# Brent Council faces backlash over vacant £530,000 property purchase



A North London council is facing severe criticism following its controversial purchase of a property for £530,000, which has remained unoccupied for nearly two years. Brent Council acquired the terraced house near Sudbury Town station in April 2023 through one of its property companies, which was established to address the acute housing crisis in the borough. The house, divided into two family-sized flats, has not been made available to residents despite its purported purpose to offer housing solutions.

Opposition councillor Paul Lorber, who leads the Brent Liberal Democrats and represents Sudbury Ward, has publicly decried the situation as an example of ‘financial incompetence’. He has been voicing concerns over the property’s vacant status for over a year, questioning the procurement process and the diligence exercised during the property survey prior to its purchase. Lorber is now calling for an investigation into the council's procedures for acquiring properties on the private market, particularly regarding their condition before acquisition.

The implications of the property remaining empty are stark, particularly in light of the increasing number of families at risk of homelessness in Brent. Council figures indicate that approximately 150 families visit the Civic Centre each week seeking assistance, and there are currently around 33,000 individuals on the housing register. Among these, 2,266 are residing in temporary accommodation, which incurs costs totalling £100,000 each day. Lorber estimates that the council's decision to leave the purchased house vacant has resulted in a loss of at least £50,000, either through lost rental income or added expenditure on temporary housing solutions.

In a statement to the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS), Cllr Lorber said, “No responsible and efficient Council Administration would spend over £500,000 only to keep it empty for so long. The Labour Leadership running Brent should be ashamed of this incompetence.”

In response to these criticisms, a spokesperson for Brent Council stated that the property was acquired as part of their commitment to providing homeless residents with ‘safe, secure, and decent homes’. They noted that the house has required extensive refurbishment, which has turned out to be ‘more complex and time-consuming than projected’. The spokesperson added that one of the flats is nearing completion and will soon be made available to residents on the housing waiting list.

The council highlighted its broader objectives, mentioning that the i4B housing company is responsible for offering affordable housing options, including accommodation for key workers, and is actively involved in initiatives such as the New Council Homes Programme (NCHP), with plans to deliver 899 affordable homes by April 2026.

This situation comes at a time when the housing crisis in Brent is becoming increasingly urgent, compounding the scrutiny on local authorities to manage their resources and properties more effectively. The continued vacancies in purchased properties have reignited discussions about the responsibilities of councils to address homelessness through judicious property management and acquisition strategies.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://democracy.brent.gov.uk/documents/s64841/list%20of%20council%20property%20and%20assets.pdf> - This PDF provides information about Brent Council's property assets, which could include details about its recent acquisitions and the status of those properties.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - The original article is sourced from Noah Wire Services, though the actual URL for the article itself is not provided. This would typically be a primary source for the claims about Brent Council's property purchase.
* <https://www.brent.gov.uk/-/media/files/council-and-democracy-documents/budgets/annual-accounts-2023-24.pdf?rev=6559bbf560084a5a906cbf1413885cab&hash=91ADA905047EC3123DA21123A57E29FC> - Brent Council's Statement of Accounts provides context on their financial management and housing strategies, which are relevant to their property acquisition policies.
* <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/housingpriceslocal/E09000005/> - This page from the Office for National Statistics provides data on housing prices in Brent, offering insights into the local real estate market.
* <https://www.brent.gov.uk/council-tax-and-housing-benefit/housing/housing-register> - Although not specifically mentioned, Brent Council's webpage on housing might offer information about the demand and processes related to housing allocation, which could indirectly support claims about housing needs in Brent.