KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

EAST KENT EMPTY PROPERTIES INITIATIVE

SHEPWAY REPORT

June 2005

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1. General character

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1.1 Introduction

This section looks at the general characteristics of empty homes in Shepway only. In total 1,275 vacant properties in Kent were surveyed, of which 281 were located in Shepway. According to HIP data, this represents 11.5% of the vacant homes in the District.

The figures presented in this report are based on the results for Shepway only. Where appropriate, comparisons are made with the characteristics of all the empty homes surveyed. The survey covered both general characteristics of empty homes in Shepway, such as dwelling type and age; and more specific building characteristics. This chapter presents the results and analyses key trends.

A number of properties were found to be occupied and therefore were not surveyed. Details of such dwellings were referred to the project manager to address in respect of individual properties. This allowed continual monitoring of, and adjustment against, any system flaws in recording mechanisms.

1.2 General characteristics

The table below profiles the age of empty homes in the area. Over half of all dwellings surveyed (58.7%) were thought to have been built before 1918. Around a quarter (24.6%) had been built after 1964, when building regulations were introduced. Older dwellings are typically much more likely to be in poor condition and to have low energy efficiency; this is what we would expect to see in the dwellings surveyed.

Table 1.1 Number of dwellings in each age group		
Dwelling age	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Pre-1919	165	58.7%
1919-1944	32	11.4%
1945-1964	15	5.3%
1965-1980	35	12.5%
Post 1980	34	12.1%
Total	281	100.0%

The table below profiles the dwelling types of the home surveyed. Some 59.4% of all dwellings were flats; 28.1% of these were non-residential (e.g. commercial properties). 40.6% of dwellings surveyed were houses. The proportion of converted flats in particular is somewhat higher than we might expect to find, were the survey to represent non-vacant homes as well.
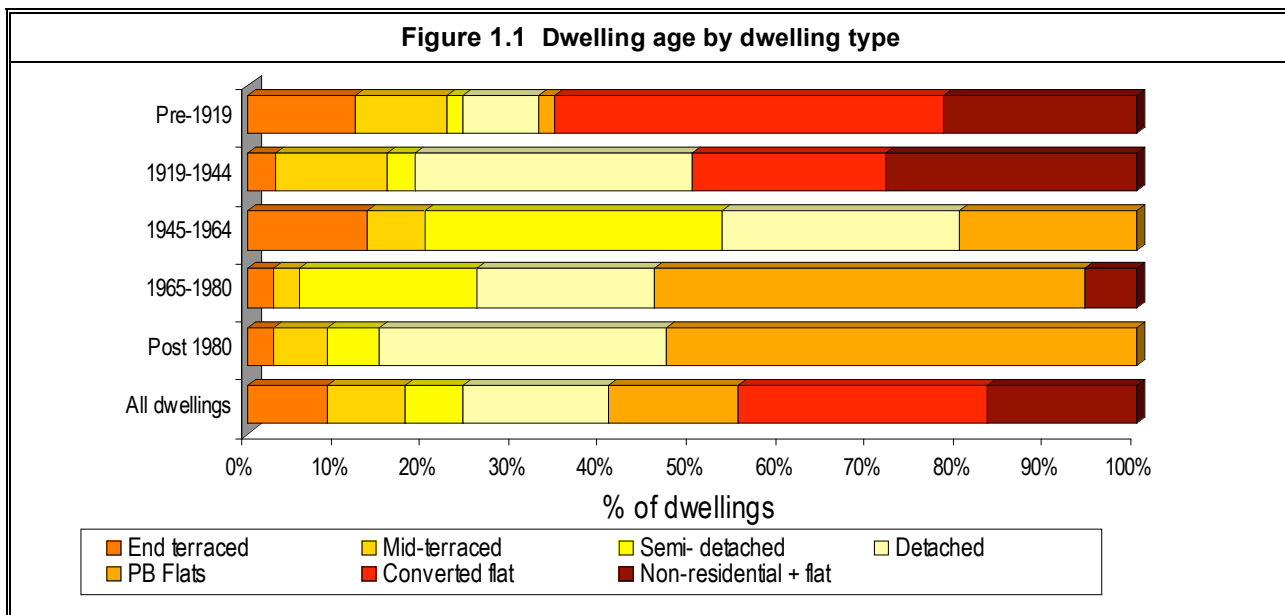
Table 1.2 Dwelling types		
Dwelling type	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
End terraced	25	8.9%
Mid-terraced	25	8.9%
Semi-detached	18	6.4%
Detached	46	16.4%
Purpose-built flats	41	14.6%
Converted flat	79	28.1%
Non-residential + flat	47	16.7%
Total	281	100.0%

For comparisons in dwelling age or type profile between each local authority area, please see the main report.

1.3 General characteristics - crosstabluations

The following tables correlate some of the dwelling type and age. The most significant trends include the high proportion of non residential buildings with flats and converted flats in pre-1919 built dwellings. Furthermore, purpose-built flats are much more likely to be found in dwellings built after 1965.

Table 1.3 Dwelling age by dwelling type							
Age of dwelling	Type of dwelling						
	End terraced	Mid-terraced	Semi-detached	Detached	PB Flats	Converted flat	Non-residential + flat	Total
Pre-1919	20	17	3	14	3	72	36	165
1919-1944	1	4	1	10	0	7	9	32
1945-1964	2	1	5	4	3	0	0	15
1965-1980	1	1	7	7	17	0	2	35
Post 1980	1	2	2	11	18	0	0	34
Total	25	25	18	46	41	79	47	281

Figure 1.1 Dwelling age by dwelling type

1.3   Physical characteristics

The table below shows the floor sizes for different types of dwelling. The survey found that the 50th percentile (i.e. the median) floor space of all dwellings to be 80.8m² and the mean is 90.7 m². The 25th percentile is 60.0 m² suggesting that smaller properties are bunched around this size, whilst the 75th percentile is 110.3 m² suggesting that there is a wider range of sizes for those properties that are larger than average.

There is a significant degree of variation in property size according to type. Detached houses have by far the largest average sizes; whilst converted and purpose built flats show sizes smaller than other types.

Table 1.4 Floor space and dwelling types			
Dwelling type	25th percentile	Mean	75th percentile
End terraced	67.8	95.0	116.0
Mid-terraced	69.8	98.0	100.8
Semi- detached	60.5	90.5	105.2
Detached	63.9	116.0	141.1
PB Flats	58.6	81.9	110.9
Converted flat	51.7	78.8	101.8
Non-residential + flat	51.8	87.4	115.2
Total	60.0	90.7	110.3

This survey also looked at the materials and structures of the key physical elements of each dwelling. The survey examined roof coverings, wall structures, wall finishes and windows, all of which are detailed in the remainder of this section.

The table below profiles the kinds of roof covering used. Concrete tiles were the most common found, being the main kind of roofing on over two-fifths of all dwellings. 'Natural slate' was the second most common roof covering on surveyed dwellings.

Table 1.5 Roof covering		
Roof covering	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Natural slate	50	17.8%
Artificial slate	27	9.6%
Clay tile	43	15.3%
Concrete tile	123	43.8%
Asphalt	23	8.2%
Felt	13	4.6%
Other	2	0.7%
Total	281	100.0%

The table below presents the kind of wall structure found. A third of all dwellings surveyed in Shepway were found to have nine-inch-thick solid masonry walls– these features are typical of older dwellings. Just under a third had masonry walls with a cavity.

Table 1.6 Wall structure		
Wall structure	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Masonry cavity	91	32.4%
Masonry single (4.5")	0	0.0%
Masonry solid (9")	94	33.5%
Masonry solid (>9")	85	30.2%
In-situ concrete	1	0.4%
Concrete panels	1	0.4%
Timber panels	8	2.8%
Metal sheet	1	0.4%
Total	281	100.0%

The table below shows the kind of finishes used on external walls for the dwellings surveyed. The vast majority (96.4%) had either rendered walls, or masonry pointing.

Table 1.7 Wall finish		
Wall finish	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Masonry pointing	169	60.1%
Render	102	36.3%
Shiplap Timber	5	1.8%
Tile hung	0	0.0%
Plastic	1	0.4%
Other	4	1.4%
Total	281	100.0%

The final table examines the types of windows installed in the dwellings surveyed. Over half were single glazed; however, the second most popular single type is double glazed windows with a PVCu frame, which were found in 37.0% of all dwellings surveyed in Shepway.

Table 1.8 Window type			
Window type		Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Single glazed	wood casement	40	14.2%
	wood sash	105	37.4%
	metal	10	3.6%
Double glazed	Wood	9	3.2%
	PVCu	104	37.0%
	Metal	13	4.6%
Total		281	100.0%

1.5 Summary

This chapter laid out and analysed results for the main dwelling characteristics of the 281 dwellings surveyed in Shepway:

- Over two thirds of all dwellings surveyed (58.7%) were thought to have been built before 1919
- Some 59.4% of the dwellings were flats; of these, 28.1% were non-residential
- The average floor area was 90.7m², with detached houses found to have by far the biggest floor sizes and converted and purpose-built flats the smallest
- Certain structural materials were particularly common – such as concrete tiles for roof covering, nine or more-inch-thick solid masonry walls finished with rendering or masonry pointing, and single glazed windows.

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2. External repair

2.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the details of external repairs required to dwellings. Typical repairs required will include repairs to roofs, windows and paved areas – the survey form at the back of the report shows the full range of possible repairs required to external features of a dwelling. Repairs do not include cosmetic improvements such as cyclical painting. The subsequent analysis of repair costs looks at three different time periods (up to a year, up to five years and within the next ten years).

2.2 Measuring the extent of disrepair

An idea of the presence of faults provides useful information about the main problem areas, but does not represent either the extent of the problems or the cost of putting them right. The standard test for such repairs is the cost to put the building into good repair. This includes all the external building elements and the overall cost of rectifying any work. The survey measured three levels of disrepair (shown in the box below).

Box 2.1 Categories of repair measured in the survey

Category	Definition
Urgent repair	Where surveyors had recorded that work was needed to an exterior building element, they indicated whether work specified was urgent; defined as works needed to remove threats to the health, safety, security and comfort of the occupants and to forestall further rapid deterioration of the building. This is a measure of serious and immediate problems with the exterior of the dwelling
Basic repair	All works identified by the surveyor as needing to be done within 5 years, including any urgent work as described above. These do not include replacement of external building elements nearing the end of their life where the surveyor recorded that this action could be delayed by more than 5 years, often by short term patch repairs.
Comprehensive repair	This includes all repairs as specified above together with any replacements the surveyor has assessed as being needed in the next 10 years. Replacement periods are defined for all external elements and are given whether or not any repair work has been identified as needed. The replacement period is given as the number of years before the element needs replacing either following specified repair work or simply as the remaining life expectancy. This measure provides a better basis for identifying work which would form part of a planned programme of repair by landlords.

It should be noted that the above repair categories are cumulative. Consequently figures for *basic repair* include the costs of *urgent repairs*, and both are in turn included in the figures for *comprehensive repairs*.

Standard repair costs are based on a schedule provided by the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) and have been updated to a 1st quarter 2004 base for the South East region.

2.3 Assessment of repair costs – overall findings

The overall situation in terms of external repairs costs for empty homes in Shepway is summarised in the table below. The data shows an average urgent repair cost of £2,027 per dwelling, this figure rises to £8,091 for comprehensive repairs – these costs include dwellings requiring no work.

Table 2.1 Overall external repairs costs for Shepway empty homes		
Repairs category	Total cost for all sample	Average cost per dwelling
Urgent repair	£0.6m	£2,027
Basic repair	£0.8m	£2,949
Comprehensive repair	£2.3m	£8,091

Calculating the total cost of external repairs for all dwellings sampled shows that urgent repair costs to external elements sum to £0.6 million. Including basic repairs and comprehensive repair costs, a total of £2.3 million is required to repair external elements on the empty properties surveyed.

2.4 Elements of repairs

It is possible to look at the average cost of basic repairs for the individual elements examined in the survey. The elements are shown (in descending order of cost) in the table below.

Table 2.2 Average cost of individual external elements – basic repair		
Item	Average cost per dwelling	% of cost
External doors and windows	£859.76	29.2%
Roofs	£694.58	23.6%
External walls	£676.98	23.0%
Walls, fences, paved areas and outbuildings	£332.44	11.3%
Chimneys	£78.24	2.7%
Foundations	£166.62	5.7%
Damp proof course	£53.97	1.8%
Drainpipes and soil & waste pipes	£86.46	2.9%
Total	£2,949	100.0%

External doors and windows account for almost 30% of the basic repair cost, with the mean cost estimated to be £860. This item along with the two other most expensive ones (repairs to roofs and walls) account for around 76% of the total basic repair cost.

2.5   Repair costs and dwelling characteristics

The tables below show repair costs by age of dwelling, and building type for the 281 dwellings surveyed. Average costs for the different local authority areas are also shown. As might be expected, repair costs in Shepway are closely related to age of dwelling. The data shows the highest costs in each category for 1919-1944 dwellings - closely followed by pre-1919 dwellings - and the lowest costs in post-1980 dwellings.

By dwelling type, houses show higher external repair costs, and detached houses in particular. Flats show generally lower external costs, however those flats attached to non-residential (i.e. commercial) buildings show high repair costs, similar to those for houses. In terms of sub-areas, the Thanet Council area shows the highest external repair costs for each repair category but Shepway comes a close second. Dwellings in Swale show lower external repair costs than the other local authority areas.

Table 2.3 Repair costs by age of dwelling			
Dwelling age	Urgent repairs	Basic repairs	Comprehensive repairs
	Repair cost per dwelling		
Pre-1919	£2,638	£3,711	£9,195
1919-1944	£2,717	£4,095	£11,935
1945-1964	£1,136	£2,138	£7,127
1965-1980	£465	£622	£3,782
Post-1980	£413	£924	£3,978
Average	£2,027	£2,949	£8,091

Table 2.4 Repair costs by building type			
Building type	Urgent repairs	Basic repairs	Comprehensive repairs
	Repair cost per dwelling		
End terrace	£5,319	£7,008	£11,675
Mid terrace	£2,135	£3,330	£7,652
Semi-detached	£103	£941	£8,438
Detached	£5,772	£7,162	£19,638
Purpose-built flat	£145	£274	£392
Converted flat	£717	£1,423	£4,880
Non-residential plus flat	£1,132	£2,132	£7,098
Average	£2,027	£2,949	£8,091

Table 2.5 Repair costs by sub-area			
Sub-area	Urgent repairs	Basic repairs	Comprehensive repairs
	Repair cost per dwelling		
Dover	£1,017	£1,781	£5,066
Shepway	£2,027	£2,949	£8,091
Swale	£787	£1,366	£2,643
Thanet	£2,671	£3,523	£5,419
Average	£1,649	£2,440	£5,412

2.6 Non-residential repair costs

The survey identified external repair costs for any non-residential elements to the dwelling. These included:

- Shop front
- Garage/warehouse doors
- Forecourt surface
- Private lighting systems
- Signs and hoardings

A total of 46 dwellings were surveyed with non-residential elements. It must be remembered that not all the above elements will apply to the dwellings surveyed. The table below shows the average repair costs for these elements. The same three repair categories as above have been used (e.g. urgent repair, basic repair and comprehensive repair).

Table 2.6 Repairs costs for non-residential elements		
Repairs category	Total cost for the 46 dwellings	Average cost per dwelling
Urgent repair	£31,300	£680
Basic repair	£223,700	£4,862
Comprehensive repair	£223,700	£4,862

This indicates that in addition to the mean urgent repair costs of £1,132 for flats attached to non-residential properties, a mean of £680 is required for the non-residential elements. Therefore the average flat with part non-residential will require an average of £1,132 to repair all external elements urgently. This raises the total urgent repair costs for the sample by around £30,000.

It appears that any external repairs are required within 5 years and that there are no renewals that would be recommended in the 5-10 year period.

2.7 Summary

The survey studied external faults to the empty dwellings and associated repair costs. Some of the main findings of the analysis were:

- The average cost per dwelling of urgent external repairs (i.e. those needing to be done within the next year) was £2,027 – this totals £0.6m for the 281 dwellings surveyed
- The average cost per dwelling for basic repairs (i.e. all work needing to be done within the next 5 years) was £2,949 – totalling £0.8m for the sample
- The average cost per dwelling for comprehensive repairs (i.e. all work needing to be done within the next 10 years) was £8,091 – totalling £2.3 m for the sample
- Doors and windows were the main elements (in terms of the amount needing to be spent) requiring repair
- Older dwellings, and detached houses showed the highest external repair costs
- Dwellings with non-residential elements require on average an additional £680to repair these elements within the next year

These figures give an indication of where the highest levels of repair costs lie. Subsequent chapters focus on condition, and draw out which groups of properties or aspects of properties are in most need of attention. Please note that because it is not possible with this kind of survey to guarantee representative results through grossing up and weighting of data, the costs presented here are indicative only.

3. Security & access

3

3.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the details of the general access of dwellings and issues of security.

3.2 Dwelling access

The survey collected information regarding access to the dwelling; for example if there was garden space and potential for disabled access. The table below shows the proportion of the sample with different access options.

Table 3.1 Access to the dwelling		
Feature	Present	Not present
Garden/space vehicular	38.8%	61.2%
Garden/space pedestrian	75.4%	24.6%
Immediately on street	21.7%	78.3%
Shared with other dwellings	51.6%	48.4%
Disabled access in place	4.3%	95.7%
Disabled access potential	54.1%	45.9%
Access problems	16.7%	83.3%

Note: access problems include steep gradients, inadequate lighting and narrow pathways

The potential number of car parking spaces was also recorded. The table below shows that the majority of dwellings have one or two potential car parking space but around a quarter do not have any potential for parking.

Table 3.2 Number of potential car parking spaces		
Number of potential spaces	Number of dwellings	%
0	64	22.8%
1-2	176	62.6%
3-5	36	12.4%
5-9	5	1.8%
10 or more	1	0.4%
Total	281	100.0%

3.3   Security of dwellings

The survey also collected information regarding the security of dwellings. The findings are shown in the table below. It can be seen that the majority of dwellings surveyed (73.0%) have strong entrance doors and a similar amount (71.6%) have deadlocks fitted on the entrance door. However, less than a tenth of the sample has a burglar alarm.

Table 3.3 Security of dwelling		
Feature	Present	Not present
Strong entrance/external doors	81.1%	18.9%
Deadlocks to entrance external doors	81.1%	18.9%
Door viewer to main entrance door	12.5%	87.5%
Burglar alarm	9.6%	90.4%
Fanlight or glazing to/ adjacent to an entrance external door	63.0%	37.0%

Additionally, of the 167 flats surveyed, less than a third (32.3%) had controlled access.

3.4   Summary

The survey studied access and security of dwellings. Some of the main findings of the analysis were:

- Around a quarter of dwellings surveyed do not have a potential car parking space
- Three-quarters of properties had access via a garden space, whilst around half shared access with other dwellings
- Around half of the properties surveyed had either disabled access in place, or the potential for disabled access; whilst around 17% had an access problem
- The majority of dwellings surveyed (81.1%) have strong entrance doors and deadlocks fitted on the entrance door
- Less than a tenth of the sample has a burglar alarm

4. General condition

4

4.1 Introduction

This section looks at the general condition of the homes surveyed. Please note that in all cases it is based on the best information available, and may not be perfectly accurate.

4.2 Amenities

This section shows what actions the surveyors recommended regardingthe key dwelling amenities. The levels of repair specified are subjective – this is as much detail on repair that can be specified, given that amenities differ greatly and are very difficult to compare.

The table below shows the recommended actions on heating and hot water systems. A range of actions were recommended, although in just under a third of cases (32.4%), no action was thought to be required. The most common action is 'minor repair', which was thought to apply in two-fifths of all cases, followed by renewal, which applied to around 10% of dwellings.

Table 4.1 Heating and Hot Water System		
Action	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
No repair	91	32.4%
Minor repair	120	42.7%
Major repair	22	7.8%
Renew	30	10.7%
Install	18	6.4%
Total	281	100.0%

The table below shows the same evaluation process being carried out against kitchen amenities. Again, no action was deemed necessary in just under a third of all cases, and 43.4% were thought to need only minor repair. Renewal was recommended for 11% of cases, and around 6% required outright installation, lacking amenities entirely.

Table 4.2 Kitchen Amenities		
Action	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
No repair	91	32.4%
Minor repair	122	43.4%
Major repair	21	7.5%
Renew	31	11.0%
Install	16	5.7%
Total	281	100.0%

Finally, the surveyors took account of bathroom amenities. A very similar profile of actions can be observed to that of kitchen facilities. This may be due to sharing of hot water systems between the two sets of amenities; or due to the fact that putting in amenities or refurbishing them in the first place tend to involve similar levels of cost and difficulty.

Table 4.3 Bathroom Amenities		
Action	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
No repair	87	31.0%
Minor repair	128	45.6%
Major repair	21	7.5%
Renew	31	11.0%
Install	14	5.0%
Total	281	100.0%

4.3   Comparative condition

The table below plots the condition of the properties, relative to that of their neighbours. This is necessarily a subjective assessment of external, visible, general condition (surveying all dwellings in the surrounding area to a set of criteria is prohibitively expensive). Because dwelling characteristics are very often shared between neighbouring dwellings, this provides a reasonable indicator of whether a particular dwelling is in better or worse condition than we might reasonably expect.

The results show that the majority were deemed to be in the same condition as that of the 5 or so dwellings in the immediate area. However, around 27% - 77 dwellings, were deemed to be worse, whilst only 14% were thought to be better.

Table 4.4 Condition relative to neighbouring dwellings		
Condition	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Worse than	77	27.4%
Same	152	54.1%
Better than	40	14.2%
Isolated	12	4.3%
Total	281	100.0%

The survey also considered condition relative to dwellings in the area – this might include up to 500 dwellings, where appropriate. The results are similar to those for neighbouring dwellings.

Table 4.5 Condition relative to dwellings in area		
Condition	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Worse than	79	28.1%
Same	147	52.3%
Better than	46	16.4%
Isolated	9	3.2%
Total	281	100.0%

4.3 Summary

This section looked at the general condition of the homes surveyed:

- In just under a third of cases (32.4%), no action was thought to be required regarding heating/hot water systems; the most common action recommended is 'minor repair', which was applied in two-fifths of all cases
- Regarding kitchen amenities no action was deemed necessary in just under a third (29.8%) of all cases, and 43.4% were thought to need only minor repair; only 6% lacked amenities entirely
- Bathroom amenities were similar to these figures: no action was deemed necessary in 31.0% of cases and 45.6% were thought to need only minor repair; 5.0% lacked amenities entirely
- Just over half (54.1%) of dwellings were deemed to be in a similar condition to those neighbouring dwellings; around a quarter (27.4%) were deemed to be worse
- Comparing the condition of the sample dwellings relative to those in the area, fewer dwellings (52.3%) were rated as being in the same condition; a similar figure of around 28% were rated worse

5. Impressions and environmental assessment

5

5.1 Impressions of dwelling

The surveyor's impressions of the condition of each dwelling surveyed were recorded on the form. The results for 'overall dwelling condition' are presented in the table below. The majority of dwellings surveyed were classed as either 'good' or 'fair'. However, 72 dwellings were found to be in 'poor' or 'very poor' condition, and only 3.6% (or 10) were deemed 'excellent'.

Table 5.1 Impressions: overall dwelling condition		
Condition	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings
Excellent	10	3.6%
Good	101	35.9%
Fair	98	34.9%
Poor	45	16.0%
Very Poor	27	9.6%
Total	281	100.0%

The dwellings were also placed into one of five 'priority categories' from A to E, where dwellings classed as A should be the Council's highest priority in terms of being brought back into use quickly and cheaply. Dwellings in category E will therefore be those necessitating the most substantial repairs and expenditure and/or in an environment where demand is low. The table below shows the classification of all the dwellings surveyed.

Table 5.2 Impressions: priority category		
Category	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings
A	88	31.3%
B	75	26.7%
C	74	26.3%
D	23	8.2%
E	21	7.5%
Total	281	100.0%

It can be seen that relatively few dwellings are in categories D and E (i.e. low priority), and that almost a third of those surveyed (88 dwellings) are in the highest category in terms of being brought back into use easily at minimal cost.

Surveyors were also asked to consider the lettability of dwellings. This is shown in the table below. When considering dwellings in their present state, it is estimated that 21.7% (61 dwellings) fall into the highest two categories and so would not be difficult to let without further work. After any possible refurbishment, 249 dwellings are classed as 'excellent' or 'good'. Only 4 dwellings would still have 'poor' or 'very poor' lettability potential after refurbishments.

Table 5.3 Impressions: lettability				
Lettability	Lettability in present state		Lettability after refurbishment	
	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings
Excellent	6	2.1%	88	31.3%
Good	55	19.6%	161	57.3%
Fair	135	48.0%	28	10.0%
Poor	47	16.7%	3	1.1%
Very Poor	38	13.5%	1	0.4%
Total	281	100.0%	281	100.0%

5.2 Anti-social behaviour

Information was collected concerning the visual quality of the area local to a dwelling, as well as any evidence of anti-social behaviour in the local area. The table below shows that almost half of the dwellings surveyed were thought to be in a local area of 'average' visual quality. None were classed as 'worst' or 'best':

Table 5.4 Visual quality of local area		
Category	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings
Best	0	0.0%
2	10	3.6%
3	92	32.7%
Average	131	46.6%
5	45	16.0%
6	3	1.1%
Worst	0	0.0%
Total	281	100.0%

Table 5.5 Evidence of anti-social behaviour						
	Number of dwellings in category					
Problem	Not applicable	Minor	2	3	Major	Total
Litter/rubbish/dumping	46	190	28	15	2	281
Graffiti	241	32	0	7	1	281
Vandalism	223	46	7	2	3	281
Substance misuse	264	9	0	7	1	281
Other ASB	261	16	0	3	1	281

The 'other ASB' category primarily includes problems with groups of children or young people. The table shows that relatively few dwellings are in locations where anti-social behaviour has a significant impact on the local environment. Rubbish and vandalism appear to be the main problems, with substance misuse the least likely to affect the local area.

5.3 Environmental problems

Various environmental problems were also considered. The results are shown in the table below.

Table 5.6 Environmental problems in local area						
	Level of Problem					
Problem	Not applicable/ no problem	Minor	3	4	Major	Total
Intrusive Industry	220	35	23	2	1	281
Non-conforming uses	267	12	2	0	0	281
Vacant/boarded-up buildings	221	34	7	6	13	281
Ambient air quality	168	100	12	1	0	281
Heavy traffic	159	64	34	18	6	281
Intrusive m/ways or A roads	242	21	17	1	0	281
Railway/aircraft noise	240	14	20	3	4	281
Nuisance from street parking	100	71	47	42	21	281
Scruffy gardens/landscaping	56	103	93	25	4	281
Scruffy/neglected buildings	50	142	56	25	8	281
Dog/other excrement	81	43	94	62	1	281
Vacant sites	247	19	11	1	3	281

Note: these categories of problem follow those used by the English House Condition Survey. 'Non-conforming uses' refers to domestic properties being used inappropriately for commercial purposes e.g. scrap yards.

The aspects most likely to be problematic in the vicinity of the dwellings surveyed were 'scruffy gardens/landscaping', 'scruffy/neglected buildings' and 'dog/other excrement'. Those aspects with which the fewest problems were reported were 'non-conforming uses', 'vacant sites' and 'intrusive motorways/A roads'.

5.4 Other buildings with potential for conversion

Surveyors were asked to state whether there were any buildings in the immediate vicinity which have potential for conversion to living accommodation. This was the case for 76 of the dwellings surveyed in Shepway. The types of building are shown in the table below. Most of these are shops.

Table 5.7 Type of building suitable for conversion	
Type	Number of dwellings
Warehouse	5
Shop	48
Small hotel	3
Large hotel	4
Offices	2
Pub	5
Community hall	5
Vacant land	14
Other	5

5.5 Summary

The surveyors recorded impressions of the condition of each dwelling, as well as environmental problems and any evidence of anti-social behaviour in the local area:

- The majority (70.8%) of dwellings surveyed were classed as either 'good' or 'fair'. 72 (or 25.6%) of dwellings were found to be in 'poor' or 'very poor' condition, and only 3.6% (or 10) were deemed 'excellent'

- Around 30% of those dwellings surveyed (88 dwellings) are in the highest category in terms of being brought back into use easily at minimal cost. Relatively few dwellings (44) are low priority status

- It is estimated that 21.7% (61 dwellings) fall into the highest two categories and so would not be difficult to let without further work. After possible refurbishment, 249 dwellings would be classed similarly

- Almost half of the dwellings surveyed were thought to be in a local area of 'average' visual quality; none were classed as 'worst' or 'best'

- Relatively few dwellings are in locations where anti-social behaviour has a significant impact on the local environment; vandalism and rubbish are the main problems

- The aspects most likely to be problematic in the vicinity of the dwellings surveyed were 'scruffy/neglected buildings or gardens' and 'dog/other excrement'

- Surveyors reported that 76 buildings in the vicinity of surveyed dwellings had the potential for conversion to living accommodation; the majority of these are shops

6. Recommended properties to bring back into use

6

6.1 Introduction

One of the major parts of the survey was to recommend which properties provided the best opportunity to return back into residential use. The main thrust was to identify those dwellings which would be relatively cheap to make the required repairs to, as well as being located in areas and environments which would be popular and hence dwellings that would be easy to relet.

6.2 The method

The method was to weight each property for a range of factors. These are described below along with the broad weighing attached.

Table 6.1 Weighting by category		
Category	*Max weight*	*Description*
External Repairs	30%	A measure based on each of the three measures used (urgent, basic and comprehensive) with 10% of marks attached to each. The lower the cost the more highly the property scored
Security	2.5%	Dwellings start with 5 points and lose one for each of the five security measures required
Access	2.5%	Dwellings start with 7 points and lose one for any parking/disabled access/general access problems
Internal condition	15%	Dwellings start with 15 points and lose 5 for renew/install, 3 for major repair and 1 for minor repair in each of the kitchen, heating and bathroom categories.
Overall dwelling condition (surveyor assessment)	5%	Scoring from 5 (excellent to 0 (very poor)
Priority category (surveyor assessment)	10%	Scoring from 10 (category A to 0 (category E)
Lettability present state	7.5%	Scoring from 7.5 (excellent) to 0 (very poor)
Lettability after refurb.	7.5%	Scoring from 7.5 (excellent) to 0 (very poor)
Environmental 1 – visual quality of local area	6%	Scoring from 6 best to 0 worst
Environmental 2 – evidence of anti-social behaviour	4%	Scoring from 4 for no evidence to 0 for any major problem
Environmental 3 – other environmental problems	4%	Scoring from 4 for no evidence to 0 for any major problem
Condition of common parts	2%	2 marks scored for all houses/bungalows. Flats lose 1 mark if common parts only 'fair' and lose two marks if poor.
Relative dwelling condition – immediate surroundings (c5 dwellings)	2%	Dwelling scores 2 points if worse than immediate neighbours, 1 point if same as and 0 points if better than or isolated.
Relative dwelling condition – general area (c500 dwellings)	2%	Dwelling scores 2 points if worse than general area, 1 point if same as and 0 points if better than or isolated.

6.3   Dwellings suitable for immediate action

The 1,275 dwellings examined in the whole survey were ranked according to the score they achieved using the methodology above. The dwellings were then sub-divided into 6 groups. Group 1 contains the 200 dwellings that it would be most sensible and cost-effective to bring back into use first, the second grouping contains the next 200 and so on (although group 6 contains the last 275 rather than 200). The table below shows the distribution of dwellings in each group by area. It can be seen that around a fifth of the 200 dwellings in the 1st priority group are in Shepway.

Some 78 of the dwellings surveyed in Shepway fall into priority categories 1 or 2. 21.0% of surveyed dwellings are in the worst category.

Table 6.2 Priority category by area						
	Number of dwellings in category					
Category	Shepway		Dover	Swale	Thanet	Total
	Number	% of total				
1	41	14.6%	90	35	34	200
2	37	13.2%	73	32	58	200
3	42	14.9%	46	50	62	200
4	52	18.5%	65	35	48	200
5	50	17.8%	70	38	42	200
6	59	21.0%	85	29	102	275
Total	281	100.0%	429	219	346	1,275

The table below shows the distribution of Shepway dwellings in the 6 groups by dwelling type. Over half (24) of the dwellings in the highest priority group (group 1) are purpose built flats. With all East Kent empty homes surveyed, purpose-built flats are particularly likely to be in category 1. Semi-detached houses show a large proportion in the first two categories; whilst non-residential properties with a flat, and converted flats, are weighted towards categories 4, 5 and 6.

Table 6.3 Priority category by dwelling type							
	Number of dwellings in category						
Category	End terrace	Mid terrace	Semi-detached	Detached	Purpose built flat	Converted flat	Non residential with flat	Total
1	4	1	3	7	24	2	0	41
2	2	3	5	6	10	8	3	37
3	2	4	3	3	4	20	6	42
4	2	5	3	6	2	21	13	52
5	6	6	4	6	0	18	10	50
6	9	6	0	18	1	10	15	59
Total	25	25	18	46	41	79	47	281
% in category 1 or 2	24.0%	16.0%	44.4%	28.3%	82.9%	12.7%	6.4%	27.8%

The table below shows the distribution by dwelling age. It is clear that older dwellings are much less likely to be in the higher priority groups, whereas almost all the post-1980 dwellings are in the first few categories.

Table 6.4 Priority category by dwelling age						
Category	Number of dwellings in category					
	Pre-1919	1919-1944	1945-1964	1965-1980	Post 1980	Total
1	5	0	4	10	22	41
2	12	3	1	12	9	37
3	31	2	3	6	0	42
4	35	11	3	3	0	52
5	41	5	2	2	0	50
6	41	11	2	2	3	59
Total	165	32	15	35	34	281
% in category 1 or 2	10.3%	9.4%	33.3%	62.9%	91.2%	27.8%

It seems that dwellings to focus on in particular (i.e. those which can be brought back into use quickly and easily) are newer dwellings, and purpose-built flats. However, due to the large proportion of pre-1919 dwellings and converted flats in the survey, in absolute terms such dwellings make up a non-negligible element of categories 1 and 2.

6.4   Summary

The 1,275 dwellings were ranked in order to show which properties provided the best opportunity to return back into residential use, and divided into 6 roughly equal categories. Dwellings in Shepway are similarly distributed to those found in other areas; with 27.8% of dwellings in categories 1 and 2.

Looking at dwellings in Shepway some of the key findings are:

- High proportions of semi-detached houses (44.4%) and purpose-built flats (82.9%) were ranked in categories 1 and 2
- Converted flats and non-residential properties with flats showed particularly low proportions in the top categories
- Older dwellings are much less likely to be in the higher priority groups