

## **EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY**

### **FOREWORD**

Welcome to Hambleton District Councils strategy to deal with empty properties.

In the coming months the strategy will help to advise and develop ways to bring empty properties back into use. In our District we have a significant amount of people who cannot find a home, private rental charges restrict who can afford to rent and the cost of getting onto the housing ladder prohibits many, especially the young.

Empty properties are a wasted resource and in Hambleton we are seeking to maximise the use of all available housing. We need to address the shortage of affordable housing available and also reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless households.

By adopting this strategy we can deliver more affordable housing and take a proactive approach to dealing with empty properties and it will enable us to take a co-ordinated approach to dealing with empty properties. Partnerships with Registered Social Landlords, private developers and other stakeholders will help us to develop appropriate interventions and tools.

Bringing empty properties back into use benefits the whole community, prospective tenants, landlords, owners and people living in the vicinity of an empty property.

The strategy sets out Hambleton's approach, aims and objectives to empty properties. It sets out methods which can be employed to prevent homes becoming empty, bring empty homes back into use and enforcement action which is available if all other methods fail

**Cllr. Neville Huxtable.**  
**Cabinet Member for Housing**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Why are empty homes a problem?**

Empty homes are a wasted resource and can adversely affect the surrounding community. They can have a wider impact, for example

- Empty properties can be an eyesore, they can devalue the house next door by 18% (Hometrack Survey) and surrounding properties and the area as a whole, starting a spiral of decline
- As the property deteriorates it may affect adjoining property causing a statutory nuisance or become dangerous
- Loss of revenue within the local economy e.g. rent or income generated from council tax.
- Empty properties can attract anti social behaviour, vandalism, fly tipping, arson and vermin.
- Overgrown gardens act as a screen for drug and alcohol abuse and other anti social behaviour.
- Exacerbate the lack of affordable housing for families on low income.

The reuse of empty homes together with the conversion of vacant commercial property lies at the heart of the Governments commitment to securing a decent home for all.

Properties may be empty over an extended period for a variety of reasons:

- Difficulty selling or letting the property due to the condition of the property
- Owners reluctant to let due to concerns over the suitability of prospective tenants
- Owners unaware of alternative management options ie letting agents, RSLs etc.
- Property kept vacant as an investment
- Oversupply of private rented dwellings
- Delays in settling an estate of a deceased owner
- Owner is in hospital or a residential home and not willing to sell
- Owner unable to sell and has abandoned the property

The definition of an empty property is one which has been empty for a period longer than 6 months. However it has been found that there is quite a large turnover of properties brought back into occupation between the six month to one year period this may be due to the slowing of the housing market, refurbishment or repair.

### **Why have an Empty Property Strategy**

Currently in Hambleton there is a shortage of all types of housing. The average income in Hambleton is £22,544.00 and the average house price is £227,843.00 this illustrates the gap in house price to income ratio is quite significant. One of the principal aims of the Empty Property Strategy is to ensure that action is taken promptly to try and ensure that properties are not left unoccupied for any long periods of time.

## **National Drivers for Change**

Demand for affordable housing is increasing and the Government recognises that many houses are standing empty and now require local authorities to take a more pro-active approach. The Local Government Act 2003 S.7 places a duty on Local Authorities to maintain and enhance housing markets and it is now a priority to bring private sector empty housing back into use.

The government has set targets for local authorities as a method of addressing the problem. These targets include:

- A **national target** that by 2008 60% of all new housing should be provided on previously developed sites or by conversion of existing buildings.
- A **Best Value Performance Indicator** requiring councils to record the number of vacant dwellings either brought back into use or demolished by direct action by the Council.
- **Local targets** of working with RSLs to create a private sector leasing scheme. The authority currently has a pilot scheme with Endeavour Housing Association for 2 years .
- The Government has also **reduced the VAT** to be paid on refurbishment costs to 5% on an empty property which has been empty for longer than 3 years.
- Audit Commission **Key Lines of Enquiry No. 8** states that there should be arrangements in place with partners for the supply of good quality temporary accommodation (empty properties could be utilised for this).
- Audit Commission **Key Lines of Enquiry No. 9** states that a local authority should have a clear strategic approach to wasted homes in the area e.g. empty properties
- **The Housing Act 2004** introduced new legislation to enable local authorities to take over management of some residential properties that have been empty for more than six months. An Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) gives the council the right to possession of the property. This legislation came into effect from April 2006 and the council must apply to a Residential Property Tribunal for approval. The council would need to demonstrate that the owner of the empty property has been unwilling to co-operate to return the property back into use. Some properties are excepted from EDMOs and initially an Interim EDMO would be applied for to enable the council to work more formally with the owner and if this is not successful a EDMO would be applied for and if granted the council can then take over management (usually in partnership with a Registered Social Landlord) and move tenants into the property for up to 7 years.
- **The 2001 Private Sector House Condition Survey** identified the approximate cost of making fit unfit private sector dwellings would be on average £7,000.00 per property. A new House Condition Survey was completed in April 2006 and is expected to report imminently and the cost is anticipated to have significantly increased from the 2001 figure.

## Hambleton Area

According to the 2004 Housing Needs Survey across Hambleton a total of **2,212** existing households are in some form of **housing need** in addition to **1,910** residents who want to form new households. This projected demographic trend places further pressure on the local housing market. Since 1999, there has been a progressive lengthening of the Housing Register which at 1 April 2004 had 1446 households registered on it, an increase of 60.5%. We now need to maximise the use of all empty properties whether they are residential or commercial premises.

It is the intention of this authority to explore every available option to try to bring empty properties back into use informally but if all offers of advice and assistance fail then the authority will have no option but to use enforcement action to bring about improvements to the housing stock.

Membership of the Humberside and South Yorkshire Empty Property Forum will enable Hambleton District Council to share good practice with similar organisations and be part of a campaigning group to address issues directly with the Empty Homes Agency, and National Association for Empty Property Practitioners. Hambleton District Council will also explore opportunities for sub regional working and seek to establish a Sub Regional Empty Property Working Group. This will enable further joint working and a co-ordinated approach across the region to deal with empty properties.

## Empty Property in Hambleton

There are on average **400 empty dwellings in Hambleton** at any one time and of these approximately 50% are transactional, ie they have been empty for just over six months but are re-occupied within 12 months but unfortunately there are several long term empty properties.

A significant amount of housing stock is unoccupied nationally. In April 2005, there were a total of 680,412 empty homes in England (3.2% of the housing stock). The vast majority (86%) were privately owned. (HIP 2005: Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix).

The following table demonstrates the national position on empty homes as described above.

2005	Ownership of Empty Homes				
	Total Number of Empty Homes	Local Authority	RSL	Other public	Other private
North East	39,148	5,209	3,424	396	30,119
Yorkshire & Humberside	79,505	7,320	4,799	260	67,126
East Midlands	58,419	4,985	1,792	953	50,689
Eastern Region	56,656	3,427	2,150	832	50,247
London	91,219	9,619	5,826	963	74,811
South East	91,232	3,211	3,767	720	83,534
South West	57,956	2,039	2,264	518	53,135
West Midlands	77,544	5,049	5,544	141	66,810

North West	128,473	7,735	11,047	883	109,068
ENGLAND TOTAL	680,412	48,594	40,613	5,666	585,539

The following chart demonstrates regional position at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005

Vacant Dwellings April 2005					
<b>REGION</b>	<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RSL</b>	<b>PUBLIC BODY</b>	<b>PRIVATE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Yorkshire and the Humber	7,320	4,799	260	67,126	79,505
<b>Hambleton</b>	0	42	0	909*	951
England	48,594	40,613	5,666	585,539	680,412

\*this figure includes all empty property ie: less than 6 months

The following table demonstrates that locally Hambleton District Council compares favourably with similar local authorities with regard to percentage of vacant stock as at 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2006 but there is still a need to return more empty properties into occupation.

LOCAL AUTHORITY	TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR STOCK	NUMBER EMPTY FOR LONGER THAN 6 MONTHS	TARGET PER YEAR FOR BVPI64	% OF PRIVATE SECTOR STOCK
Craven	23,003	327		1.42
Ryedale	20,507	286	3	1.39
Richmondshire	17,824	268		1.49
Harrogate	61,392	757	25	1.23
Selby	28,576	400	25	1.39
<b>Hambleton</b>	32,296	400	11	1.23
Scarborough	47,865	633	28	1.32

### **Corporate Commitment**

Hambleton District Council has a commitment to bringing empty homes back into occupation. In 2004 the local authority used its powers under the Compulsory Purchase legislation to acquire underutilised unfit property and adjacent land, the properties have now been demolished and new housing is under construction which will provide 24 new units of housing 14 affordable housing and 10 for open market sale. Every effort was made to work with the owner to try to resolve this matter informally but unfortunately a compromise was not reached.

The use of the Compulsory Purchase Order demonstrates our commitment to dealing with unfit and empty property and land and this process was fully supported by all Members of the authority.

In addition the Local Government Finance Act 2003 allowed local authorities to remove discounts for long term empty properties. Approval was given by Cabinet to remove the 50% discount from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004.

Hambleton District Council has worked in partnership with Endeavour Housing Association and Foundation Housing to bring a long term empty property back into use. Barbeck House, a long term empty property in Thirsk has been refurbished and converted to provide 3 self contained flats with support for young single homeless people and was opened in July 2006.

In addition the conversion of the old hostel in Thirsk into four flats with support for single homeless was opened in November 2006. These projects will address an identified gap in support services for young people and represents a partnership between Hambleton and Richmondshire District Councils, Endeavour Housing Association, Foundation Housing, the Lotteries Board and North Yorkshire County Council. The £1.2m scheme will provide ten units of supported accommodation for 16-25 year olds across Hambleton and Richmondshire.

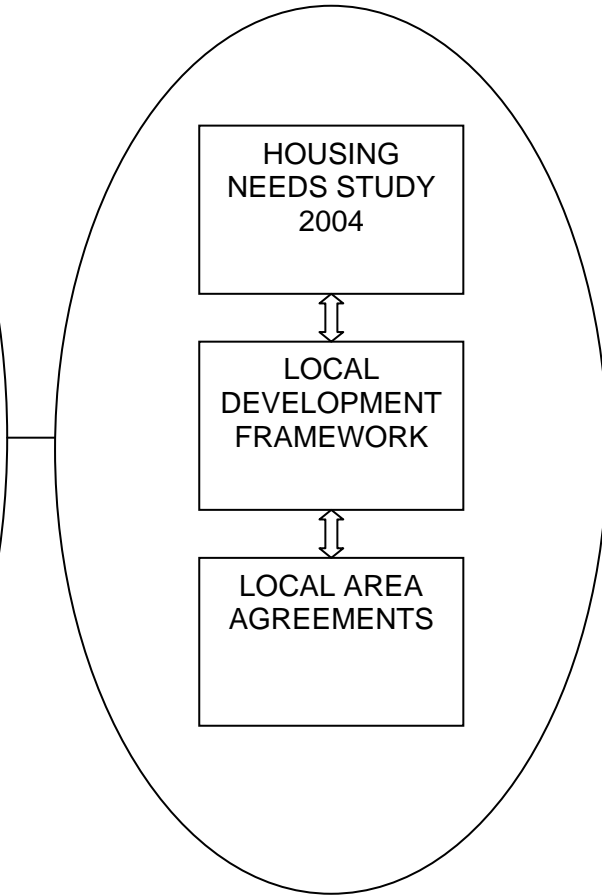
The Empty Property Strategy supports the Corporate Plan and Community Strategy and Corporate objectives to provide quality and affordable housing for those in housing need and there are also links to other strategies as indicated in the following flowchart



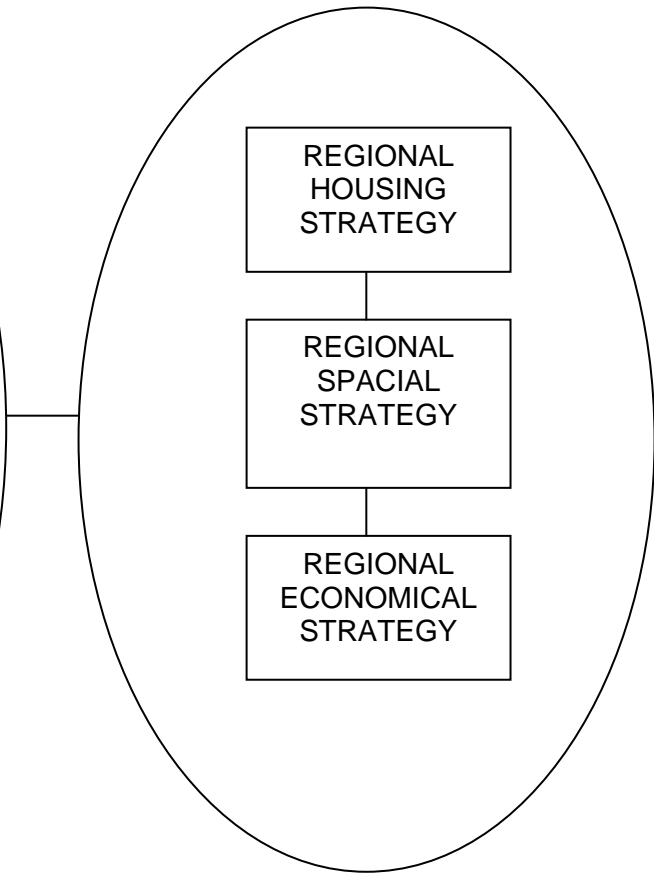
**HAMBLETON DISTRICT**



**INFORMED BY**



**YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER REGION**



## **OBJECTIVES**

The principle aim of the Empty Property Strategy is to reduce the number of empty properties in Hambleton and ensure that they are brought back into use to provide good quality housing for people who need it. The Corporate Plan for the Environment and Housing has set a target to bring **33 long term empty properties back into use by 2008** thus residents will benefit from an increase in the number of affordable homes and homeless families forced to stay in temporary bed and breakfast or hostel accommodation will be re-housed more quickly. We will achieve this by

- Working in partnership with owners of empty properties, registered social landlords, private developers, letting agents and other interested parties, to meet housing need across all tenures and minimise greenfield development.
- Identifying the number and the distribution of empty properties within the District.
- Tracking and monitor empty properties through the database and contact owners to offer advice and assistance.
- Identifying and develop best practice to return empty property back into use
- Maximising reuse of empty homes and other buildings
- Providing good quality affordable housing
- Supporting existing corporate strategies
- Ensuring economic stability of rural communities
- Raising the Councils commitment to returning empty properties back into use and promoting “success stories”
- In appropriate cases, **taking enforcement action to compel empty homes back into use.**

Ensuring that existing housing is used to its maximum potential will maintain the economic stability of the rural community. This may also counter outward migration due to lack of affordable housing especially for young people and first time buyers seeking to get onto the housing ladder.

## **Empty Properties**

Most vacant properties are privately owned, Council Tax is charged at the full rate in respect of dwellings that have been empty and unfurnished for more than 6 months, no discount is available. The Local Government Act 2003 introduced changes to the legislation to ensure that data was shared across departments for empty property work.

There are known to be a number of second homes in the District although it is not easy to separate weekend cottages and holiday homes from those that have been left vacant but furnished. For Council Tax purposes any property which is furnished is classified as a second home, a 10% discount is applied to the Council Tax charge for second homes. Nevertheless, there are still owners who allow their properties to stand empty in some cases in very poor condition.

## **Implementing the Strategy**

The Action Plan at the end of this strategy demonstrates how the strategy will be implemented, commencing with initial contact with the owner of the empty property

and then endeavouring to find an amicable solution to bringing the property back into use.

### **Targeting the Problem**

A database of empty properties has been established which identifies how long properties have been empty and where if any, empty property hot spots are developing.

### **Prioritising Action**

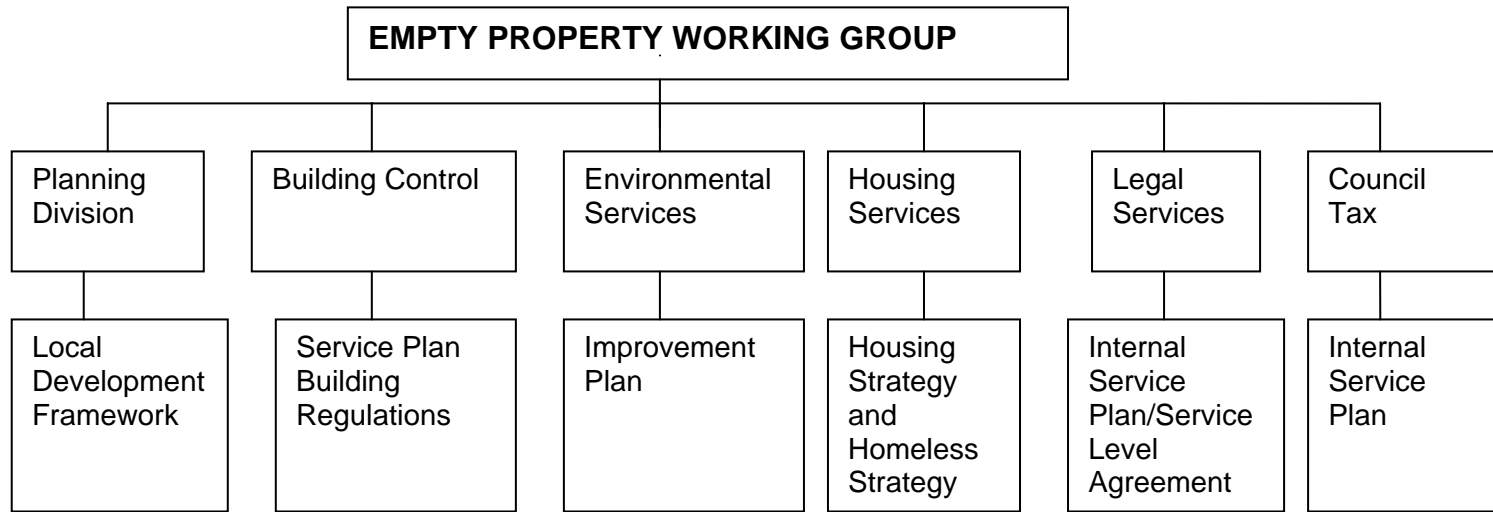
1. Priority will be given to areas where there is the most housing need. Joint working will enable the authority to take a co-ordinated approach to dealing with empty properties and establish the most appropriate course of action to remedy the problem.
2. Priority will be given to long term empty properties in the market towns of Northallerton, Thirsk, Bedale, Easingwold and Stokesley and the service and secondary villages within these sub areas as identified in the Local Development Framework.
3. Some properties have been removed from the Council Tax register due to their being uninhabitable and attention will be directed at where these properties are and tracing their owners

Issues for attracting priority action:

1. Property has been empty for more than 6 months
2. and/or property causing a nuisance/dangerous
3. and/or property attracting anti social behaviour
4. and/or property is detrimental to the amenities of the area
5. and/or ties in with regeneration issues
6. and is suitable for occupation (with or without building works)
7. There may be exceptional circumstances which need to be addressed.

A flowchart (Appendix 1) demonstrates the procedure that will be followed to deal with an empty property step by step from initial contact through to enforcement action if this is deemed necessary.

This work will be overseen and managed by a corporate Empty Property Working Group and is constituted as illustrated by the following diagram. This diagram also illustrates the service plans and other relevant documents which the members are bound by.



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## **Partnership Working and Development Opportunities**

A variety of options are being explored to enable the Council to offer financial assistance to owners of empty properties. Officers are currently investigating sources of funding to support a low cost loans scheme to support this strategy.

Bids are currently being prepared for submission to the Regional Housing Board, Private Finance Initiatives will also be explored and partnership working with mortgage lenders will be explored to encourage the use of equity release schemes.

We are working in partnership with Registered Social Landlords providing Private Sector Leasing and owners of empty property may be able to lease their property, to those in housing need, through a Registered Social Landlord. The benefits of this are that the owner is guaranteed rental income even when the property is empty and the RSL will find the tenant and manage the property on behalf of the owner.

We offer free independent advice and assistance to any owner of an empty property, whether commercial or residential on ways to bring the property back into use. These options include:

- Selling the property - we provide a list of estate agents, we can also put the owner in contact with a RSL who may purchase the property, advice on auctions and advertising the property privately by the owner, we can also advise on private developers who may wish to purchase the property.
- Letting the property – we provide a list of letting agents and managing agents in addition the owner could let the property himself and we are able to provide appropriate advice. We also work in partnership with Endeavour Housing Association who may take over management of an empty property (Private Sector Leasing Scheme) and house someone in housing need.
- Refurbish the property – we can provide advice on loans, mortgages and equity release schemes in addition there may be an option for an RSL to refurbish the property and manage it for a fixed term.

## **Explore Good Practice**

Several years ago the Authority explored the option of Living Over The Shops (LOTS) as a way of maximising the use of town centre properties with vacant flats over the shops. At that time unfortunately this was not a viable option for the Authority but due to increased housing demand this initiative will be revisited and re-evaluated.

There are many examples of good practice in rural areas where local authorities have worked in partnership with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and accessed private funding initiatives to bring long term empty properties back into use. Local authorities can support RSLs in their bids for funding in addition to approaching English Heritage and Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS).

This has proved successful in other areas and the local authority would require a nomination agreement for a minimum period to provide affordable housing for people in housing need.

Hambleton District Council does have access to commuted sums. Commuted sums are monies which are set aside from developments to be used at a later date to provide resources, usually affordable housing, for local people. This source of finance may offer opportunities for the Authority to target empty properties and research into how this could be managed. Commuted sums may offer additional scope to introduce grants or loans to provide more affordable housing.

These models of good practice demonstrate how enforcement action, financial incentives and partnership working can work together to achieve a satisfactory outcome. The benefits are more affordable housing for those in housing need, income to owners of empty properties and the reduction in the need for greenfield development and a reduction in empty properties

### **Communication Strategy**

Hambleton District Council will promote the empty property strategy and raise awareness of the powers of the local authority at a launch day to be arranged for early 2007. Owners of empty properties will be invited in addition to landlords and the general public. Leaflets will be produced and displayed wherever members of the public have access, ie libraries and council buildings and will also be distributed to owners of empty properties.

Regular articles in the Hambleton News will update residents on any action taken and demonstrate our pro-active approach to dealing with empty properties, this will include contact details of the housing team who can provide advice and assistance.

### **Enforcement**

The Hampton review is looking at streamlining enforcement to avoid unnecessary burdens on business. In addressing empty properties we are enabling this by having a working group which will include all agencies necessary for taking the issue forward. In this way we will ensure that all views are considered and one lead officer will co-ordinate the work which will be less burdensome than several different contacts.

It is our intention to work informally with the owners through advice, assistance and negotiation to try to bring an empty property back into use. **However, if necessary the Authority will exercise its statutory enforcement powers to compel an empty property back into occupation.** The Empty Property Officer Working Group will decide on the appropriate course of action to take in each case where all offers of assistance have failed. This will ensure a co-ordinated approach in effectively tackling the problem.

The group is developing an enforcement policy which will give clarity and transparency to the process and it will embody the enforcement concordat which Hambleton District Council is signed up to.

The specifics of the Housing Enforcement Policy are that the council will address private housing issues throughout Hambleton District with a view to ensuring housing conditions are maintained.

The options for enforcement are as follows;

- Take no action
- To take informal action

- To use statutory notices
- To use formal cautions
- To prosecute

### **Informal Action**

Informal action includes verbal warnings or requests for action and the use of letters.

### **Formal Intervention**

A wide range of legislation is available under which notices may be served to deal with public health, pollution, housing standards, pest control and empty properties.

The Council will advise the recipient of the notice of the procedures for making an Appeal against any Statutory Notices served upon them.

The Council will also advise the recipient of a notice of the procedure for making an Appeal against a Statutory Notice.

Some of the enforcement powers could include:

- ❖ **Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO)** can be used where property or land is having a detrimental effect on a neighbourhood and can also be used on planning grounds, the property can be demolished or brought back into use.
- ❖ **Enforced Sale Procedure** may be used to bring an empty property back into use where the council has had to take remedial action against a property and a legal charge has been lodged with the Land Registry. The Council can recover its costs incurred and can work in partnership with potential purchasers to ensure that the property is brought back into productive use.
- ❖ **Section 215 Town and Country Planning Act 1990** can be applied to unsightly land or the exterior appearance of a property.
- ❖ **Housing Act 2004 Part 1 HHSRS**. Any residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor (ODPM 2004). Can take into account deficiencies over a 12 month period eg take account of how a hazard could deteriorate further. Inspections could identify Category 1 hazards (worst) and whether the empty property is likely to become a nuisance and help prioritise for action.
- ❖ **Building Act 1984** can also be used to make the property safe or enable the local authority to take emergency action to make the building safe.
- ❖ **Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1982, S.29** where properties are insecure and pose a risk (illegal entry, arson, vandalism)
- ❖ **Environmental Protection Act 1990, S80** where there is a need for the owner to remove waste so that vermin are not attracted to the site. (There are several powers to deal with vermin)
- ❖ **The Housing Act 2004** introduced Empty **Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO)** for use by Local Authorities. An **interim EDMO** is an order made to enable a local housing authority, with the consent of the relevant proprietor to

take steps for the purpose of securing that a dwelling is occupied. A **final** EDMO is an order made following on from an interim EDMO or previous final EDMO for the purpose of securing that the dwelling is occupied (without the owners consent). A council would be able to carry out works to a vacant property and lease the property out for a number of years. The rent proceeds would then be paid to the owner after any costs incurred by the council eg legal costs and works done to bring the property into occupation are recovered.

### **Works in Default**

Some of the legislation applicable to private housing gives the local authority the option to carry out works in default. The Council will advise the owner or manager of the property of the nature of the works to be carried out as works in default and take account of any representations the owner or manager might make. Costs incurred shall be reclaimed from the recipient of the original notice.

### **Prosecution**

Prosecution will be considered where there has been a serious breach of the relevant provisions of legislation.

### **Formal Caution**

The issue of a formal caution will be considered as an alternative to prosecution in accordance with relevant guidance.

### **Equality and Diversity**

The Private Housing Enforcement Policy aims to comply with the Human Rights Act 1998 and relevant anti-discrimination legislation – the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act (amended) 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. In doing so the Council wishes to fulfil its widens duty to the residents of Hambleton District and those who will make their homes here in the future, to support and promote diversity and to enable service users, some of whom are amongst the most vulnerable of all, to establish themselves as positive members of local and wider communities.

### **Complaints Procedure**

The Council has adopted a formalised complaints procedure that is easily accessible in a leaflet available from the Council upon request. Where disputes cannot be resolved then the officer concerned will explain how a complaint may be made.

### **Monitoring and Reporting**

The success of the strategy will be a reduction in the number of empty properties within the district and measured against SMART targets (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Bound) and these targets are set out in the Action Plan below. The Action Plan clearly sets out the Authorities objectives and detailed deadlines.

Quarterly report to Housing and Health Best Value Panel on BVPI64.

## **Procedures**

The procedures are set out in the flowchart attached and each stage will be followed. If all efforts fail to bring the empty property back into use then enforcement action will be taken.

## **Resources**

The resources that are available to the Authority include the following:

- Empty Property Working Group – although the Authority is unable to support a dedicated Empty Property Team there is considerable expertise available to assist in the process of bringing empty properties back into use.
- HAL – Home Appreciation Loans – currently this money is not available for use for empty property work but may be available in the future..
- Capital (Commutated sums) – as explained earlier in this document we may be able to work with a Registered Social Landlord to progress.
- Staff time – Senior Housing Officer in addition to the Housing Officers and Environmental Health Team



## EMPTY PROPERTY STRATEGY – ACTION PLAN

IDENTIFIED ISSUE/ WEAKNESS	SPECIFIC ACTION	MEASURABLE OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	RESOURCES AND EFFICIENCY	DEADLINE	CONTRIBUTES TO CORPORATE PRIORITY	RISK INTERNAL/EXT IMPACT PROBABILITY
No Empty Property Strategy currently in existence	Develop and Empty Property Strategy	Annual Review of the strategy to ensure effectiveness	Senior Housing Officer/ Empty Property Work Group	Officer time and consultation with stakeholders	March 2007	2,3,4,5	I/M/L
No specific information about how many empty properties	Develop an empty property database  Produce graphs detailing how long property empty and location  Highlight hotspots of empty properties and plot on GIS	Review information monthly  Monthly graphs  Target empty properties in these areas	Senior Housing Officer/IT  Senior Housing Officer/Housing Officers	IT Officer time in developing database CT Officer time providing up to date information Cost of converting existing Excel information to Access	Mar 2007  March 2007	1,2,3,4,5	I/M/L
No evidence of proactive measures to bring empty properties back into use	Contact owners of dwellings vacant for more than 6 months	5% of owners of empty properties contacted each month	Senior Housing Officer/Housing Officers	Officer time and the on costs of postage and telephone calls	April 2007	2,3,4,5	I/M/L
Lack of understanding why properties are left empty	Questionnaire to owners and Analyse responses as to why property empty  Develop and implement an appropriate Action Plan	Data on why properties empty. Explore options with owner  Implement and monitor Action Plan	Senior Housing Officer/Housing Officers/Housing Services Manager	Officer time, cost of postage	March 2007  May 2007	2,3,4,5	I/L/L

IDENTIFIED ISSUE/ WEAKNESS	SPECIFIC ACTION	MEASURABLE OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	RESOURCES AND EFFICIENCY	DEADLINE	CONTRIBUTES TO CORPORATE PRIORITY	RISK INTERNAL/EXT IMPACT PROBABILITY
Lack of a co-ordinated approach to tackle empty properties and develop schemes with partners	Bi-monthly meetings of Empty Property Working Group to plan best course of action	Develop options appraisals for 6 properties each bi-monthly meeting	Empty Property Working Group	Officer time	April 2007	2,3,4,5	I/L/L
No interim target has been identified for how many empty properties are to be brought back into use annually	Bring 34 empty properties back into use by Spring 2008 BVPI64	11- June 2006 11 – June 2007 12 – June 2008	Senior Housing Officer Empty Property Working Group	Officer time	May 2006 May 2007 May 2008	1,2,3,4,5,6	E/H/L/
Lack of knowledge outside of the council regarding an Empty Property Strategy and the Councils powers.	Publicise Empty Property Strategy  Launch event Hambleton News  Leaflets to owners, residents, stakeholders, partners Local Strategic Partnerships	Log specific enquiries  Feedback from launch event demonstrating understanding Review leaflet	Senior Housing Officer/ Office/Housing Officers/ Housing Services Manager	Officer time, consultative material and estimate cost of consultation (£200)  £200.00	May 2007	2,3,4,5	E/M/L/
Lack of finance to encourage owners of empty properties to bring them back into use	Explore funding opportunities for grants and loans.  Consider equity release schemes. Identify possible partners in the finance sector	Lever in funding as an additional tool. Make grant funding bid.	Senior Housing Officer/ Housing Officers/ Housing Services Manager	Officer time and possible match funding	March 2007	2,3,4,5	E/M/L
Lack of information on	Promotional pack	Produce an	Senior Housing	Staff time and cost of	March 2007	1/3/4/5/6	I/M/L

IDENTIFIED ISSUE/ WEAKNESS	SPECIFIC ACTION	MEASURABLE OUTCOME	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	RESOURCES AND EFFICIENCY	DEADLINE	CONTRIBUTES TO CORPORATE PRIORITY	RISK INTERNAL/EXT IMPACT PROBABILITY
benefits of bringing an empty property back into use	for empty property owners	information pack containing advice on financial benefits, appreciating asset, support and advice	Officer/Housing Officers/ Housing Services Manager	producing information £100			
Lack of information regarding the Councils enforcement powers to bring empty properties back into use	Develop enforcement policy and when to use powers including the new EDMO and CPO procedure	80% of empty properties brought back into use through agreement with the owner.	Senior Housing Officer/Environmental Health Manager	Staff time Remedial work where appropriate	June 2007	2,3,4,5	I/H/L
Lack of clear procedures to deal with empty properties	Develop procedure documents and pro forma contact letters	Clear procedures in place for consistency.	Senior Housing Officer	Staff time	March 2007		I/M/L
No priorities for grant funding for HHSRS	Develop priorities for grant funding have regard to HHSRS	Reducing Category 1 hazards and achieving Decent Homes Standard	Environmental Health Manager	Staff time	March 2007		I/M/L

**FLOWCHART FOR  
PROCEDURE TO  
BRING PROPERTY  
BACK INTO USE**

**Property Empty for 6 months**

Owner does not respond

Contact Owner of Empty Property

Owner responds

Send further contact letter

Offer advice and assistance

No response visit neighbouring properties to confirm ownership

Explore options act as mediator

Disposal

Further contact letter Section 16 Notice

Monitor Progress

Renting

Owner Refuses to Co-operate

Owner agrees to meeting to discuss options

When Property occupied gather evidence for BVPI64

Private Sector Leasing

Advise on Enforcement Action

Offer Advice and Assistance Explore Options

Equity Release Scheme

Refer to Empty Property Working Group

Owner agrees to one of the Options in the Strategy

Owner Agrees but no Progress is made

Advise Owner of Outcome

Monitor Progress Collect Evidence

Refer to Empty Property Working Group

Offer Further Meeting to Resolve Situation

Advise Owner of Outcome

CPO, EDMO, PLANNING, HOUSING, BUILDING ACTS ETC.

Enforcement Action Where Appropriate

Offer Further Meeting to Resolve Situation

Monitor Progress Collect Evidence

Enforcement Action where appropriate

## APPENDICES

1. Empty Property Strategy Action Plan
2. Flowchart

