

Housing...Housing...Housing...Housing

Empty Properties

*Options and information for
property owners seeking to bring
an empty property back into use.*



RUSHMOOR
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Empty homes are a wasted resource, especially in an area of high demand where housing is in such short supply. They can also be targets for crime and can attract vandals, squatters and general anti-social behaviour. Bringing empty homes back into use is a sustainable way to meet future housing demand and can improve the whole community.

Did you know you may be losing money by leaving your property empty?

An empty home is an asset at risk - what should be making you money is costing you money. It is estimated that the cost of leaving a home empty can be as high as £8,000 a year after taking into account lost rent, taxes, insurance and deterioration of the property value.

We can help you bring your empty property back into use so that it can become a home again. There are a number of options available to you:

- Repair/convert your property for occupation
- Let your property direct to a tenant
- Let your property through Rushmoor Borough Council's 'Rent in Advance and Deposit' scheme
- Let your property through a private letting agent
- Sell your property to a private developer or housing association
- Sell your property on the open market
- Sell your property at auction

Housing advice and assistance

We can offer free advice and information on tenancies and housing issues to both landlords and tenants.

For more information, contact Suzannah Hellicar, Housing Options Manager, Rushmoor Borough Council, Council Offices, Farnborough Road, Farnborough, Hants GU14 7JU. Tel: (01252) 398 636 or email suzannah.hellicar@rushmoor.gov.uk

Empty Property Grant

We offer Empty Property Grants to owners whose properties have been empty for over a year. This is to pay for half of the cost of work needed to be able to rent the property out. The maximum grant available is £10,000. The landlord has to repay the grant with interest if the property is not occupied for ten years after the work has finished.

For further details, please contact Hilary Smith, Private Sector Housing Manager, Tel: (01252) 398 636 or email hilary.smith@rushmoor.gov.uk

Council Tax

If you own a property where no one lives, you may be entitled to a discount or exemption from Council Tax. This depends on how long your property has been empty and what is happening to it.

You can claim a Council Tax exemption if your property is undergoing, major repair works or structural alterations to make it habitable. By this, we mean major repairs or alterations to the roof, ceilings, walls, floors etc. This exemption can last for a maximum of 12 months and the property must be unfurnished and unoccupied. For further details please contact our council tax team on (01252) 398 912.

Empty homes VAT discounts and exemptions

A builder can now charge a reduced 5% rate on VAT, compared with the standard rate of 17.5% on work to renovate a house that has been empty for two years. The reduced VAT rate can be applied to any repairs, maintenance or improvement work carried out to the fabric of the property, as well as work to provide water, power, heat, access, means of drainage and waste disposal and security.

For more information, telephone the Customs and Excise National Advice Service on 0845 010 900 or visit the Customs and Excise website www.hmrc.gov.uk.

Letting in the private sector

You may want to consider letting your property yourself or through a managing agent. If you use a managing agent, you may want to use one that belongs to the National Approved Letting Scheme, which sets out a service standard and operates a complaints procedure for letting and managing agents.

For more information contact the National Approved Letting Scheme, Tavistock House, 5 Rodney Road, Cheltenham GL50 1HX Tel: (01242) 581 712 Fax: (01242) 232 518.

Becoming a Private Landlord

You can get advice on becoming a landlord from the following organisations:

Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA)

Maple House, 53-55 Woodside Road, Amersham,
Bucks HP6 6AA Tel: (0845) 345 5752
Fax: (01494) 431 530 www.arla.co.uk

National Landlords' Association (NLA)

22-26 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TJ
Tel: 020 7840 8900 www.landlords.org.uk

Rent in Advance and Deposit Scheme

We run a 'Rent in Advance and Deposit' scheme, helping people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and in priority need under the law on homelessness, to find privately rented accommodation.

What can the 'Rent in Advance and Deposit' scheme offer you as a landlord?

- Help in finding a suitable tenant
- Guarantee a deposit (we call this a bond)
- Pay a deposit
- Pay one month in advance
- Ensure ongoing tenant and landlord support is provided

Once you have received your deposit, you will need to register it through the Government's Tenancy Deposit Scheme. More information can be obtained from the website www.depositprotection.com

For further details please contact Claire Leivers, at Rushmoor Borough Council, Council Offices, Farnborough Road, Farnborough, Hants GU14 7JU. Tel: (01252) 398 623 or email claire.leivers@rushmoor.gov.uk

Selling an empty house at auction

Most empty properties are sold at auction. More than 25,000 properties are sold in more than 1000 property auctions every year. From placing the property on the market to legal completion of the sale will in normal circumstances take about ten weeks. One advantage of selling your property at auction is that auctions attract a large number of investors, who might be prepared to pay more for your property if they feel it is a good investment.

Empty Commercial Property

In some circumstances, and subject to planning permission, housing associations may be able to attract grant funding to convert a empty commercial property to residential use. If you own such a property and are interested in discussing this option, please contact Jane Abraham or Sally Ravenhill at Rushmoor Borough Council, email: jane.abraham@rushmoor.gov.uk or sally.ravenhill@rushmoor.gov.uk or tel: (01252) 398 630.

Reporting an empty property

If you know of an empty home in Rushmoor, please contact us. This information will help us to identify properties which we may be able to bring back into use. Your help is very much appreciated.

Planning and Building Control

For advice on planning applications please contact our Planning department on 01252 398 399. For advice on building control call 01252 398 715. Information is also available on the Council's website at www.rushmoor.gov.uk.

Legal advice

For free legal advice contact the Community Legal Advice Centre on 0845 345 4 345 or visit their website at www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk.

If you need this leaflet in larger print, another language, Braille or on audiotape, please let us know. We will get this to you as soon as possible.

Procedure for tackling empty property

We take action on properties that have been empty for more than 12 months and investigate those notified to us by the public. Our priority is to tackle properties that have been empty for the longest period of time and those that have a negative effect on their neighbourhood.

Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMOs)

Where a residential property has been empty for more than six months we can serve an EDMO, to take over the management of the property, carry out any repair work and recover the cost through the rent for a period of up to seven years. We consider using EDMOs on properties that have been empty for less than three years and require some remedial work.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

Where we have exhausted all other options, we can use compulsory purchase powers, set out in the Housing Act 1995 as amended by the Housing Act 1996, as a last resort. Since 1999, five empty properties have been brought back into use through compulsory purchase powers.

Rushmoor Borough Council Housing Services

Council Offices, Farnborough Road,
Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7JU.

Tel: (01252) 398 630

Fax: (01252) 398 552

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DX 122250 Farnborough 2

email: jane.abraham@rushmoor.gov.uk

To find our strategy documents visit:

www.rushmoor.gov.uk



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