tell-tale signs to look out for.

Objective 3 - Provide advice, assistance and guidance to landlords and property owners to prevent properties from becoming long term problematic empties.

As awareness of the empty homes issue continues to grow, so to do the opportunities and methods available to bring these properties back into use. In the absence of national schemes specifically designed to support empty

homeowners, local authorities are uniquely positioned to develop tailored initiatives that meet the needs of their communities through locally driven solutions.

While Huntingdonshire District Council does not currently operate a financial assistance scheme such as loans, grants, or direct funding this remains an area for future exploration. We are committed to developing financial support that maximises the opportunities to bring empty homes back into use.

In the meantime, the Council will continue to explore and implement non-financial forms of assistance. These will include signposting to relevant services, facilitating access to advice, or brokering partnerships with local organisations and developing a property matching service. However, such support often depends on the specific needs and circumstances of individual property owners and may need to be developed on a case-by-case basis.

The Council's Empty Homes webpages will serve as a key point of contact and information. These pages will be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current policies, available support, and guidance for owners. The webpage will be further developed to include downloadable documents, details of available assistance, and the reporting tool for members of the public to notify the Council of suspected empty properties—an initiative that has proven successful and will be reviewed.

Objective 4 - Reduce the number of long term empty homes in the district and return problematic empty homes back in to use.

The process of returning empty homes to use and reducing the overall number of long-term vacant properties begins with the effective investigation and prioritisation of referrals, accurately recorded within the council's empty homes database. All complaints and referrals from residents are treated as a priority and assessed using a structured rating matrix (Appendix A) to determine their urgency and impact.

To build trust and strengthen the reputation of the service, all complaints will be followed up, with complainants kept informed about the process and the priority status of the property in question. Following the initial information-gathering stage, the Council will maintain regular and persistent engagement with empty home owners using existing resources, including tailored correspondence. This approach ensures owners are given every opportunity to respond and work collaboratively with the Council.

Council procedures will support the recording and monitoring of all engagement efforts, enabling timely follow-up actions or interventions where necessary. As each empty home case is unique—reflecting different histories and ownership circumstances—the Council will continually review its toolkit of support and intervention options. Where gaps are identified, solutions will be explored to enhance the service offering.

This strategy also aims to inform and align with wider Council policies and initiatives, encouraging cross-departmental support for efforts to bring empty homes back into use. The property database will be used to regularly assess enforcement options for all cases, with appropriate action pursued for priority

properties, especially where urgent attention is required due to a referral or complaint.

Where previously agreed steps have stalled, or where there is a lack of engagement from the owner, enforcement action will be considered. Prior appraisal of enforcement options will ensure a swift and proportionate response, including the service of statutory notices where necessary. While enforcement is viewed as a last resort, it remains a consideration throughout the investigation and support stages to demonstrate that all reasonable opportunities for voluntary resolution have been exhausted.

The Council's target is to bring at least 10 prioritised empty homes back into use annually over the lifetime of this strategy.

Objective 5 - To maximise income opportunities including Council Tax and Enforcement Debt Recovery

There are considerable opportunities for the development of the working relationship between council tax colleagues and private sector officer (empty homes). Through this developing partnership this strategy aims to identify and maximise debt recovery through council tax charges, arrears and land registry charges due to default works.

In circumstances that enforcement action has been carried out we will pursue these with the support of colleague and where appropriate recommend subsequent action in collaboration with legal services and consider enforced sales.

Working with Revenue and Benefits current empty homes with large amounts of council tax arrears should be evaluated using the scoring tool and prioritised accordingly.

Monitor and review

To deliver the Empty Homes Strategy successfully, the Council will utilise all available resources across within Huntingdonshire District Council and its external partners. The Council will keep records of the number of empty Homes returned to use and the period they remained empty. The accompanying Action Plan (Appendix C) will be reviewed and updated annually.

Our Commitment

Regardless of why a property has become and remained empty, and irrespective of the owner's current circumstances, the Council's primary aim is always to work collaboratively with the owner wherever possible. Our goal is to provide support and, where necessary, facilitate action to help achieve the owner's intended outcome.

It is important to recognise that every property, owner, and situation is unique. The reasons a property becomes and stays empty vary widely, and each case must be approached individually based on the information available. While some circumstances may be more sensitive or challenging than others, the Council remains committed to the principles and objectives of the Empty Homes Strategy.

We also acknowledge that empty properties can create issues for neighbouring residents and the wider community.

Owners should understand that, although the Council prefers to work with them to realise their plans, doing nothing is not an option. By owning an empty property, they carry a responsibility and must take appropriate action.

^[1] [\[A practical...empty homes\]](#), [\[3-Point Plan\]](#)

^[2] Source - <https://www.approved-planning.co.uk/how-many-houses-per-acre-uk/>

^[3] Empty Homes Network

^[4] <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/68/section/17>
<https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/property/313-property-features/33111-housing-estate-regeneration-and-cpos> <https://www.no-use-empty.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/what-powers-do-local-authorities-have/>

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