



Housing – A Critical Perspective.

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Abstract / Initial Proposal Form:

1. Paper / Proposal Title: Pretty Vacant: Understanding the persistence of empty homes in the UK

2. Format: Written paper

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4. University or Company Affiliation: University of Salford

5. Abstract (300 words):

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimate that by 2022 there will be a national shortage of 1.1 million homes (JRF, 2011). House building clearly has an important role to play in meeting this need. However, at the same time the Government reports that in England, at the autumn of 2015, there were 200,000 homes there had been empty for over 6 months and over 600,000 empty homes in total. Although housing markets need empty homes in localities in order to function correctly, taking advantage of the presence of these dwellings and avoiding confrontations over planning permissions should be a key objective to reduce the need to build and more rapidly tackle housing need. However, the persistence of empty homes appears fraught with complexity. Shelter (2011) suggest that empty homes in particular parts of the North of England are so severely affected by disrepair and unfitness that a high proportion of the properties will never fulfil any useful purpose. Others argue that the desire for a property owning democracy has led to the speculative purchasing of empty homes by landlords whose

management of these properties has led to the breakdown in the fabric of local communities leaving properties deteriorating and uncared for (Collinson, 2011).

This paper reports on work undertaken over three separate projects each of which has sought to understand the persistence of empty homes, map the systems in place for dealing with returning empty homes back to use and propose changes to how empty homes are dealt with. In particular, this paper will detail the findings arising from interviews and focus groups of empty home owners. It will describe how home owners came to own the property, their experiences of owning the home, the challenges they face and their aspirations for the property. In closing the paper will describe steps that can be taken in order to return properties back into housing

7. Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Philip Brown

Professor, University of Salford, Social Change.

Philip Brown is Professor of Social Change, Director of the Centre for Applied Research in Health, Welfare and Policy (CARE) and Director of the Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit at the University of Salford. He has led and delivered a wide range of projects for the private and public sector, charitable bodies and European Commission. These projects typically aim to identify and assess the impact of specific policy initiatives over a variety of topic areas. He has broad research interests having worked in fields as diverse as social inclusion, migration, homelessness, fuel poverty, energy efficiency and regeneration.

Danielle Butler

Doctoral Student, University of Salford

Danielle Butler is a doctoral student within the Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit, University of Salford with interests in behavioural and environmental psychology, fuel poverty, housing and social inequalities, and qualitative research methods. Danielle completed her undergraduate dissertation in collaboration with the Greater Manchester Empty Homes Knowledge Transfer Partnership in which her research explored the experiences of empty home ownership. This project was selected as the 2014 winner of the Jonathan Sime Award; a national award that recognises a significant contribution to the field of people-environment research in an undergraduate dissertation. Danielle recently completed an MSc by Research in which her project examined the attitudes and experiences of fuel poverty among non-student, young adult households.

Marie Griffiths

Reader, University of Salford, Director of the Centre for Digital Business.

Dr Marie Griffiths is a Reader and Director of the Centre for Digital Business. Marie has significant experience gained working on varied digital research projects which have explored the commercial and societal implications of technological change. Marie's current research agenda focuses upon young people and digital media, exploring their behaviour in virtual spaces, their roles as 'prosumers' in social networking sites, the extensive media hubs that now surround even very young children and understanding the potential consequences of this digital saturation.

John Hughes

Principal Housing Strategy Officer, Tameside Council.

John Hughes is the Principal Housing Strategy Officer at Tameside Council and graduate of the University of Salford. Specific interests include how local authorities can integrate Psychology and behavioural insight to inform housing policy and practice, specifically in the field of empty and vacant property and stalled housing development sites. John was lead supervisor on a knowledge Transfer Partnership in collaboration with the Sustainable Housing and Urban Studies Unit which explored the reasons for empty home ownership and their impact on Neighbourhoods in Tameside.

Aisling McCourt

Researcher, University of Salford, Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU).

Aisling McCourt is a researcher based within the Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) at The University of Salford. She is an experienced social and economic researcher, having worked in research roles at the Northwest Regional Development Agency, Rochdale Borough Council and, more recently, with Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council and the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities. Her research interests spans across housing and urban studies, and has involved research into vulnerable groups, empty homes and engaging with hard-to-reach communities. In 2015, Aisling completed a two year Innovate UK funded Knowledge Transfer Partnership on the phenomenon of empty homes and empty home ownership across Greater Manchester. The study was subsequently graded outstanding by Innovate UK. Her more recent research has included a joint study with Salford Business School into creative entrepreneurial start-ups across Manchester; evaluating a local authority intensive keyworker programme for families with complex needs; and understanding fire risks associated with cultural aspects of Black and Minority Ethnic, Faith and Migrant communities.

Lisa Scullion

Reader, University of Salford, Social Policy, Associate Director of the Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU).

Dr Lisa Scullion is Reader in Social Policy and Associate Director of the Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) at the University of Salford. She has led a range of projects focussing on social welfare and multiply excluded groups. Her background is in Social Policy and has specific research experience across a range of subjects within the domain of social exclusion. More specifically, her research focuses on welfare reforms, homelessness and migrant communities. She is currently part of a large ESRC grant 'Welfare Conditionality' which seeks to explore the impact of welfare sanctions on welfare service users.