



# Empty Properties

HS17 Empty properties  
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“ **Our Housing Service can provide you with information, assistance and advice to help if you have an empty property that you would like to bring back into use** ”

### Introduction

Empty properties are not only a wasted asset for the owner, they can also be a blight on the neighbourhood, attracting crime and vandalism. There are many benefits to bringing a property back into use and in Hart, this includes meeting the future housing demand in a district where there is a short supply of suitable accommodation. For the property owner, bringing an empty property back into use will provide them with a steady income, in addition to a number of other benefits.

### What are the options for property owners to bring an empty property back into use?

- Repair the property for occupation.
- Let out the property to a tenant – this could be through Hart District Council’s ‘Rent Bond Scheme’.
- Sell the property on the open market.
- Sell the property to a private developer or registered provider.
- Sell the property at an auction.

### Repairing your property - Empty property VAT discounts and exemptions

Under certain circumstances, a builder working on an empty property can charge a reduced rate on VAT to renovate works to a house that has been empty for two years. The VAT rate on these properties can be reduced from 20% to 5%.

For further information, contact the Customs and Excise National Advice Service on 0300 200 3700 or visit their website at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) (search for **Empty Properties VAT exemption**)

### Letting your property out through Hart’s Rent Bond Scheme

Hart District Council provides a landlord incentive scheme - including Bond Guarantees - that offer landlords and tenants a range of support services in order to create lasting and sustainable tenancies.

For landlords, there are a number of benefits to working with the Council. You will receive a free service that helps you bring your property back into use and contributes to your income. The scheme enables you to let your property, receive expert support, indemnifies you against damages up to an agreed limit and reduces property void periods.

The scheme works by offering landlords a Bond Guarantee on behalf of potential tenants and by supporting tenants to maintain their tenancies. We will help you to trouble-shoot any problems throughout the life of the tenancy and there will be a named contact within the Housing Service for you and for your tenant. If required, we can also offer the first month’s rent in advance.

The tenants will be our customers; these are people who have approached the Council's Housing Service for help with their housing situation. The majority of our customers are in work, yet most are without sufficient savings to fund a deposit, have low incomes and may be receiving welfare benefits.

By agreeing to rent your property to our customers, you will be working with us directly to support people with an assessed housing need, who are homeless or who are at risk of homelessness.

In return, we can offer you expert help with a range of areas relevant to landlords and support you to be a responsible landlord. These are all free and include:

- Advising you about changes in the law and what you might expect from forthcoming legislation
- Handling all the paperwork including the inventory
- Acting as mediators if disputes arise
- Interviewing and assessing all tenants before they approach you and matching tenants to suitable properties

- Providing a written guarantee in place of a deposit which does not have to be protected under any of the national tenancy deposit protection schemes
- Providing support with Housing Benefit and assistance with applications for direct payments where appropriate
- Providing advice and information including forums, newsletters and access to an accreditation scheme
- Providing tenancy agreements and inventories for your property
- Supporting you and the tenant to help ensure that tenancies last
- Delivering a professional service at no cost to you.

For further details of the scheme, see the Housing Advice Leaflet 'Information for Landlords on the Rent Bond Scheme' which is available via our website at [www.hart.gov.uk](http://www.hart.gov.uk)

## Letting out your property directly or via a managing agent

If you let a property via a letting agent or managing agent you must use one that is approved under one of the three government redress schemes:

- Ombudsman Services (Property) [www.ombudsman-services.org](http://www.ombudsman-services.org)
- Property Redress Scheme [www.theprs.co.uk](http://www.theprs.co.uk)
- Property Ombudsman [www.tpos.co.uk](http://www.tpos.co.uk)

To find agents who belong to one of these schemes and for further advice and assistance, you can contact organisations such as the National Approved Letting Scheme (NALS), the UK Association of Letting Agents (UKALA) or the Association of Residential Lettings Agents (ARLA).

### The National Approved Letting Scheme (NALS)

Cheltenham Office Park  
Hatherley Lane  
Cheltenham  
GL51 6SH

- Tel: **01242 581712**
- Email: [info@nalscheme.co.uk](mailto:info@nalscheme.co.uk)
- Website: [www.nalscheme.co.uk](http://www.nalscheme.co.uk)

### Association of Residential Lettings Agents (ARLA)

Arbon House  
6 Tournament Court  
Edgehill Drive  
Warwick  
CV34 6LG

- Telephone: **0845 250 6003**
- Website: [www.arla.co.uk](http://www.arla.co.uk)

### UK Association of Letting Agents (UKALA)

2nd Floor  
200 Union Street  
London  
SE1 0LX

- Tel: **0207 820 7900**
- Email: [info@ukala.org.uk](mailto:info@ukala.org.uk)
- Website: [www.ukala.org.uk](http://www.ukala.org.uk)

## Council Tax

From 1 April 2015, properties which remain unoccupied for a period of 2 years or more will attract a Council Tax Levy of 150%. This may mean that you need to ensure the property is occupied. In doing so, you could achieve a rental income by offering someone a much needed home.

For further details about Council Tax Levies contact the Council Tax department:

- **Telephone: 01252 622122**
- **Email: [revenues@hart.gov.uk](mailto:revenues@hart.gov.uk)**

## Reporting an Empty Property

Hart District Council is keen to support people to bring empty properties back into use and there are a number of ways that we are doing this.

If you would like to report a property that you think is empty then please do so using our Empty Homes Reporting Form [www.hart.gov.uk/empty-property-reporting-form](http://www.hart.gov.uk/empty-property-reporting-form)

## Advice from other Departments

The Council delivers a range of services. There are a number of departments who may get involved with empty properties. They can offer help and advice but they may also get involved in an enforcement capacity if the empty property is impacting on the surrounding community or if it could be a hazard or a danger to the public.

### Environmental Health

When empty properties are considered to be a danger to public health, a nuisance or where there are pest control issues, the Council's Environmental Health Service may take action under the Public Health Act 1936; Environmental Protection Act 1990 or Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949.

- **Telephone: 01252 774421**
- **Email: [eh@hart.gov.uk](mailto:eh@hart.gov.uk)**

### Private Sector Housing

When empty properties are considered to have hazards which could result in harm, the Private Sector Housing team may take action to remedy the conditions under the Housing Act 2004.

- **Telephone: 01252 774420**
- **Email: [housing@hart.gov.uk](mailto:housing@hart.gov.uk)**

### Planning and Building Control

With regard to empty properties which are derelict or unsightly, the Council's Planning Department may take action under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 using a Section 215 notice.

For advice on planning issues, please contact our Planning Department:

- **Telephone: 01252 774419**
- **Email: [planningadmin@hart.gov.uk](mailto:planningadmin@hart.gov.uk)**

In the event that an empty property is considered to be a dangerous structure, the Building Control Service may take action under the Building Act 1984 to make the property safe.

For advice on building control, please contact our Building Control Service:

- **Telephone: 01252 398715**
- **Email: [buildingcontrol@hart.gov.uk](mailto:buildingcontrol@hart.gov.uk)**

## Contact details

Address: Hart District Council,  
Civic Offices, Harlington Way,  
Fleet, Hampshire,  
GU51 4AE

Tel: 01252 774420

Email: [housing@hart.gov.uk](mailto:housing@hart.gov.uk)

Web: [www.hart.gov.uk](http://www.hart.gov.uk)

Facebook: [/HartDistrictCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/HartDistrictCouncil)

Twitter: [@HartCouncil](https://twitter.com/HartCouncil)

Instagram: [@HartCouncil](https://www.instagram.com/HartCouncil)