

Help to bring  
your property back  
into use.

**An information  
guide for owners  
with empty  
properties.**



Colne Housing Society, is working in partnership with Maldon District Council and Braintree District Council, to bring empty properties back into use.

## Guide to letting your Property

Colne Housing Society, in conjunction with Maldon and Braintree District Councils, want to help you let your empty property to those in housing need.

This may seem like a daunting prospect, but this guide has been designed to show how simple it can be, from the support that Colne and its partners can offer, to identifying the financial assistance that is available to help with renovations.

So if you have an empty property that you might considering leasing, and you would like more information, then you can contact Colne Housing on **01206 244700**, or in writing at Colne Housing Society, Digby House, Riverside Office Centre, Causton Road, Colchester, Essex CO1 1RJ, or by emailing [info@colnehousing.co.uk](mailto:info@colnehousing.co.uk)

## What does the scheme involve?

The aim of this scheme is to breathe new life into properties, which have been standing empty, within the districts of Maldon and Braintree. Once the property has been assessed for suitability, the property will be renovated to meet Decent Homes Standards and to a leasable standard using funding provided by the East of England Regional Assembly. The works will be managed by Colne, and once complete, the property will be leased for an agreed period of three or five years. Colne will also be responsible for the management of the property for the duration of the lease including all contact with the tenants. At the end of the lease, the property will be returned to the owner with vacant possession to the Decent Homes Standard less fair wear and tear.

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## What are the advantages to property owners?

### Stress free service

We will take away much of the stress and strain of letting out your property.

### Professional property management

We will use our expertise to look after and manage your property. You have no contact with the occupier.

### Guaranteed rent

We will guarantee to pay the rent every month for the duration of the lease, whether the property is occupied or not.

### Certificates organised

We will organise gas and electrical inspections to be carried out during the lease term with approved contractors.

### Advice and information

We can provide advice and assistance on a range of issues including details of grants and loans available to help meet our property standards.

## Repairing lease

We can carry out repairs on your behalf. Most repairs are carried out at no cost to you.

Any repairs which are not covered by Colne will be invoiced at the same cost with no additional admin fees.

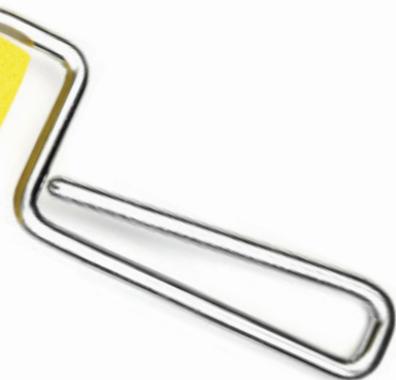
### Repairs service

- All repairs and maintenance issues will be reported to Colne Housing
- Colne will instruct approved contractors to carry out all repairs and ensure they are carried out to a high standard

## Acceptance onto the scheme

Properties will be accepted onto the scheme if they meet the following conditions:

- The property must have been empty for a minimum of 6 months
- The property must be suitable to meet the housing need of the Council
- The Local Authority will place a charge for the costs of any works undertaken on the property for the duration of the lease
- A property standard inspection must be completed and the building must meet required standards for private sector leasing
- Building Control Certificates must be provided for all properties that have been converted or extended
- Landlord's building insurance must be provided
- Evidence of ownership is required
- The property must have no mortgage



## Do I need to tell anyone before I let my property?

Before letting your property you should inform:

- Your insurance company
- Your freeholder (if you are letting a leasehold property)

## Ready to let?

Colne will assist in ensuring your property is ready to be let. This means making sure that the property meets all the necessary health and safety requirements, is clean and tidy, with all fixtures and fittings in good working order.

## Health and safety standards

### Gas safety

The law states that gas appliances must be properly installed and maintained to avoid the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. All gas appliances should be checked once a year, and on every new letting, by a Gas Safe registered installer. Colne Housing will arrange this on your behalf at no extra cost to you.

### Electrical safety

Colne will ensure that a NICEIC approved electrician tests the property, and completes any necessary works, before the start of any new tenancy. This will ensure all the required safety standards are met.

### Fire safety

By law, all properties built after 1992 must be fitted with mains smoke alarms on each floor of the building. This law does not cover older properties, but Colne insists smoke alarms (battery or mains fitted) are installed in rental properties and are regularly checked.

Colne will make an arrangement with the owner of the property to sign the lease. Once the final checks have been done three sets of keys will be required from the owner. When the lease has been confirmed and signed, a date will be set for Colne to take over the management of the property. The first rent payment will be received approximately two weeks after the start of the lease.



## Colne's Responsibilities

Colne Housing will make everything as easy as we can to help you lease your property. Our main responsibilities are:

- Allocating a tenant to the property and managing the tenancy
- Handling complaints from tenants and landlords
- Arranging regular inspections of the property and ensuring that the property is being looked after
- Collecting the rent and reviewing every twelve months
- Providing a telephone hotline for tenants to report repairs or to make complaints
- At the end of the lease term, returning the property to you with vacant possession and in a good condition.



# Questions and answers

**Colne Housing understands that you will have questions. We have answered the most standard ones for you.**

## **Q. What standards will my property need to meet?**

A. Before any property is accepted onto the Leasing Scheme, it must meet our minimum standards. The purpose of these standards is to ensure that the quality of properties is consistently high. Colne will provide advice on the grant funding available to ensure that the property meets the required standards.

## **Q. Who will be responsible for the repairs?**

A. As the owner, you will be responsible for any repairs or maintenance that are necessary to the structure or exterior of the property. You will also be responsible for any electrical or heating upgrades that may be needed, as well as replacement of large fixtures such as boilers and water tanks. These repairs are specified in the lease and are set out in Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.

Colne will inspect the property on a regular basis and will advise you of any repairs that are required. You can either arrange to have the works done yourself, or Colne can arrange to have the works carried out on your behalf.

## **Q. Who is responsible for the insurance?**

A. The owner is responsible for taking out landlord buildings insurance on the property throughout the lease period. It will be necessary for you to contact your insurers to advise them of your plans to lease the property.

## **Q. Who is responsible for the utility bills and council tax?**

A. When occupied, the tenant is responsible for the utility bills (water, gas, electricity, telephone etc.) and the council tax. During void periods, Colne would cover these costs unless the property is vacant due to uncompleted landlord repair issues.



**Q. How is my rent paid?**

A. The rent is paid monthly in advance directly into your bank account.

**Q. Who will the tenants report their repairs to?**

A. In addition to regular inspections Colne provides a maintenance telephone hotline so that tenants can ring at any time to report repairs.

**Q. What happens to my property at the end of the lease?**

A. If at the end of the lease you require the property to be handed back (rather than renewing the lease) Colne will undertake a full inspection to assess the condition of the property and conduct any necessary repairs.

**Q. Will I need to furnish my property?**

A. The property should be left unfurnished.

**Q. Who is responsible for integrated kitchen appliances?**

A. The owner retains responsibility for integrated appliances.

**Q. Do I have to remove free standing white goods from the property?**

A. No. If the goods are in working order, they can be gifted to Colne who will pass them onto the occupier. However, we cannot guarantee that gifted items will remain in the property when it is handed back to the owner.



We will make every effort to provide information in alternative formats on request, including tape, large print and translations.

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