# Living near a neglected empty house can cut property values by over £50,000



Living near a neglected, empty house can dramatically devalue your property, potentially reducing its market worth by over £50,000. This alarming trend is part of a larger issue in the UK, where nearly one million homes are currently vacant, most of which have been unoccupied for more than six months. Data provided by the charity Action on Empty Homes reveals that, among these, 133,000 properties are tied to deceased owners. This issue has been exacerbated since the discontinuation of the National Empty Homes programme in 2015, which previously allocated funds to local councils aimed at mitigating the problem.

The rise in long-term vacancies has been striking; between 2016 and 2024, the total number of such properties has surged by 32%. In areas such as London and eastern England, the increases are even more pronounced, reaching 93% and 69%, respectively. Experts attribute this trend to a combination of factors, including an ageing population who leave behind homes that often require significant renovation, and a protracted probate system that allows properties to remain empty while ownership issues are resolved. Furthermore, there is a notable segment of property owners who, driven by investment motives, opt to leave their homes vacant without any governmental incentives in place to encourage occupancy.

The financial implications for homeowners adjacent to derelict properties can be severe. Depending on the level of disrepair, houses located next to such buildings could lose anywhere from 5% to 20% of their value, with the latter figure being particularly detrimental for properties that are already in poor condition. For instance, Jessica Risorto, a director at Redbrik estate agents, warned that extreme cases could render a property practically unmortgageable, particularly if structural issues arise due to neglect next door. As David Hollingworth from L&C Mortgages highlighted, mortgage lenders may flag concerns raised by valuers about potential decay emanating from adjacent derelict properties, making it crucial for homeowners to act decisively.

To combat the adverse effects of nearby vacant homes, residents are encouraged to engage their local councils actively. Many councils have resources aimed at tackling the issues posed by empty homes, which can include enlisting community help to trace owners or enforce remedial actions through statutory measures. This might involve reporting issues such as overgrown gardens, fly-tipping, or structural dangers to building integrity.

Involving local representatives can also escalate concerns; efforts to raise awareness through local MPs or councillors can amplify the issue. To pursue this further, homeowners might consider tracing the owners themselves, employing strategies ranging from informal notices to participating in services like the Land Registry to ascertain ownership.

Innovative solutions to address the problem of vacant homes have emerged, including services that facilitate contact with absent owners. Empty Property Hunters, for instance, harnesses a network of “hunters” who report unoccupied properties in return for a fee, further incentivising action. The company works to connect empty property owners with buyers willing to invest in renovations, thereby potentially revitalising neighbourhoods and restoring property values.

Real-life examples illustrate the impact of these efforts. One individual, Michele Kingzett, successfully identified an unkempt bungalow in her area and assisted in reconnecting the owner with potential buyers. Stories like hers highlight not only the potential financial gains for those spotting these properties but also the broader community benefits stemming from reducing the prevalence of derelict homes.

Overall, addressing the issue of empty properties necessitates a collective and sustained effort from local authorities, homeowners, and community members. The potential of empty spaces to either serve as lucrative investments or as blights on neighbourhoods underscores the urgency of implementing strategies to bring these homes back into active use. Ultimately, with nearly £200 billion worth of vacant properties sitting idle across the market, the need for comprehensive solutions to turn these liabilities into viable assets is more pressing than ever.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7
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3. Paragraphs 1, 5
4. Paragraphs 2, 4
5. Paragraphs 1, 6
6. Paragraphs 5, 6
7. Paragraph 1

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/money/mailplus/article-14732151/How-house-door-knock-50-000-value-home.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/empty-homes-england-rise-nearly-10-cent-five-years> - The Local Government Association reports that the number of long-term empty homes in England has increased by nearly 10% over the past five years, now totaling over one million properties. This rise exacerbates the housing crisis, as these unoccupied homes remove potential residences from the market, affecting first-time buyers and those on housing registers. Despite efforts like the introduction of an empty homes premium in 2013, the numbers continue to rise, highlighting the need for more effective strategies to address the housing shortage.
3. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn03012/> - The House of Commons Library provides data on empty homes in England, noting that as of October 2022, there were 676,304 recorded empty homes, a 3.6% increase from the previous year. Of these, 248,149 were long-term vacant properties, unoccupied for more than six months. The report also outlines various powers local authorities have to tackle empty homes, including Empty Dwelling Management Orders and council tax exemptions and premiums, aiming to bring these properties back into use.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/sep/24/more-stressful-than-prison-sharp-rise-in-the-number-of-empty-properties-in-england> - The Guardian highlights a significant rise in empty properties across England, with long-term empty homes increasing by 24% over the past six years, now totaling 248,000. This surge contributes to the homelessness crisis, as these vacant properties remove potential homes from the market. The article emphasizes the need for stronger action to repurpose these properties into affordable housing to address the escalating housing shortage.
5. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/numberofvacantandsecondhomesenglandandwales/census2021> - The Office for National Statistics reports that on Census Day, 21 March 2021, there were 1.5 million unoccupied dwellings in England and 120,450 in Wales, accounting for 6.1% and 8.2% of all dwellings, respectively. Of these, 89.7% in England and 85.4% in Wales were truly vacant, while the remainder were second homes with no usual residents. The South West had the highest percentage of second homes with no usual residents at 1.3%.
6. <https://homelet.co.uk/landlord-insurance/landlord-lowdown-blog/could-the-nations-empty-homes-be-the-key-to-alleviating-rental-property-shortages> - HomeLet discusses the potential of empty homes to alleviate the UK's rental property shortage. Converting vacant properties into rentals could increase housing stock and ease rental pressure. However, challenges include the condition of these homes, which may require significant repairs, and the need for incentives to encourage owners to rent them out. The article emphasizes that while empty homes could contribute to solving the rental shortage, it's a complex issue with no simple solution.
7. [https://www.thepropertydaily.co.uk/article/2022/01/13/£200bn-worth-empty-homes-sat-vacant-across-britain%E2%80%99s-property-market](https://www.thepropertydaily.co.uk/article/2022/01/13/%C2%A3200bn-worth-empty-homes-sat-vacant-across-britain%E2%80%99s-property-market) - The Property Daily reports that research by Barrows and Forrester estimates £200 billion worth of property is vacant across Britain's housing market, up 2.1% from the previous year. England accounts for £190 billion of this value, with London having the highest total value of vacant dwellings at £41 billion. The article highlights the significant amount of dormant property in the market and suggests that addressing this issue could help meet housing demand.