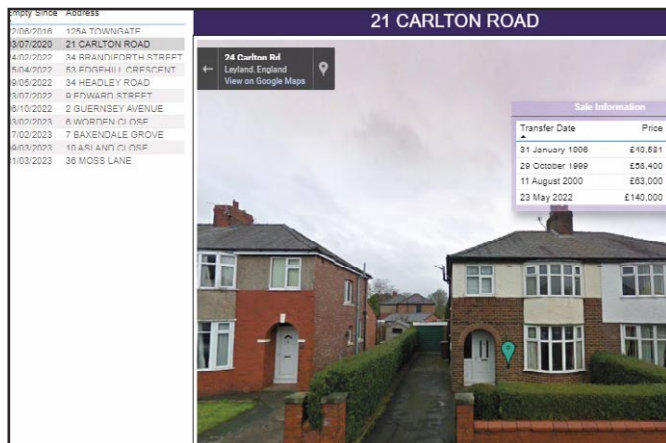# VISTA - INTELLIGENT EMPTY PROPERTY MONITORING

More than a million properties have been reported as being unoccupied in England in 2022 according to a publication by the Local Government Association and Empty Homes Network. Increasing the ability for councils to be more proactive in their approach to dealing with these empty properties is the key to reducing this figure.

In response, Destin Solutions has developed an empty property monitoring solution called 'VISTA' enabling Local Authorities to view all of their empty properties and properties exempt from paying council tax in an online portal.

Virtual property inspections
Not only can a Local Authority view all of their empty properties in a single dashboard, when clicking on an individual property address, they can view the most recent image of a property captured by tools like Google maps. This helps facilitate virtual property inspections, so that empty homes officers or back office staff can ascertain whether the property now appears occupied using visual cues such as cars parked in the driveway, bins outside the property and the general state of repair of the property.

A screen shot from the VISTA solution

These virtual property inspections take a matter of minutes to complete with no fuel costs or travel time incurred. This is a much more pro-active approach to monitoring the statuses of empty and exempt properties. With resources already stretched to the limit, it provides an opportunity for Councils to quite quickly review the likelihood of whether a property has changed occupancy status and provides an audit trail, tracking when virtual inspections have taken place.

Instant alerts when properties are sold or change ownership
VISTA works by taking a subset of a Local Authorities council tax data which highlights empty and exempt properties and loading this into the portal. Additional data has also been captured from the land registry dating back to 1995 and which is updated monthly to identify when properties have been sold or changed ownership. When this happens an alert is sent to specified individuals within the Authority so that next action can be taken to ascertain any change in status of exemptions or occupancy.

Data held in VISTA can be filtered and sorted by the length of time a property has been unoccupied and by exemption type and can be used to help plan and prioritise which properties should be reviewed either physically or virtually.
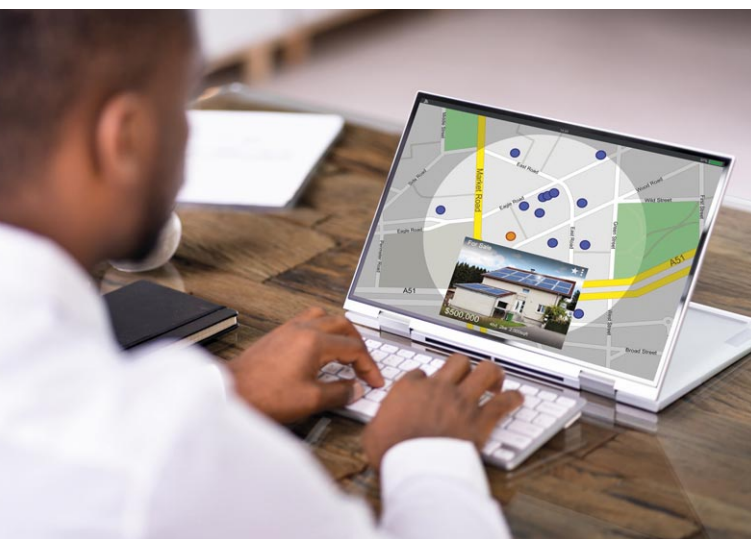
Reporting capabilities

Local Authorities will be able to run a number of reports on their empty homes and exemptions data for example;

- identify all properties which have been empty over a specific period of time

- identify all properties which have a specific exemption class

- identify properties where an exemption class has been changed or removed

- identify when a property was last virtually inspected

- identify all properties which have been sold or changed ownership within a specific time frame

This will facilitate better management insight into the state of empty homes in a specific area and help report on any trends or changes as they occur.

Additional dataset integration

If required a Local Authority also has the option to request that additional datasets are acquired on their behalf to run alongside the solution for example obtaining contact details for newly identified occupiers and/or running credit checks against empty properties to ascertain if these properties are now in fact occupied.

Key Benefits

- More proactive and intelligent monitoring of the status of empty homes and exemption statuses

- Less resource intensive – save time and resource by conducting virtual inspections

- Supports empty home strategies – giving more direction and focus on what to inspect

- More rapid identification of occupation or exemption status change

- Automates the process of tracking status changes in unoccupied and exempt properties

- Easy to use solution – empty homes and back office staff can quickly identify through visual verification if properties appear more likely to be back in use and can re-initiate communication with occupiers

Key Features

- **Virtual inspections** – review more properties with virtual inspections capability and track when these were last conducted

- **Data dashboard** – all empty homes and exemption data captured in one centralised view for easier filtering and sorting of data

- **Reporting capabilities** – more transparency and ability to download and export reports

- **Property sales alert** – instant alerts flagging when properties are sold or change ownership which may indicate a change in occupancy or exemption status

- **Additional dataset integration** – the option to integrate credit checks on empty properties to identify changes in occupancy status and/or obtain contact details for newly identified occupiers

VISTA can be purchased as either a stand-alone product for empty homes practitioners or it can be integrated into our Aspire Property Inspection Solution or VISION performance management and reporting solution.