

Brooke House Decant
Frequency Asked Questions
Updated 8 March 2024

For All Residents

Why do I need to move out?

We need to carry out some necessary repairs to the staircase and roof. Whilst the programme of work to the staircase is carried out, sections of the staircase will not be accessible. The Council have sought advice from the Fire Service to ensure your ongoing safety and they have advised that they would not be able to carry out their operational procedures in the event of a fire and therefore the building will need to be vacated for safety reasons to enable these works to be carried out.

It is likely the work will take place in sections starting at the top of the building.

How long will the work take to complete?

We expect that the work to the staircase will take up to 12 months to complete. The works to the staircase will not commence until the building has been fully vacated.

Will the move be temporary or permanent?

This will be a temporary move whilst the works take place, however due to the length of time these works will take, there are alternative options for tenants or private renters which are detailed below.

When will I need to move out?

This will depend on your housing requirements, or if you have any medical needs that would require you to move more urgently, which we will consider on an individual basis. Based on the average level of empty 1- and 2-bedroom properties that become available to let during the year, we anticipate that it could take up to 2 years to completely decant the building, however, please be assured that if we can undertake this in a shorter period of time, then we will do so however it is subject to properties becoming available.

When will the decant start?

The decant process commenced immediately after the decision was taken to complete the full programme of works in January 2024.

We have contacted residents experiencing significant repair issues in the first instance to start the decant process. After these properties have been vacated, we will look at the individual needs of residents and will re-house based on each household's requirements.

How long will I need to stay in alternative accommodation?

As detailed above, this will depend on how long it takes the Council to find alternative accommodation for all residents but potentially those residents that move at the beginning of the process could be living in alternative accommodation for several years as it could take up to 2 years to fully decant the building and a significant amount of the refurbishment work cannot commence until the building is empty.

Will my furniture be placed in safe storage or left in the flat?

We would expect you to be able to take your furniture to your alternative accommodation, and leave the property empty. However, if this is not possible, we will discuss possible options with you at the time.

What would happen if I don't want to move?

We will discuss this in detail with you to understand your concerns and make every effort to support you in this move.

However, we do not have an option of allowing you to stay in your property whilst the staircase is inaccessible and intrusive works are being undertaken, so as a last resort we would need to explore alternative action which may compel you to move.

Is the building safe enough for us to live in during the waiting time to move?

Yes. The Council will continue to maintain the building to keep you safe and we will be increasing the frequency of our inspections and regular safety checks. The Council currently have a review programme to check the building for the following safety issues:

- Annual Fire Risk Assessment
- Cyclical testing and maintenance regime for all fire equipment, alarms and sprinkler system
- Electrical Testing of Landlords supply
- Emergency lighting tests
- Water safety testing
- Passenger lift servicing
- Annual check of flat entrance doors
- Monthly block inspections
- On site security patrolling building

What should I do in the event of a fire?

As a high rise block your building has a 'stay put' policy in the event of a fire. This means that if a fire occurs you should remain in your property until the Fire Brigade attend to assess the risk and decide if a full evacuation is required, which they will

manage in a way to keep all residents safe. If the fire is directly affecting your property, you and any other occupants in your home should leave immediately and notify the emergency services by calling 999.

There are fire notices located on all floors and in the ground floor lobby.

In the event of a fire the lifts will automatically shut down and anyone required or instructed by the Fire Service to leave the building will need to use the stairs.

Basildon Council Secure tenants

How much notice will I get to prepare for the move?

We will endeavour to give you as much notice as we possibly can to help prepare you for your move. Once we have contacted you and started the decant process, we will be waiting for suitable properties to become vacant to offer you, so it is not possible to predict how long this will take.

I can't afford to move and do not have anyone to help me. Will the Council help?

Yes if you have a secure tenancy with Basildon Council, the Council will arrange your move to your new property. This property will be carpeted and painted in advance of you moving in. A £250 payment will also be made to assist you with any out-of-pocket expenses.

Where needed we can put you in touch with organisations that can help you with any changes to your benefits, and advice on the people you need to advise about your new address. We will help to set up your fuel supply at the new property.

Will I have some choice on where I can move to?

When it is time to decant your property, the allocations team will contact you directly to discuss the process and your individual housing need, which will include your preferred location. We will endeavour to accommodate your preferences; however, we are reliant on the location of properties becoming available so choices may be limited.

Can I move permanently?

As you will be in alternative accommodation for over 12 months, secure tenants can have a choice of moving permanently if that is your preference. We can discuss this when we meet to start the decant process with you.

What type of property will I be offered?

For secure tenants that wish to return to Brooke House, temporary accommodation will be provided that is considered suitable for your immediate housing need, this is most likely to be alternative Basildon Council housing stock as it becomes available.

During the period of the decant, if works need to be prioritised or started earlier, hotel accommodation could be considered. The Council will try to avoid this where possible. If you are a secure tenant and have chosen to move permanently, you will be offered

alternative housing suitable for your housing need in accordance with Basildon Council's allocation scheme.

Will there be parking at the temporary accommodation?

We cannot guarantee that you will have access to a dedicated parking bay. Most of our housing stock is located within housing estates across the borough which has street parking provided on a first come first served basis.

How much rent will I pay at the temporary accommodation – will this be more than I pay now?

You will only pay the rent you are charged now, even if the charges at your new property are higher. You will be liable for the Council Tax and utility costs at the temporary accommodation. If you choose to accept your alternative accommodation as a permanent tenancy you will pay the rent and charges for the new property.

Can I take my pets to the temporary accommodation?

You can advise the allocations team if you have pets, and they will endeavour to identify a property where you can take your pets with you.

If I had somewhere else to stay during this period, for example with friends or family could I do this and would you be able to safely store my furniture and belongings?

Yes we would allow you to stay with friends or family and we would not charge you any rent for your flat at Brooke House for the time you are not in occupation.

We can provide storage facilities at the Council's expense if you choose this option.

I have just redecorated my flat, will I receive compensation for this?

Unfortunately, it would not be feasible to compensate for decoration within your property. You will be given the choice to return to your property, which will be made secure during your absence.

Leaseholders

If you are using the property as your main and principal home the Council will support you to find alternative accommodation.

If you are renting your property to someone else, you will need to end this tenancy to ensure the property is vacant until such time as the works are completed. We will discuss the best course of action to do this with you. We will be in contact with your tenants directly in the coming months and if they find themselves homeless as a result of this action our homeless teams will support them to find alternative accommodation.

We will provide as much notice as possible of when the property will be required to be empty so you can take appropriate action to end the tenancy with your tenant.

We understand that you will experience rent loss during this time and we would advise you to discuss this with your Landlord insurance provider.

Temporary Tenants

All temporary tenants have now been decanted from Brooke House.

Swan Housing Association

If you are an Assured or Fixed Term tenant with Swan Housing Association you will still need to move and the Council are working closely with officers at Swan to accommodate this as smoothly as possible.

The Council will offer you suitable alternative accommodation and if you have an assured tenancy with Swan we will have the same conversations about whether this will be a temporary or permanent move dependant on your preference.

Swan will provide the same support that is offered to Basildon Council secure tenants.

Private Renters

We will be speaking with your landlord to advise them of the timeline for works and that we need the property to be vacant during the period works take place, and would recommend that you speak directly to your landlord about this. Our Housing teams will be contacting you directly nearer the time when your property is due to be decanted, so we can provide re-housing advice and support. Depending on your circumstances they may be able to support you in securing alternative private rented accommodation.