
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Chris Bailey
National Campaign Manager
Action on Empty Homes
(by email)

16 June 2023

Dear Chris

Representation of data on empty and second homes in Council Taxbase statistics

Thank you for taking the time to raise your concerns around the [Council Taxbase 2022 publication](#) with us. We have looked into your concerns and engaged with the relevant team at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to inform our response.

Issue 1: the way in which empty or second homes are represented in chart 1 is misleading. We agree that from the chart alone users could misinterpret the section labelled “Empty or Second homes” to represent all empty or second homes rather than those liable to council tax discount or premium. Since our engagement with DLUHC, it has reinstated the sentence that was present in the publications prior to 2021 and added additional footnotes to explain the different segments of the chart.

Issue 2: Neither of sections 5.1 or 5.2 refer to empty homes disregarded for council tax purposes. We agree that the empty or second home total figures in sections 5.1 and 5.2 of the Council Taxbase publication could cause confusion for users. We recommended that the producer clearly explain to users that in the sections relating to empty or second homes, there are a number of dwellings removed due to exemption from council tax and explain why this is the case. DLUHC has since added new commentary explaining that empty homes exempt from council tax are not included. The new commentary can be found in:

- Section 1 in the headline on vacant homes
- Section 5.1 in the introductory text to tables 3a and 3b
- Section 5.1 in an explanatory paragraph that explains that dwellings exempt from council tax are not included. It also refers users to DLUHC’s separate [Dwelling Stock Estimates statistics](#) for an aggregate total of the empty properties receiving a discount, being charged a premium and receiving an exemption.

Issue 3: The use of the term “dwelling stock” in both the Council Taxbase and the Dwelling Stock Estimates publications could confuse users as it presents another breakdown of vacant homes. DLUHC has undertaken the following actions to address this concern:

- Information has been added to section 5.1 of the Council Taxbase publication to indicate more clearly the composition of the totals in each publication.
- Information has been added to section 5.1 of the Council Taxbase technical notes signposting users to the Dwelling Stock Estimates publication for an alternative measure of dwelling stock and vacant homes, as well as providing more detail on the differences.
- The latest Dwelling Stock Estimates release now includes clear signposting to the Council Taxbase statistics as the data source and includes a description of what the user can expect from the publication.

We welcome the quick response from statisticians in DLUHC to make these changes that will collectively support the appropriate use of these data.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', written in a cursive style.

Ed Humpherson