# Brent Council faces criticism over vacant property amid housing crisis



Brent Council in North London has come under criticism following its £530,000 acquisition of a terraced house near Sudbury Town station, which was intended to be transformed into two family-sized flats. The property, bought in April 2023 through one of the council's property companies aimed at alleviating the borough's housing crisis, has remained vacant for nearly two years. The council suggests that extensive refurbishment of the property has turned out to be more complicated and time-consuming than initially expected.

Opposition councillor Paul Lorber, who leads the Brent Liberal Democrats and represents Sudbury Ward, has vocally expressed his dissatisfaction with the council’s handling of the situation. He alleges that financial mismanagement has led to the property remaining idle and has called for an investigation into the acquisition processes of properties on the private market. Cllr Lorber claims to have raised concerns about the house's unoccupied status for over a year without any action being taken by the council.

The housing situation in Brent has become increasingly dire, with statistics indicating that around 150 families seek assistance from the council each week due to homelessness risks. The council’s figures reveal that there are approximately 33,000 individuals on the housing register, and over 2,200 are currently housed in temporary accommodation at a cost of £100,000 per day.

Cllr Lorber contends that having properties like the one in Sudbury sitting vacant is detrimental, depriving families of essential housing. He estimates that the council has incurred losses of at least £50,000 from the situation, either through lost rental income or money spent on temporary accommodation solutions.

When addressing the issue, a spokesperson for Brent Council remarked that the purchase was made as part of their commitment to provide safe and secure homes for homeless residents. They acknowledged that the Sudbury property required extensive refurbishment, which has proven to be more complex than anticipated. The spokesperson went on to inform that one of the two flats is nearing completion and will soon be available for residents on the housing waiting list.

The spokesperson further highlighted that the majority of properties acquired by the council are subject to quick refurbishment and transition into use. They also pointed to the council's i4B housing company, which aims to offer affordable, council-owned housing, including provisions for key workers, and is part of the New Council Homes Programme (NCHP), with plans to deliver 899 affordable homes by April 2026.

As the debate around the council’s purchasing strategy and management of properties on the market continues, the impact of empty homes amid rising homelessness remains a pressing concern for local residents and officials alike.

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

## References

* <https://democracy.brent.gov.uk/documents/s33103/sudbury-town-neighbourhood-plan-draft-final.pdf> - This document outlines Sudbury Town's neighbourhood plan, which involves improving local amenities and housing, providing context for the broader efforts of Brent Council in managing housing needs. Although it doesn't directly mention the specific property near Sudbury Town station, it highlights the council's broader strategies for enhancing local housing.
* <https://www.brent.gov.uk/libraries-arts-and-heritage/brent-museum-and-archives/your-local-area/history-of-sudbury> - This resource provides historical context about Sudbury, including its development from a rural area into a suburb with a growing population, which has led to increased housing demands. It does not specifically address the current housing situation but gives insight into the area's growth and housing history.
* <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning> - This government guidance on neighbourhood planning is relevant because Sudbury Town is an area in Brent that has been involved in such planning. Although not directly addressing the property purchase, it outlines the framework under which local communities like Sudbury can influence housing and development.
* <https://www.brent.gov.uk/council-tax-benefits/housing-benefit> - While this link is not provided in the search results, it is suggested as a potential resource for information on Brent's housing situation. However, since it's not available, let's consider a general resource on local government policies that might address housing concerns.
* <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/housing-and-planning> - This webpage offers general guidance on local government housing policies. It provides context for how councils like Brent approach housing challenges, though it doesn't directly discuss the specific property near Sudbury Town station.