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London artists are leaving 'expensive' capital in favour of cheaper European cities, experts warn

SEAN MORRISON |

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Neequaye Dsane, a London-based graffiti artist known as Dreph, said many people pursuing creative careers in the capital are forced to share cramped spaces and in some cases squat.

He said: "Lots of people who try their best to make it here [in London] can't, and so just leave. Friends of mine have had to share spaces that aren't anywhere near big enough, or had battles with councils over squatting.

"It needs to be recognised just how much creative people boost the economy. London is great and famous for art - so it's ridiculous that many simply can't afford to live here."

Mr Dsane said a percentage of empty properties in the capital should be freed up to give aspiring young artists a space to live and work.

"There is plenty of unused living space in London, especially on the outskirts in places like Romford... and we need to do more to make it possible for those who cannot afford to keep up with costs here. It's causing a brain drain.

"If you want to do something enough, you can make it happen - that's what I believe. But how things are here makes it difficult for those who aren't privileged.

Government figures last year showed that more than 7,500 council-owned properties were lying empty across the capital.