



Lambeth Empty Homes and Voids Action Plan 2024 - 2030

Autumn 2024

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Introduction

Nationally we are facing a housing crisis, with London and Lambeth on the sharp end of this national emergency. Demand far outstrips supply, private rent costs continue to rise and far outstrip wage increases, and there is a lack of social and affordable housing to meet demand leading to extensive waiting lists, homelessness, and rough sleeping. Given the scale of the challenge, local authorities are exploring all avenues to provide the homes our residents need. Alongside a range of activity such as investment in building more homes and use of our planning system, one available lever to local and national government is to facilitate more occupancy of homes that sit empty.

There is an extensive data and literature on empty homes. It has long been recognised as an important national challenge given the opportunity it presents to play a part in addressing the nationwide housing shortages. In 2022, there were 676,304 empty homes in England, as recorded by council tax statistics. This was a 3.6% increase on the year before. 248,149 of these were 'long-term vacant' properties (vacant for over 6 months). In 2023, 'long-term vacant' properties rose again by 12,556 (or 5%) to 261,189. Vacant dwellings statistics are annually updated by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and can be traced back to 2004¹. Long-term empty dwellings steadily decreased in England to around 200,000 from 2012 to 2017, but in recent years have seen rises (aside from Covid-19) to 2023 being the highest on record since 2011.

Lambeth's new Housing Strategy 'A Place We Can All Call Home' sets out a series of commitments to help the borough achieve its vision for Lambeth 2030, including to deliver 'More Affordable Homes'. As well as building and buying more homes, a key part of our strategy is to make better use of Lambeth's existing homes, including in taking the opportunities that present themselves by vacant and under-occupied homes. There are many different types of 'empty home', each with their own financial, legal, and administrative obstacles to bringing them back into permanent occupation. Some are considerably more complex, costly, or more difficult to act against than others. However, we recognise that to our residents, an empty property appears the same regardless to who owns it or the reasons why it sits empty. The Council is acting across the range of its powers to maximise the number of empty homes that are brought back into use.

Recognising the importance in making progress, a wide range of Lambeth Council services responsible for different types of property are taking action to deliver more homes back into use as quickly as possible. This action plan sets out our recent and planned activity on empty homes to deliver this. This action plan defines the different types of empty home, sets out the current national situation, contextualises what this means in Lambeth, before outlining what actions Lambeth is taking in relation to different categories of empty home. This action plan will be updated annually and our key figures quarterly, to demonstrate the progress the Council is making, explain where and why we are facing challenges, and to articulate any new actions we are taking.

¹ MHCLG. 2024. Live tables on dwelling stock (including vacants). [Online]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants>

National Context

The impact of years of austerity, successive years of housebuilding below the levels needed (especially social housing), high numbers of post-war housing stock now requiring significant investment to repair or regenerate them and recent spikes in inflation have all come together to create a deepening housing crisis. Lambeth, alongside many local authorities in London and beyond, grapples with the reality of this crisis, and how best to support residents, at a local level. The topic of empty homes has long been a focus of national and local policymakers as an opportunity to address some of this housing need. A series of changes to the powers and funding available to local government have been made by national governments to try to facilitate more occupancy of empty homes and reduce the time homes of all types spend vacant².

- In 2004, the Empty Dwelling Management Order (2004) empowered councils to take control of homes vacant for over two years and in 2007 VAT on regeneration work for properties empty for over two years was reduced to 5% to encourage more action to be taken.
- In 2011, the Government's Empty Homes Programme provided £100 million in grants to refurbish empty homes in England, while the New Homes Bonus rewarded councils by matching the council tax raised on properties brought back into use for six years (later reduced to five years in 2017/18 and four years in 2018/19).
- By 2013, reforms removed automatic council tax discounts and introduced the option for councils to charge a 50% premium on unfurnished homes empty for more than two years. Amendments in 2019 and 2020 increased premiums to 100% for more than two years, 200% for more than five years and 300% for properties that are empty for more than ten years.
- From 2021, the Affordable Homes Programme (2021-2026) was expanded to allow bids for funding to bring empty homes back into use as affordable housing. In 2023, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act allowed councils to charge a 100% council tax premium on homes empty for 12 months (instead of two years) and introduced the same 100% premium for furnished second or holiday homes.

Nationally, the information used to measure the level of empty homes largely relies upon council tax data. Whilst this provides a consistent set of data tracing back over two decades, the council tax receipts are not necessarily a reflection of all empty properties. A report by the campaign group Action on Empty Homes identified some key challenges, including that private owners are disincentivised from declaring a property empty due to premiums now applied, derelict properties not being classed as dwellings for counting purposes, or that properties that remain empty but are exempt from council tax are not recorded in the same way³. Privately owned properties, especially in London, are sometimes kept empty or underoccupied as investments with accruing value, as second homes or as short-term lets.

² A full breakdown of policy changes can be found in Appendix 1.

³ Action on Empty Homes. 2019. Empty homes in England 2019. [Online]. Available from: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6553693f7d629a133b6a4ece/t/6553852c1d7d5c1ee3f78114/1699972404829/2019+report.pdf>

Empty homes owned by local authorities, housing associations, or other registered social housing providers that do not have a legitimate tenancy in place are often described as ‘void.’ While these homes may be unoccupied for a period of time, they are not necessarily always ‘empty’ and can be between tenancies for various reasons. The ‘void period’ refers to the time between a formal tenancy ending and a new tenancy beginning, even if the property is legitimately or illegitimately occupied during this time.

These homes often must undergo repairs to a state of ‘lettable standard’ or are waiting to be re-let to a new tenant. The longer it remains empty the longer prospective tenants go without essential housing, the less income the provider makes, and the more costs rise. Loss of income also reduces the funding available to reinvest and pay for future repairs in properties. Given this, all housing providers are incentivised to return homes to occupancy as quickly as possible. For local government, returning council owned properties to occupancy as quickly as possible is especially crucial in helping us support residents in urgent need of housing on our waiting lists or in temporary accommodation. Lambeth has a number of privately empty properties and Council-owned voids and is being proactive to address the unique challenges and opportunities in both.

Lambeth Context

Housing sits at the heart of Lambeth 2030’s ambition to make Lambeth a place we can all call home. Our [new Housing Strategy](#) for 2024 to 2030 sets out a framework for delivering this under three key priority themes.

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| More Affordable Homes | <i>Lambeth will lead the way in providing more genuinely affordable homes for residents, making best use of resources, levers, and opportunities to innovate.</i> |
| Delivering Excellent Housing and Repair Services | <i>Lambeth will put residents first, providing services which value and meet the needs of residents – and rectify things if they go wrong.</i> |
| Supporting Healthy and Safe Neighbourhoods | <i>Lambeth housing will be at the centre of safe and sustainable places, which support physical and mental health and wellbeing.</i> |

Delivering these priorities is essential, given the scale of the housing challenge that Lambeth faces. Median private rent in Lambeth constitutes around 57% of the median household earnings, with 2 in 5 households living in deprivation once housing costs are accounted for. Over 10% of homes in Lambeth are deemed overcrowded, based on ratio of bedrooms to occupants. Around 40,000 households are currently on the Council housing waiting list - over 12% of Lambeth’s total population. As of November 2024, there were over 4,750 people living in temporary accommodation. The cost of housing homeless families from Lambeth has now risen to more than £90million. It is estimated that Lambeth Council accommodates around 1 in 30 of all households in temporary accommodation in the UK. Last year a further 5,500 people made homelessness applications to Lambeth, and pressure for temporary accommodation continues to rise.

Empty properties and voids represent one opportunity for Lambeth to increase its provision to meet the significant challenges we face. It is important to note that **numbers of the empty homes and void properties in Lambeth will continually shift** as properties move back into occupation or residents move out. In 2023/2024, government statistics showed Lambeth’s number of long-term (6 months+) empty properties rose slightly to 2,024 premises, which is shown in more detail in Appendix 2⁴. This includes second homes, which saw a year-on-year increase of 18% to over 600 properties. Every single home that can be brought back into occupancy is a significant social benefit to residents occupying these homes full time.

The Council commits to **updating this action plan annually**, to demonstrate to residents the progress we are making towards our **Housing Strategy’s objective to make better use of Lambeth’s existing homes**. We will also **publish quarterly data updates on key empty homes and voids categories** based on the Council’s statistics, to provide a consistent record of the number of ‘empty homes’ that we have in Lambeth across our Council and private empty properties.

Categorising and Quantifying ‘Empty Homes’ in Lambeth

Under the overall term of ‘empty homes’, there are a **several different categories of property**. These differences include who owns the property, lengths of time left empty, whether it is furnished or unfurnished, and varying severity of work required. For each category, there are different actions available to local authorities to try to encourage them back into most efficient use for permanent housing.

Lambeth’s own statistics on its empty home and voids is **distinct from the government figures**, which categorise properties as being empty between less than 6 months or more than 6 months vacant based on council tax records.

The main overarching categories of Lambeth’s empty homes and voids are set out in Table 1. These are described further below, however, this list is not exhaustive and a more detailed breakdown of different types of empty home and void is provided in Appendix 3.

| Property Category | Count | Data sourced |
|--|-------|--------------|
| Council-owned General Stock Standard Repairs Voids (long and short cycle) | 184 | November 24 |
| Council-owned General Stock Properties Ready for Occupation | 88 | November 24 |
| Council-owned Estate Regeneration Confirmed Voids | 182 | November 24 |
| Privately owned empty (unfurnished, less than 12 months) | 1527 | October 24 |
| Privately owned empty (unfurnished, more than 12 months) | 504 | October 24 |
| Privately owned (furnished, empty or occupied periodically) | 600 | October 24 |

Table 1: Count Empty Home/Void Property Categories in Lambeth

⁴ Gov.Uk. 2024. Live tables on dwelling stock (including vacant). [Online]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants>

Standard Repairs Voids

Those properties are classed as “void” as they undergoing standard repairs between tenancies before being relet, referred to as ‘short cycle’ and ‘long cycle’, depending on the cost and complexity of work required. Short cycle repairs usually require minor repair work that are less complex and less costly to complete. Our target ‘key-to-key’ turnaround time for short cycle void properties between tenancies is 30 days for those requiring minor work. Properties needing significant capital investment or large-scale works, such as a new kitchen or bathroom installation, are classified as long cycle voids. These are managed on a case-by-case basis, with turnaround times determined by the complexity and scale of the work, often requiring coordination between multiple contractors to complete the necessary repairs. Given the scale of the Council’s housing stock, it is **to be expected that a number of properties will be requiring repairs** at any given time, as part of effective management of the council’s homes to give time for repairs and re-occupancy processes. The Council recently **set a target to work towards having 150 standard repair void** (short and long cycle) properties. Our current total is 184, and actions within this plan should help us move closer to our target.

Non-standard Repairs and Properties out of Formal Tenancy

The Council has a range of other properties that are not occupied by a formal tenancy **because of a range of more complex or nuanced other reasons than just standard repairs**. Appendix 3 details the range of reasons a council property might not be in formal tenancy at a particular point in time (beyond standard repairs) and gives a sense of scale for each of these challenges. This includes properties where repairs have been completed and they are awaiting occupancy and void properties on council regeneration estates. However, **not all properties out of formal tenancy are actually empty**. For example, a property being used to temporarily house another household whose Council property is undertaking **significant repairs** (otherwise known as a ‘decant’). The Council may also face challenges with **unauthorised occupants** in properties, where despite a lack of tenancy an individual may refuse to vacate the property and sometimes this can require lengthy legal proceedings. Court delays are a national challenge, and extensive backlogs of cases can lead to legal disputes being unresolved for lengthy time periods with no further action available to return this property to formal tenancy until the legal matter is resolved. Other examples where a property will be void for a period is when a property is being scheduled for imminent **substantial capital works**, with the severity of works required making it unsuitable for a new tenancy. The range of reasons set out in Appendix 3 shows the range of **case-by-case challenges** that come with returning each property to a tenancy. Given the complexity and wide range of other reasons for voids outside of long and short cycle repairs, we do not have specific targets, but endeavour to have as few voids in other categories as possible.

Privately Owned

Privately owned empty properties are monitored via council tax records in Lambeth. Those that are empty and unfurnished for less than 12 months currently have no enforcement levers to bring them back into use. Once they are empty and unfurnished for more than 12 months, we can bring in a series of escalating council tax actions to encourage their return to occupancy based on length of time empty. Those furnished and

empty or periodically occupied (otherwise known as second homes) will also receive a council tax premium after 12 months from the 1 April 2025. However, this will not escalate over time and this will be the limit of the Council's current enforcement powers on furnished homes.

We have used the most recently available statistics for each category, which varies depending on who is responsible for collecting and reporting on those respective figures. **Figures will routinely change as voids and empty homes change status.** However, the totals from a specific point in time are still useful to provide an **indication of the scale of empty homes in Lambeth**. Quarterly this table will be populated and shared with residents, with an annual update to the wider action plan.

Council Powers on Empty Homes and Voids

Whilst there are many different categories of empty home, the Council does not always have the powers to act on them. There are a series of areas where the Council has significantly less direct or indirect enforcement capabilities to encourage empty homes into use.

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| Housing Associations | Whilst the Council works closely alongside our Housing Association partners, it does not have control or direct oversight of their own voids policies or operations. Housing Associations vary in size and often sit across multiple boroughs, with their own processes to manage voids. Whilst Housing Associations are incentivised to act on their empty homes to reduce income lost, inflation, the social housing rent cap and lack of capital can make it difficult for them to make sizeable investments to address empty properties where complex or costly repairs are required. The Council can provide advice and guidance but has no direct control over their void turnaround time or in how, or when, they address their long-term empty properties. |
| Short-term/Holiday Lets | Current legislation puts a cap on the use of transactional properties (short-term or holiday lets) at 90 days per year. However, there is not yet a register of all these properties and it is expected many across London exceed this limit. Research from London Council's suggests the challenge of short-term lets is worsening in the capital and contributing to the increasing crisis in housing available for residents ⁵ . Lack of consistent and accurate monitoring makes it difficult for local authorities to use enforcement powers to tackle this issue, with calls from the Mayor of London to establish a licencing scheme that can better regulate short-term lets ⁶ . |
| Council Tax Exemptions | There are a number of empty property types which are exempt from council tax premiums and other enforcement actions. Some examples of this include properties owned by someone who has moved into a care home or hospital, |

⁵ London Councils. 2024. Press Release: Boroughs share short-term let concerns. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/news-and-press-releases/2024/boroughs-share-short-term-let-concerns>

⁶ Mayor of London. 2023. Press Release: Mayor Demands Licencing Scheme to Prevent Short-term Lets Damaging Housing Supply. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-demands-licencing-scheme-prevent-short-term-lets-damaging-housing-supply#:~:text=Therefore%2C%20the%20Mayor%20is%20calling,exclusively%20to%20short%2D%20term%20lets.>

a home left empty by someone in prison, homes that have been repossessed or those that cannot be lived in by law i.e., those that are derelict⁷. Recent regulation changes set out additional exemptions on long-term empty homes and second homes such as annexes being treated as part of the main dwelling and dwellings of those residing in job-related armed forces accommodation. Once the Second Homes Premium is enforced from 1 April 2025, job-related dwellings, caravan pitches and boat moorings and seasonal homes where year-round occupation is prohibited due to planning conditions all also have exemptions. On both accounts, exemptions will also apply to dwellings being actively marked for let or sale and those requiring/undergoing major repairs, though this will be limited to 12 months before premiums can then be applied as usual.

Action Planning on Empty Homes and Voids

The following action plan highlights the key areas where the Council has the powers to act, and the activities it is undertaking to strengthen its approach to empty homes. The expected impact outlines how the Council expects its actions to make a positive impact on the obstacles to empty home occupation.

Taking Action on Empty and Void Council Housing Properties

Lambeth Council is one of the biggest social landlords in the country, with 33,000 rented and leasehold council homes. Around 23,000 of these are tenants directly with the Council. As a result, it has a high number of its own properties that become empty when tenancies change. **The Council can expect to always have some homes ‘empty’ at any given time because of the time it takes to assess, repair and re-let these properties between tenancies; these are known as “voids”.** Our aim is to ensure that these properties are returned to occupancy by residents as soon as possible. This must be balanced by delivering safe accommodation that meets the lettable standards we have set ourselves in Lambeth, which are higher than those set out by national government.

In recent years, Lambeth Council has renewed its approach to voids within its Council housing stock in general residential use. To continue to improve the way in which the council manages its void properties and ensure they are brought into use for residents, the Council is focusing on improvement of our data and IT systems that we use to manage these properties; increasing staff capacity to manage and support process; and refining each of the distinct steps within our voids processes to ensure they are as effective and accountable as they can be. We have also outlined specific strategies to take action on our voids on our regeneration estates and to support void management by our Tenant Management

⁷ Gov.uk. How Council Tax Works: Second Homes and Empty Properties. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/council-tax/second-homes-and-empty-properties>

Organisations (TMOs). By delivering these actions, the Council's monitoring of its own social housing stock will be more accurate, the management processes for our voids will be more efficient and homes will be assessed, allocated and re-occupied quicker. We will also explore opportunities for commercial properties to be repurposed for residential use.

| Action | Expected Impact | Timescales for Completion |
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| <p>Streamlined Voids Management and Contractor Accountability: The Council has centralised its voids repairs work under a single contractor.</p> <p>Action we already take as business as usual is that turnaround time is used as a contractor performance metric and financial penalties are used where short cycle repairs KPI's (10 days, complete repairs within timeframe) are not met, if an extension is not pre-agreed. For long cycle voids with more substantial works, works timeframes are set on a case-by-case basis due to the range of works required.</p> | <p>Contractors consistently deliver at the speed and quality we have set at Lambeth, delivering more Council homes back into occupancy more quickly.</p> | <p>The Council has now converted to a sole contractor.</p> <p>The Council has already linked contractor performance objectives and financial incentives to repair turnaround time.</p> |
| <p>Data Cleanse and Voids IT Improvement: The Council's data on empty homes are undergoing a 'cleansing' process, where old records and inaccurate records of properties are being checked and either amended or removed from our records.</p> <p>A new IT system is being developed which will more accurately record all 'live' empty council properties. This means the reason why the property is empty will be more up to date and correctly reflect its current status.</p> <p>The new IT system will include a function which monitors all the specific tasks that are required on each empty property, who is responsible, and records the current progress they have made. This is for all void types.</p> <p>The new IT system will also automate some processes that are currently manual, giving officers more time to focus on working to addressing obstacles to homes being occupied.</p> | <p>More accurate property records will enable better decision making on the most appropriate action on different types of empty home in the borough.</p> <p>Clearly defined tasks, who is responsible for them, and their current progress will build higher levels of accountability for bringing properties back into occupancy as quickly as possible.</p> | <p>Data cleansing is underway and will be complete by the end of 2024.</p> <p>The new IT system was tested in September 2024. Testing was completed and changes being made as a result of the testing. It will be fully implemented by February 2024.</p> |
| <p>Managing Decants More Efficiently: Some Council properties are used as a temporary 'decant'. This means they are used to temporarily house those who have been temporarily moved out of their full-time residence due to repair works.</p> <p>We will complete an audit of 'decant' properties to ensure they are still in use and properly recorded. The Council will host regular cross-service meetings to monitor and plan for decant properties, to balance between the need for decant housing as well as permanent occupancy. We will establish a process to ensure all decant properties have agreed timelines for when they will become available for a tenancy.</p> | <p>Better cross-service coordination and clearer processes will reduce the time properties remain vacant while being used as labelled as decants, making more homes available for long-term tenancies and use of our existing housing stock more efficiently.</p> | <p>Audit of all properties categorised as a 'decant' complete by December 2024.</p> <p>All properties currently occupied as a 'decant' have a timeline for their return to tenancy by December 2024.</p> <p>Formal process for monitoring properties used as a decant agreed by December 2024. New IT changes will assist in this process.</p> |

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| <p>Additional Capacity: The Council will put in place additional capacity to deliver more action on empty homes, through hiring, and sharing capacity between services. This includes staff such as surveyors to assess more voids as rapidly as possible and resource to conduct viewings to let properties ready for allocation.</p> | <p>More capacity allows us to assess, address and re-let properties in a shorter amount of time, leading to reduced void periods and increased levels of occupancy across general stock.</p> | <p>All properties currently categorised as 'ready for occupation' re-categorised or occupied by January 2024. This is a live figure so new properties will be made ready on a weekly basis. Target will aim to have only newly completed properties in this category with KPI's set for staff to sign up as quickly as possible.</p> <p>All new staff/additional capacity in place by November 2024.</p> |
| <p>Enhanced Letting and Allocation Process: The Council is updating its allocations and matching process between empty properties and eligible residents to be more streamlined. This includes limiting the number of offers made for housing, reducing the need to produce repeated shortlists of potential tenants. It also includes a process of pre-letting, where we allocate lets in advance of voids in order to speed up the allocations and occupancy process.</p> | <p>Removing multiple rounds of shortlisting and faster agreement and acceptance of housing offers will mean properties that are ready for occupancy are empty for shorter periods.</p> | <p>The refined allocations and matching process for empty properties and eligible tenants was completed in September 2024.</p> |
| <p>Incentivising Efficient Use of Council Housing Stock: We already encourage tenants in Council properties to downsize through the Transfer Incentive Scheme. Under-occupiers are given very high priority to bid for a smaller property. We normally offer £500 for each bedroom an under-occupier gives up. We will also pay removal expenses and the costs of disconnecting and reconnecting gas and electricity supplies for those who move through Choice Based Lettings. The incentive scheme is currently under review.</p> | <p>Council stock is more efficiently used, with those who have more bedrooms than they need downsizing to enable larger families to live in an appropriately sized property.</p> | <p>The Transfer Incentive Scheme is already in place.</p> |
| <p>Managing Empty Properties on Council Regeneration Estates: The empty homes on our Council regeneration estates are some of the most visible properties, of concern to the community and prone to security risk in the borough. Given the age of some of our estate housing stock, some of these estates are scheduled for large scale retrofitting or for regeneration. The implementation of the council's Key Guarantees, established in 2017 to support estate renewal, has generated a significant number of empty properties.</p> <p>In response to this, the Council implemented a specific Estate Regeneration Voids Strategy published in 2018 and updated in 2024, with a series of associated and ongoing actions to reasonably maximise our occupancy in these circumstances without creating unnecessary risk or uncertainty for residents.</p> <p>These actions include a new assessment process on the costs and benefits of bringing each empty estate property back into use and what tenure/housing type would be most appropriate, enhanced security processes to prevent</p> | <p>Empty properties are used most efficiently to meet the financial and housing needs of our residents.</p> <p>Properties not returned to occupancy will have a clear assessment as to why not.</p> <p>By rapidly securing empty properties that become empty on our estates, it is less likely that unauthorised occupancy will limit repairs works or reletting to new tenants, enable faster return to occupancy.</p> <p>Faster allocations mean those the waiting list or in temporary accommodation are housed faster, and the time our estate</p> | <p>The updated Estate Regeneration Voids Strategy update has been in place since January 2024.</p> |

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| unauthorised occupation in newly empty properties and pre-matching appropriate tenants to properties. | properties which are ready for occupation remain empty is reduced. | |
| <p>Managing the Return of Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs) to Council Housing Stock: As part of our wider empty homes work, we are ensuring that our existing stock of Council-owned properties is effectively used to support our most vulnerable residents. Part of this is returning former leaseholder properties under assured shorthold tenancies (ASTs) via Homes for Lambeth back into traditional Council housing stock. The total number of AST properties identified is 118. However, not all of these properties will be void at the same time but will at some point become void during their return to Council housing stock.</p> <p>The Council is refining taking action to ensure these properties are re-occupied as quickly as possible. This includes gifting existing electrical goods and appliances to new tenants and taking a proportional and approach to refitting, focused on ensuring safety. To ensure voids refurbishing represent value for money, Director sign-off is required for any works costing over £5,000. Leaseholder properties can sometimes be without a gas certificate, and this takes up to six weeks to resolve, so we have also integrated the gas check alongside the initial survey.</p> | <p>Less time and unnecessary financial expense spent on unnecessary refitting in former AST properties mean they return to occupancy faster and more cost effectively.</p> <p>AST properties return to occupancy faster, as less time is spent pending gas certification completion.</p> | <p>ASTs will be returning to Council stock on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>Director sign-off for works over £5,000, gifting of appliances and gas check processes are already in place.</p> |
| <p>Supporting Resident and Tenant Management Organisations with Voids: A number of Council-owned properties are managed by Tenant (or Resident) Management Organisations (TMOs/RMOs). There are 10 TMOs in Lambeth, varying in size from around 100 to over 1,000 properties. They are responsible for short cycle voids with minor and low-cost works, though major works responsibilities are escalated to the Council.</p> <p>The Council is increasing its support for TMOs/RMOs around voids. This includes meeting with all TMOs/RMOs to understand their void processes and challenges, working together to improve consistency of use in the void IT, refreshing the referrals process, and training such as recently on the Housing Allocations process.</p> | <p>TMO/RMOs are better supported to address and monitor their voids, leading to properties returning to occupancy faster.</p> <p>The new IT/referral process will enable all stakeholders to see clearly which voids have been referred back to the Council for major works, and the latest updates on progress.</p> | <p>Engagement and support for TMOs/RMOs is an ongoing activity for the council.</p> <p>The new IT system was tested in September 2024. Testing was completed and changes being made as a result of the testing. It will be fully implemented by February 2024.</p> |

Taking Action on Privately Owned Empty Properties

The most significant number of Lambeth's empty homes are privately owned residences. The reasons privately owned dwellings can remain vacant varies. This includes furnished and unfurnished properties, ranging from being used infrequently as a holiday or second home by an owner, under-inhabited due to its use in a limited transactional capacity such as short-term lets, requiring substantial capital investment to return it to a liveable standard or housing being treated as an investment. Council tax records as of August 2024 showed the number of empty unfurnished private dwellings totalled almost 2000, with an additional 528 furnished homes periodically empty (often referred to as 'second homes').

Without direct control over these properties, the Council has more limited ability to bring these vacant dwellings back into occupancy. However, the Council is taking steps to maximise all available policy levers at its disposal to encourage empty homeowners to bring these properties back into some form of residency, whether in the private rented sector or sold for inhabitation. This action is being led by our Private Sector Housing & Enforcement, Council Tax and Temporary Accommodation teams.

By identifying and leveraging our council tax premiums on different forms of privately owned empty home, the Council is pushing to return our most common empty home back into occupancy for residents. It also returns significant revenue, with £1.1m collected (paid in full) from a total of £1.4m charged for financial year 2023 to 2024 and £903k collected (paid in full) of £2.9m charged for financial year 2024 to 2025. The Council continues to pursue outstanding payments. This is expected to rise as legislation expands the criteria for properties that can be charged additional premiums, as furnished properties periodically occupied (often referred to as "second homes") from 1 April 2025 shall incur a 100% council tax premium. This is expected to raise a further £1.2 million in revenue for 2025 to 2026. However, there will be further exemptions to Long Term Empty Premium and Second Homes premium that can be applied from 1 April 2025, as already outlined under 'Council Powers on Empty Homes and Voids'.

| Action | Expected Impact | Timescales for Completion |
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| Maximising Council Tax Premiums: The Council proactively leverages the highest premiums it can charge on empty properties under current legislation. Unfurnished properties empty for extended periods are charged an additional rate on top of the normal rate of council tax (1 year + at 100%, 5 years+ at 200%, 10 years+ at 300%). This is the maximum we can charge under current legislation, and we do so to encourage private owners towards use of empty homes for occupation for residents. | The higher premiums on empty properties (both furnished and unfurnished) will continue to disincentivise owners from keeping their properties unoccupied. Council tax premiums on empty homes raise significant income for the Council. | The Council removed its discounts for Council tax on empty properties in 2013/14. The Council has implemented its Long-Term Empty premiums in alignment with changing council tax legislation since 2013/14, initially at 50% for 2 years+. From 1 April 2019 this increased to 100% for 2 years+ and from 1 April 2020 to 100% for 2 years+ and 200% for 5 years+. On 1 April 2021 this rose to 100% for 2 years+, |

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| Recent legislation has extended council tax premium powers to include properties which are furnished properties periodically occupied (referred to as "second homes") and from 1 April 2025 they will incur a 100% council tax premium. | Second homes (furnished) being charged a premium are expected to earn the Council an additional c.£1.2mil revenue in 2025/26. | 200% for 5 years+ and 300% for 10 years+. From 1 April 2024 this expanded again to 100% for 1 years+, 200% for 5 years+ and 300% for 10 years+. The Council has issued notice to Ratepayers that furnished properties periodically occupied (referred to as "second homes") will attract a 100% premium from 1 April 2025. |
| Improving Engagement with Residents on Empty Homes: The Council is committing more capacity to communication with residents on empty homes. This action plan is one tool to do so, as well as improving the Council's empty homes webpage and providing better digital opportunities for residents to identify concerns with empty homes in their community. | Residents are better informed on the Council's activities on empty homes and find it easier to engage with the Council on this matter. | This action plan was completed and published in Autumn 2024. The Council's empty homes webpage will be updated by April 2025, following approval of this action plan. |
| Increased Utilisation of Newly Developed Empty Properties: The Council is using planning applications to identify and monitor newly developed properties (under 6 months) which are empty. It is proactively contacting developers of newly developed empty properties with the offer of leasing to the council to let to residents on completion. | Reduced numbers of newly developed properties sitting empty, whilst more housing is available for residents in most need of accommodation. | The identification and contacting of newly developed empty properties is an ongoing process, as more developments complete. |
| Assessments, Monitoring and Inspections: The Council have created a Private Sector Enforcement and Regulations (PSER) Empty Property Database to log and monitor all privately owned empty properties and track actions related to them. The Council have established a quarterly, cross-team group to discuss and agree actions on properties with limited progress towards occupancy. Lambeth is embedding an inspection process for properties that have not responded to letters, with priority-based inspections on problem properties. | The Council has a more accurate overview of its privately owned empty properties and the steps that have been taken to encourage them back into occupancy. | The PSER Empty Property Database is now complete and is in use. The London Borough Problem Property Group meets quarterly on an ongoing basis. The inspection process for non-responsive properties has been underway since April 2024. |
| Implementing More Enforcement Powers: Lambeth is strengthening its use of enforcement powers. This includes creating an Enforced Sale Process to sell empty properties that have accrued debt to the Council. It also includes enhanced use of Compulsory Purchase Orders on properties with significant environmental impacts and implementing enforcement levers on properties deemed a nuisance. | More owners of empty properties must take steps to return their property to occupancy, either themselves or via sale. | The new enforced sale process will be in place by April 2025. The new compulsory purchase order process will be in place by April 2025. |
| Supporting Owners to Maximise Property Occupancy: The Council is developing its support offer to owners to encourage them to return their properties to occupancy. We are exploring opportunities for Renovation Grant's to produce more self-contained residential units and VAT reductions for those who return currently empty | More owners of empty properties choose to take steps to return their property to occupancy. | All owners of empty properties have been contacted via letter by April 2024. This process is ongoing for newly identified empty properties Review of uptake of existing capital loans and discounts is underway and will be complete by April 2025. |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>properties into use. Current use of available grants and discounts is being reviewed.</p> <p>All empty property owners have been contacted via letter with options available to bring their properties back into use, such as via sale or Council conducting repairs in exchange for an agreed Council lease period. We are also conducting a benchmarking of other Council grant and loan incentives offered for empty properties. We will review our own offer to owners in light of this and assess the financial implications and viability of adjusting our offer. A pilot of this process is underway, with the capital "loan" agreement and lease agreement templates being set up.</p> | | <p>The benchmarking exercise will be complete by April 2025, the results of which will inform a reassessment of our grants and loans provision for empty property owners.</p> <p>The templates for the "loan" agreement and "lease" will be completed by April 2025, with the pilot being taken forward.</p> |
|---|--|--|

Advocacy for Improved Empty Homes Powers

The Council is working to maximise all the policy and practical levers it has as its disposal to bring empty homes of all types back into occupancy. However, there are limitations under current national legislation to what action that local authorities can take. The Council is therefore working to advocate on behalf of its residents for the national policy changes that will have a positive impact on our ability to take action on empty homes. Our priorities for our empty homes external affairs activities are outlined below.

| Action | Expected Impact |
|--|---|
| <p>National Empty Homes Strategy: The Council will work with the Greater London Authority to encourage the new national government to produce (and consult on) a new national empty homes strategy, to provide clear strategic direction on how vacant properties will be better used to meet the essential housing needs of our residents.</p> | <p>Clear national policy framework that provides more clarity to local authorities on what powers they can and should use to deliver more homes into full time occupancy for residents.</p> |
| <p>Short-term and Holiday Lets Register: The Council will advocate for the government to implement a compulsory register for all properties being used as short-term or holiday lets.</p> <p>Alongside a mandatory register or licencing process for these property types, the Council will champion the need for stricter zoning restrictions on the number of short-term lets allowed in certain areas, the ability to add a tourism tax or increased council tax on properties used for short-term lets and making planning permission a requirement to change property use from residential to short-term lets.</p> | <p>Properties owners using homes for holiday or short-term lets per year will be less able or disincentivised from doing, leading to more homes returning it to full time occupancy.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Improving Enforcement Powers: The Council will advocate for greater enforcement powers for local authorities to take action to bring privately owned empty homes into occupancy.</p> <p>For Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) our asks include simplifying the process and amending it to allow local authorities to remove 'hope value' from land valuations. This would allow purchase at current use value rather than potential future value, making CPOs on empty property more financially viable for local authorities.</p> <p>On enforced sales we need less complex legal procedures, extended timeframes, and increased funding/financial incentives to support local authorities to undertake more enforced sales processes where appropriate and applicable.</p> <p>On Empty Dwelling Management Orders, we are asking for a simplified application process, financial support to manage and refurbish these properties, stronger legal powers to resolve disputes with owners and to implement more robust non-compliance penalties.</p> | <p>Enhanced enforcement powers will enable the Council to take more proactive action to bring privately owned empty homes back into occupancy, with less financial and resource costs for doing so.</p> |
| <p>Devolution of Council Tax Premium Rates: The Council will advocate for the rate of council tax premiums that are applicable to empty properties to be a devolved matter, with local authorities given the power to set their own premiums.</p> | <p>The Council having the power to increase premiums would give us the opportunity to encourage more private owners to return properties to occupancy.</p> |
| <p>New Planning Powers: Current planning regulations don't allow planning permission to set requirements for property occupancy. The Council will advocate for an expansion of this, to allow planning permission to be pre-requisite on immediate occupation. This would enable the Council to utilise newly developed properties for affordable housing if they remain vacant after completion.</p> | <p>The Council would consistently have more properties available to house residents in need.</p> |

Delivering our Plan

The Council is committed to making the most efficient use of our empty homes to meet the needs of our residents, especially those most vulnerable on our social housing waiting lists and in temporary accommodation. Every property that can be re-occupied provides the foundation for residents to lead healthier lives, to be more financially secure, and to contribute to their community. This action plan provides an ongoing framework for us to hold ourselves accountable and demonstrate the impact we are having on empty homes. It will be updated annually to reflect progress that has been made and include new additions. We will publish refreshed data quarterly for the prominent empty homes and voids categories as outlined in Appendix 3. Our action on empty homes is an important part of our Housing Strategy's priority to deliver more affordable homes for residents, and to help make our Lambeth 2030 commitment to be a place we can all call home a reality.

Appendices

Appendix 1: National Policy Reform on Empty Homes, 2004 to present.

| Year | Policy Reform ⁸⁹ |
|-------------|---|
| 2004 | Creation of Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) powers for councils to tackle long-term empty homes that had been vacant for 2+ years. |
| 2007 | VAT on regeneration work being delivered on empty homes (not lived in for over 2 years) is reduced to rate of 5%. |
| 2011 | Empty Homes Programme, providing up to £100 million in grants in England for 2011 to 2015 to refurbish and bring empty homes back into use. The GLA ran this programme for London from 2012. |
| 2011 | New Homes Bonus includes rewards for Councils returning empty properties into occupation. Initially, the Government matched the council tax raised for each property brought back into use for a period of six years (reduced to 5 in 2017/18, reduced to 4 2018/2019). |
| 2013 | Removing automatic Council Tax discounts on empty properties. Discount on empty properties (up to 100%) is discretionary to Councils for first year of being empty. |
| 2013 | Changes council tax rules allowed local authorities to charge a premium on properties left empty for more than two years (initially 50% premium for two years empty, from 2019 100% premium for two years empty). Decision remains discretionary, with local authority to decide on what to charge. |
| 2013 | Empty Homes Loan Fund, a joint initiative between central government, the charity Empty Homes, Ecology Building Society and participating local authorities. Loans were provided to owners of empty properties. Closed less than a year later due to low take up. |
| 2018 | Homelessness Reduction Act increased pressure on councils to maximise housing availability, indirectly impacting void and empty home management. |
| 2019 | Government extended the council tax premium, allowing charges of up to 300% for properties empty for more than ten years. |
| 2021 | Affordable Homes Programme funding (2021-26) “can support bids to bring empty homes into use as affordable housing”. |
| 2023 | Levelling Up and Regeneration Act allows for 100% council tax premium to be charged on homes that remain empty for 12 months, rather than 2 years. |
| 2023 | Levelling Up and Regeneration Act allows Council's to charge twice the usual Council Tax for properties that are substantially furnished and are used periodically rather than as a main residence (second/holiday homes). |

⁸ <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN03012/SN03012.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.actiononemptyhomes.org/what-weve-achieved#:~:text=We%20are%20the%20only%20national,tackle%20the%20waste%20empty%20homes.>

Appendix 2: Action on Empty Homes, Regional Breakdown of Long-term Empty Homes (London, 2023 to 2024).

<https://www.actiononemptyhomes.org/facts-and-figures>

| London long-term empty and second homes to show total % of housing not in residential use on a long-term basis, by local authority area | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|--------|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Local Authority | LTEH | LTEH | LTEH | LTEH % | Rise or | Second | Second | 2nd Homes | 2nd Homes | Rise or | 2024 data | LTEH | Second Homes | Total Number | Total % not in | 1 in every 'x' |
| | 2023 | 2024 | Change | change | Fall? | homes | Homes | Change | % Change | Fall? | Total Homes | Occurrence % | Occurrence % | not in use | Primary Residential Use | homes out of use |
| | 2023 | 2024 | | | | 2023 | 2024 | | | | | | | | | |
| Barking and Dagenham | 383 | 391 | 8 | 2 | UP | 180 | 194 | 14 | 8 | Up | 81,219 | 0.48 | 0.24 | 585 | 0.72 | 139 |
| Barnet | 1,905 | 2,094 | 189 | 10 | UP | 2,039 | 2,191 | 152 | 7 | Up | 160,214 | 1.31 | 1.37 | 4,285 | 2.67 | 37 |
| Bexley | 655 | 701 | 46 | 7 | UP | 43 | 43 | 0 | 0 | No Change | 101,629 | 0.69 | 0.04 | 744 | 0.73 | 137 |
| Brent | 1,053 | 937 | -116 | -11 | Down | 190 | 188 | -2 | -1 | Down | 134,671 | 0.70 | 0.14 | 1,125 | 0.84 | 120 |
| Bromley | 1,068 | 1,193 | 125 | 12 | UP | 354 | 321 | -33 | -9 | Down | 143,434 | 0.83 | 0.22 | 1,514 | 1.06 | 95 |
| Camden | 1,541 | 1,652 | 111 | 7 | UP | 7,259 | 6,298 | -961 | -13 | Down | 113,319 | 1.46 | 5.56 | 7,950 | 7.02 | 14 |
| City of London | 261 | 145 | -116 | -44 | Down | 1,783 | 1,894 | 111 | 6 | Up | 8,057 | 1.80 | 23.51 | 2,039 | 25.31 | 4 |
| Croydon | 1,639 | 1,606 | -33 | -2 | Down | 367 | 337 | -30 | -8 | Down | 167,769 | 0.96 | 0.20 | 1,943 | 1.16 | 86 |
| Ealing | 460 | 529 | 69 | 15 | UP | 187 | 178 | -9 | -5 | Down | 149,531 | 0.35 | 0.12 | 707 | 0.47 | 212 |
| Enfield | 1,089 | 1,563 | 474 | 44 | UP | 1,562 | 1,211 | -351 | -22 | Down | 127,948 | 1.22 | 0.95 | 2,774 | 2.17 | 46 |
| Greenwich | 1,123 | 1,203 | 80 | 7 | UP | 648 | 781 | 133 | 21 | Up | 124,143 | 0.97 | 0.63 | 1,984 | 1.60 | 63 |
| Hackney | 977 | 1,184 | 207 | 21 | UP | 1,186 | 1,085 | -101 | -9 | Down | 120,387 | 0.98 | 0.90 | 2,269 | 1.88 | 53 |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | 778 | 665 | -113 | -15 | Down | 2,745 | 2,785 | 40 | 1 | Up | 94,867 | 0.70 | 2.94 | 3,450 | 3.64 | 27 |
| Haringey | 1,468 | 1,574 | 106 | 7 | UP | 1,098 | 1,572 | 474 | 43 | Up | 114,365 | 1.38 | 1.37 | 3,146 | 2.75 | 36 |
| Harrow | 827 | 1,183 | 356 | 43 | UP | 436 | 406 | -30 | -7 | Down | 96,732 | 1.22 | 0.42 | 1,589 | 1.64 | 61 |
| Havering | 805 | 856 | 51 | 6 | UP | 197 | 228 | 31 | 16 | Up | 108,525 | 0.79 | 0.21 | 1,084 | 1.00 | 100 |
| Hillingdon | 396 | 392 | -4 | -1 | Down | 744 | 681 | -63 | -8 | Down | 117,986 | 0.33 | 0.58 | 1,073 | 0.91 | 110 |
| Hounslow | 1,420 | 1,448 | 28 | 2 | UP | 323 | 282 | -41 | -13 | Down | 110,771 | 1.31 | 0.25 | 1,730 | 1.56 | 64 |
| Islington | 657 | 749 | 92 | 14 | UP | 249 | 232 | -17 | -7 | Down | 112,407 | 0.67 | 0.21 | 981 | 0.87 | 115 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 1,720 | 1,787 | 67 | 4 | UP | 7,879 | 7,667 | -212 | -3 | Down | 89,187 | 2.00 | 8.60 | 9,454 | 10.60 | 9 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 771 | 1,944 | 1,173 | 152 | UP | 699 | 938 | 239 | 34 | Up | 70,278 | 2.77 | 1.33 | 2,882 | 4.10 | 24 |
| Lambeth | 1,886 | 2,024 | 138 | 7 | UP | 512 | 604 | 92 | 18 | Up | 148,202 | 1.37 | 0.41 | 2,628 | 1.77 | 56 |
| Lewisham | 893 | 765 | -128 | -14 | Down | 394 | 539 | 145 | 37 | Up | 132,903 | 0.58 | 0.41 | 1,304 | 0.98 | 102 |
| Merton | 1,263 | 1,167 | -96 | -8 | Down | 1,386 | 1,293 | -93 | -7 | Down | 87,693 | 1.33 | 1.47 | 2,460 | 2.81 | 36 |
| Newham | 2,053 | 2,180 | 127 | 6 | UP | 249 | 224 | -25 | -10 | Down | 131,947 | 1.65 | 0.17 | 2,404 | 1.82 | 55 |
| Redbridge | 850 | 869 | 19 | 2 | UP | 797 | 773 | -24 | -3 | Down | 107,835 | 0.81 | 0.72 | 1,642 | 1.52 | 66 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 615 | 558 | -57 | -9 | Down | 341 | 471 | 130 | 38 | Up | 85,765 | 0.65 | 0.55 | 1,029 | 1.20 | 83 |
| Southwark | 2,920 | 2,348 | -572 | -20 | Down | 2,881 | 3,148 | 267 | 9 | Up | 150,014 | 1.57 | 2.10 | 5,496 | 3.66 | 27 |
| Sutton | 1,002 | 859 | -143 | -14 | Down | 112 | 121 | 9 | 8 | Up | 86,206 | 1.00 | 0.14 | 980 | 1.14 | 88 |
| Tower Hamlets | 1,491 | 1,474 | -17 | -1 | Down | 7,908 | 7,572 | -336 | -4 | Down | 149,166 | 0.99 | 5.08 | 9,046 | 6.06 | 16 |
| Waltham Forest | 944 | 910 | -34 | -4 | Down | 652 | 417 | -235 | -36 | Down | 110,404 | 0.82 | 0.38 | 1,327 | 1.20 | 83 |
| Wandsworth | 165 | 194 | 29 | 18 | UP | 568 | 1,384 | 816 | 144 | Up | 157,112 | 0.12 | 0.88 | 1,578 | 1.00 | 100 |
| Westminster | 1,132 | 1,242 | 110 | 10 | UP | 3,051 | 2,772 | -279 | -9 | Down | 131,827 | 0.94 | 2.10 | 4,014 | 3.04 | 33 |
| Totals [London]: | 36,210 | 38,386 | 2,176 | 6 | UP | 49,019 | 48,830 | -189 | 0 | No Change | 3,826,513 | 1.00 | 1.28 | 87,216 | 2.28 | 44 |

Appendix 3: Definitions of different types of empty home and void in Lambeth.

| Property Category | Definition | Scale |
|---|---|---------------------------|
| Council owned¹⁰ | | |
| Short Cycle Voids | Properties that are temporarily empty for a short period, usually between tenancies, while repairs and maintenance are carried out before the next tenant moves in. | 81 |
| Long Cycle Voids | Properties that remain vacant for an extended period, often due to significant repair needs, structural issues, or planning for redevelopment. | 103 |
| Standard Repairs (Long and Short Cycle) Voids Total: 184 | | |
| Occupied by temporary decant | Works on the void have been complete, but the property is being occupied on a temporary basis (not a tenancy) due to essential repairs or issues with another Council property meaning urgent short-term housing is required. | 77 |
| Unauthorised Occupant | A person/group living in a property without the legal right to do so (i.e., without a tenancy agreement), rendering the property unoccupiable. | 138 |
| Demolition | Properties that are vacant but are empty due to being scheduled to be demolished, often due to redevelopment or being deemed unsafe or uninhabitable. | 42 |
| Capital Void | Properties that are vacant due to planned capital works or major improvements, which are often part of a broader investment strategy in the housing stock. | 19 |
| Ready for Occupation | Properties that have completed any necessary repairs or maintenance and are now ready to be let out to new tenants. | 88 |
| Notice | Properties that are empty (or soon to be) because the previous tenant has given (or been given) notice to vacate and the property is in the transition phase before new occupancy. | 28 |
| Other Voids | We have compiled these categories under an 'Other Voids' grouping, given each represent a very low number of voids of between 1 and 10 properties. These categories include Commercial Voids, Provisional Void, Squatted, and Asset Review*. | Between 1 and 10 |
| Estate Regeneration Voids ¹¹ | Council estates previously listed for regeneration has generated a number of empty properties due to fulfilling the key guarantees made to residents of those estates. The Council has implemented a specific Estate Regeneration Voids Strategy updated in 2024 , to support the Council's ongoing management of its social housing stock as well as leasehold/freehold properties acquired via a council buyback. | |
| Estate Regeneration Confirmed Voids | A proportion of our voids on our regeneration estates are accessible to us and are confirmed void without any occupants, formal or informally, but are requiring repairs or intervention from the Council to return them to occupancy. | 149 |
| Estate Regeneration Complex Voids and Empties | The remainder of our properties on our regeneration estates that do not have a formal tenancy in place can be both occupied, temporarily occupied or unoccupied for the same range of complex reasons outlined for our general stock (such as Occupied by Temporary Decant, Unauthorised Occupant, Squatted, Commercial Void and Asset Review). | 186 |
| Returning AST from PRS to Council Stock ¹² | Homes let through Homes for Lambeth via assured shorthold tenancies (ASTs) that are being returned from the private sector into Council housing stock, with a void period expected between tenancies. Some are on fixed term tenancies and some on periodic tenancies. Not all these properties will be void at the same time. | 163 (total, not all void) |

¹⁰ Data on the Council's general owned housing stock has been retrieved from our housing management system, NEC. This system maintains records for all general housing properties managed by Lambeth Council. These totals only include those in our general stock and other Council owned housing with more unique contexts or managed by a separate team are listed and quantified separately below. This updates routinely and figures were accurate as of November 2024.

¹¹ Data on the Council's owned regeneration estate voids has been retrieved from our housing management system, NEC. This system maintains records for all regeneration properties managed by Lambeth Council. These totals only include those in our regeneration estates. This updates routinely and figures were accurate as of November 2024.

¹² Data on Council owned stock that is returning from the PRS to Council stock is a total of all ASTs identified. This figure is not reflective of the number of empty homes, but of the number of AST properties that are transitioning back to Council stock. All of which can expect a void period at some point during this process but are not all void simultaneously.

| | | |
|---|--|------|
| | | |
| Tenant / Resident Management Organisations (TMOs/RMOs) ¹³ | Void homes that are owned by the Council, but are managed by Tenant or Resident Management Organisations (TMOs/RMOs). TMOs/RMOs managed the records and processes on all short cycle voids, but those that have the scale of works for a long cycle void (£5,000+) are returned to the Council general stock team to oversee repairs. | 69 |
| Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Properties ¹⁴ | Void homes that are owned by the Council, but with private contracts with property management company for management, maintenance and repairs of properties. | 8 |
| Social Housing Providers | | |
| Housing Associations and other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) ¹⁵ | Empty homes that are owned and managed by housing associations or other registered social landlords. | 529 |
| Privately owned¹⁶ | | |
| Unfurnished Empty Homes (less than 12 months) | A privately owned property without furniture and possessions that remains unoccupied, but has been empty for less than 12 months. No premiums are applied. | 1527 |
| Unfurnished Empty Homes (more than 12 months) | A privately owned property without furniture and possessions that remains unoccupied, that has been empty for more than 12 months. Premiums are charged in a tiered way, based on length of time empty: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 to 5 years = 442 • 5 to 10 years = 40 • 10 years+ = 22 | 504 |
| Furnished Empty Homes (periodically occupied, often referred to as “second homes”). | Furnished private properties either owned abroad or as a second home for someone in the country who has a different main residence but has remained unoccupied or only periodically occupied. Due to a change in legislation these properties will incur a 100% Council Tax Premium from 1st April 2025. | 600 |

*Asset Review: The Council endeavours to repair and maintain all its existing housing stock where possible, so we can continue to provide homes to our residents in most need. In some circumstances, the high costs of repair make disposal of some select properties the most cost-effective option for the Council in order to invest and maintain its overall housing stock

¹³ Data on empty homes and voids on sites currently managed by TMOs/RMOs has been retrieved from our housing management system, NEC. These figures are an estimate as of November 2024, recognising improved data and referral processes are underway as outlined in this action plan.

¹⁴ One site that is currently managed under a Private Finance Initiative by an external provider. Data on empty homes and voids on PFI has been retrieved from our housing management system, NEC. These figures are accurate as of November 2024.

¹⁵ Data on empty homes in our housing association or other registered social housing providers was retrieved from Council Tax records and may not reflect the housing associations own figures on void or empty stock. These figures are accurate as of October 2024.

¹⁶ Data on privately owned empty homes was retrieved from Council Tax records and updates quarterly. These figures are accurate as of October 2024.

