KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

EAST KENT EMPTY PROPERTIES INITIATIVE

DOVER REPORT

May 2005

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Executive summary

Context of the Study

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ii) ??????????????????????????

iii) ??????????????????????????

Borough of <…> study area

1. General character

1

1.1 Introduction

This section looks at the general characteristics of empty homes in Dover only. In total 1,275 vacant properties in Kent were surveyed, of which 429 were located in Dover. According to HIP data, this represents 23.8% of the vacant homes in the Borough.

The figures presented in this report are based on the results for Dover 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 Dover, 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 two thirds of all dwellings surveyed (70.2%) were thought to have been built between before 1919. Just 13.8% had been built after 1964, when building regulations were introduced (compared to 17.4% for all dwellings in the East Kent survey). 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	301	70.2%
1919-1944	23	5.4%
1945-1964	46	10.7%
1965-1980	29	6.8%
Post 1980	30	7.0%
Total	429	100.0%

The table below profiles the dwelling types of the home surveyed. Some 27.9% of all dwellings were flats; 14.5% were non-residential (e.g. commercial properties) and the remaining 57.6% were

houses. The proportions of detached houses and converted flats in particular are 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	44	10.3%
Mid-terraced	124	28.9%
Semi- detached	39	9.1%
Detached	40	9.3%
Purpose-built flats	46	10.7%
Converted flat	74	17.2%
Non-residential + flat	62	14.5%
Total	429	100.0%

For comparisons in dwelling age or type profile between each local authority area, please see the main report. Dover had age and type profiles broadly similar to those of the average for East Kent.

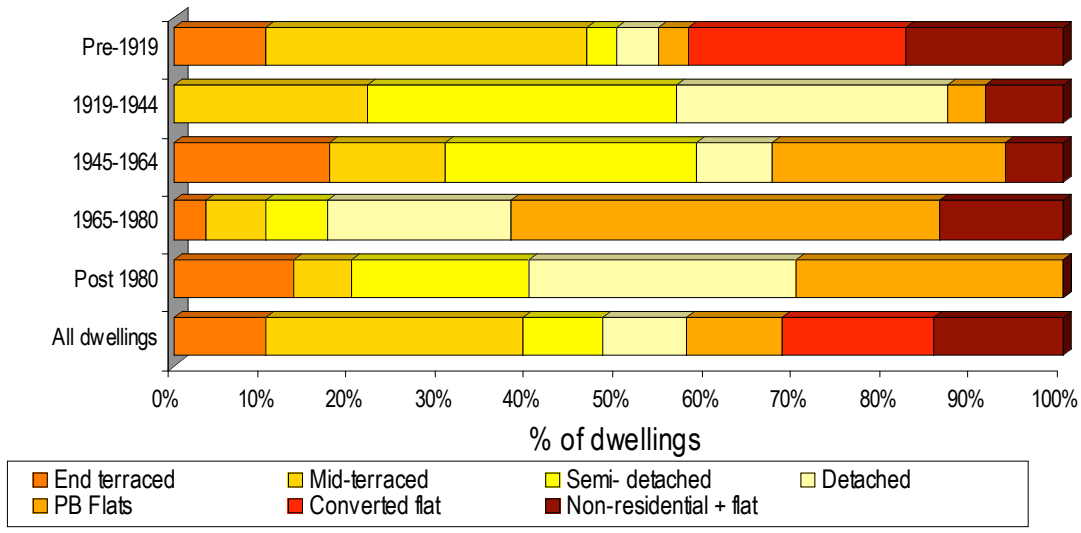
1.3 General characteristics - crosstabluations

The following tables correlate some of the dwelling type and age. Although it is difficult to discern trends with such a small sample size, there is a definite pattern of terraced houses and converted flats being built before 1919. 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	31	109	10	14	10	74	53	301
1919-1944	0	5	8	7	1	0	2	23
1945-1964	8	6	13	4	12	0	3	46
1965-1980	1	2	2	6	14	0	4	29
Post 1980	4	2	6	9	9	0	0	30
Total	44	124	39	40	46	74	62	429

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 average) floor space of all dwellings to be 79.5m², slightly larger than the average for the whole survey.

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 much smaller than other types. Properties that are primarily non-residential, and detached houses show the greatest variation in dwelling sizes.

Table 1.4 Floor space and dwelling types

Dwelling type	25th percentile	50th percentile (ie. Average)	75th percentile
End terraced	73.8	85.8	104.4
Mid-terraced	68.8	81.0	97.5
Semi- detached	76.5	85.2	108.4
Detached	81.4	105.1	134.6
PB Flats	61.5	70.1	89.2
Converted flat	57.8	68.0	88.0
Non-residential + flat	43.9	73.8	96.3
Total	65.6	79.5	102.5

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. Some 7 dwellings surveyed were found to have a kind of covering from the 'other' category.

Table 1.5 Roof covering

Roof covering	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Natural slate	125	29.1%
Artificial slate	52	12.1%
Clay tile	65	15.2%
Concrete tile	151	35.2%
Asphalt	19	4.4%
Felt	10	2.3%
Other	7	1.6%
Total	429	100.0%

The table below presents the kind of wall structure found. Almost three quarters of all dwellings were found to have nine-inch or thicker solid masonry walls. Just over a quarter had masonry walls with a cavity – these features are typical of older dwellings, and reflect the relatively old age profile of dwellings in the area studied.

Table 1.6 Wall structure

Wall structure	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Masonry cavity	117	27.3%
Masonry single (4.5")	1	0.2%
Masonry solid (9")	239	55.7%
Masonry solid (>9")	70	16.3%
Concrete panels	1	0.2%
Timber panels	1	0.2%
Total	429	100.0%

The table below shows the kind of finishes used on external walls for the dwellings surveyed. The vast majority (98.6%) had either rendered walls, or masonry pointing.

Table 1.7 Wall finish		
Wall finish	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Masonry pointing	268	62.5%
Render	155	36.1%
Shiplap Timber	1	0.2%
Tile hung	4	0.9%
Plastic	1	0.2%
Total	429	100.0%

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

Table 1.8 Window type			
Window type		Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Single glazed	wood casement	61	14.2%
	wood sash	141	32.9%
	metal	13	3.0%
Double glazed	Wood	22	5.1%
	PVCu	175	40.8%
	Metal	17	4.0%
Total		429	100.0%

1.5 Summary

This chapter laid out and analysed results for the main dwelling characteristics of the 429 dwellings in the survey:

- Over two thirds of all dwellings surveyed (70.2%) were thought to have been built before 1919 – these are particularly likely to be converted flats or terraced houses
- Some 27.9% of all dwellings were flats; 14.5% were non-residential and the remaining 57.6% were houses
- The median average floor area was 79.5m^2, with detached houses found to have by far the biggest floor sizes and converted flats the smallest
- Certain structural materials were particularly common – such as concrete tiles for roof covering, nine-inch-thick solid masonry walls finished with rendering or masonry pointing, and single glazed windows.

2. External repair

2

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 Kent empty homes is summarised in the table below. The data shows an average urgent repair cost of £1,017 per dwelling, this figure rises to £5,066 for comprehensive repairs – these costs include dwellings requiring no work.

Table 2.1 Overall external repairs costs for Kent empty homes

Repairs category	Total cost for all sample	Average cost per dwelling
Urgent repair	£436,000	£1,017
Basic repair	£764,000	£1,781
Comprehensive repair	£2,173,000	£5,066

Calculating the total cost of external repairs for all dwellings sampled shows that urgent repair costs to external elements sum to £436,000. Including basic repairs and comprehensive repair costs, a total of almost £2.2 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	£555	31.2%
Roofs	£462	25.9%
External walls	£314	17.7%
Walls, fences, paved areas and outbuildings	£191	10.7%
Damp proof course	£93	5.2%
Chimneys	£92	5.2%
Foundations	£44	2.5%
Drainpipes and soil & waste pipes	£29	1.6%
Total	£1,781	100.0%

External doors and windows account for almost a third of the basic repair cost, with the mean cost estimated to be £555. The next most expensive aspects of repair are 'roofs', 'external walls', and 'walls, fences, paved areas and outbuildings', which together account for over half of the estimated mean 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 429 dwellings surveyed. As might be expected, repair costs are closely related to age of dwelling. The data shows the highest costs in each category for 1919-1944 dwellings by a significant margin. The repair costs for pre-1919 dwellings are also above average, whilst those for post-1980 dwellings are just a fraction of those of older buildings

By dwelling type, houses show higher external repair costs, and semi-detached houses in particular. Comprehensive repair costs for semi-detached and detached properties are around twice as high as average. 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.

Table 2.3 Repair costs by age of dwelling			
Dwelling age	Urgent repairs	Basic repairs	Comprehensive repairs
	Repair cost per dwelling		
Pre-1919	£1,039	£1,952	£4,711
1919-1944	£3,738	£4,930	£16,795
1945-1964	£584	£948	£4,117
1965-1980	£352	£525	£3,837
Post-1980	£23	£139	£2,277
Average	£1,017	£1,781	£5,066

Table 2.4 Repair costs by building type			
Building type	Urgent repairs	Basic repairs	Comprehensive repairs
	Repair cost per dwelling		
End terrace	£1,217	£2,003	£4,786
Mid terrace	£1,016	£1,795	£4,348
Semi-detached	£3,134	£4,549	£10,198
Detached	£1,136	£1,844	£9,038
Purpose-built flat	£41	£259	£1,540
Converted flat	£573	£936	£2,752
Non-residential plus flat	£726	£1,948	£6,288
Average	£1,017	£1,781	£5,066

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 62 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 2.5 Repairs costs for non-residential elements		
Repairs category	Total cost for the 62 dwellings	Average cost per dwelling
Urgent repair	£53,000	£863
Basic repair	£368,000	£5,929
Comprehensive repair	£637,000	£10,269

This indicates that in addition to the mean urgent repair costs of £726 for flats attached to non-residential properties, a mean of £137 is required for the non-residential elements. Therefore the average flat with part non-residential will require an average of £863 to repair all external elements urgently. This raises the total urgent repair costs for the sample from £436,000 to £489,000.

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 £1,017 – this totals £436,000 for the 429 dwellings surveyed
- The average cost per dwelling for basic repairs (i.e. all work needing to be done within the next 5 years) was £1,781 – totalling £764,000 for the sample
- The average cost per dwelling for basic repairs (i.e. all work needing to be done within the next 10 years) was £5,066 – totalling £2.17 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 houses, particularly semi-detached properties built between 1919 and 1944, show higher than average repair costs
- Dwellings with non-residential elements require on average an additional £137 to repair these elements within the next year. This would bring the total level of urgent costs up to £489,000.

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	23.8%	76.2%
Garden/space pedestrian	66.4%	33.6%
Immediately on street	31.5%	68.5%
Shared with other dwellings	31.7%	68.3%
Disabled access in place	3.0%	97.0%
Disabled access potential	39.6%	60.4%
Access problems	10.7%	89.3%

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 do not have a potential car parking space.

Table 3.2 Number of potential car parking spaces

Number of potential spaces	Number of dwellings	%
0	281	65.5%
1-2	113	26.3%
3-5	28	6.5%
5-9	5	1.2%
10 or more	2	0.5%
Total	429	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 (73.9%) have strong entrance doors and a similar amount (71.8%) 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	73.9%	26.1%
Deadlocks to entrance external doors	71.8%	28.2%
Door viewer to main entrance door	12.1%	87.9%
Burglar alarm	7.9%	92.1%
Fanlight or glazing to/ adjacent to an entrance external door	52.4%	47.6%

Additionally, of the 182 flats surveyed, less than half 44.5% had controlled access.

3.4 Summary

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

- Around two-thirds of dwellings do not have a potential car parking space
- Two thirds of properties had access via a garden space, whilst around one third shared access with other dwellings
- Less than half of the properties surveyed had either disabled access in place, or the potential for disabled access; whilst around one in ten had an access problem
- The majority of dwellings surveyed (73.9%) have strong entrance doors and a similar amount (71.8%) have 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 on the 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 almost two-fifths of cases (39.4%), no action was thought to be required. The most common action is 'minor repair', which was thought to apply in a quarter of all cases.

Table 4.1 Heating and Hot Water System

Action	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
No repair	169	39.4%
Minor repair	114	26.6%
Major repair	46	10.7%
Renew	51	11.9%
Install	49	11.4%
Total	429	100.0%

The table below shows the same evaluation process being carried out against kitchen amenities. Again, no action was deemed necessary in around 40% of all cases, and around a third were thought to need only minor repair. Renewal was recommended for 15% 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	179	41.7%
Minor repair	125	29.1%
Major repair	36	8.4%
Renew	61	14.2%
Install	28	6.5%
Total	429	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	182	42.4%
Minor repair	122	28.4%
Major repair	37	8.6%
Renew	59	13.8%
Install	29	6.8%
Total	429	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 the same as that of the 5 or so dwellings in the immediate area. However, around 30% - 123 dwellings, were deemed to be worse, whilst only 9% were thought to be better.

Table 4.4 Condition relative to neighbouring dwellings		
Condition	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Worse than	123	28.7%
Same	264	61.5%
Better than	40	9.3%
Isolated	2	0.5%
Total	429	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, as we might expect, more polarised than those for neighbouring dwellings, with fewer dwellings being rated as being in the same condition. However, the pattern of more dwellings being rated worse than better remains – some 32.2% were rated worse.

Table 4.5 Condition relative to dwellings in area		
Condition	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Worse than	138	32.2%
Same	201	46.9%
Better than	90	21.0%
Isolated	0	0.0%
Total	429	100.0%

4.3 Summary

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

- In around two-fifths of cases (39.4%), no action was thought to be required regarding heating/hot water systems; the most common action recommended is 'minor repair', which was recommended in around a quarter of all cases
- Regarding kitchen and bathroom amenities, again no action was deemed necessary in around 40% of all cases; just over a quarter were thought to need only minor repair; and only 6-7% lacked amenities entirely
- Around 60% of dwellings surveyed were deemed to be of similar condition to those neighbouring dwellings; around one third (28.7%) were deemed to be worse
- Comparing the condition of the sample dwellings relative to those in the area, fewer dwellings (46.9%) were rated as being in the same condition; a similar figure of around one third 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 overall results for 'overall dwelling condition' are presented in the table below. The majority of dwellings surveyed were classed as either 'good' or 'fair'. However, 94 dwellings were found to be in 'poor' or 'very poor' condition (22.0%), and only 10.3% (or 44) were deemed 'excellent'. This compares to 4.9% of the stock covered in the whole survey being rated excellent.

Table 5.1 Impressions: overall dwelling condition

Condition	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings
Excellent	44	10.3%
Good	136	31.7%
Fair	155	36.1%
Poor	68	15.9%
Very Poor	26	6.1%
Total	429	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 Councils' 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 being 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	131	30.5%
B	114	26.6%
C	115	26.8%
D	50	11.7%
E	19	4.4%
Total	429	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 (131 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 42.9% (184 dwellings) fall into the highest two categories and so would not be difficult to let without further work. After any possible refurbishment, 369 dwellings were thought to be able to be classed as 'excellent' or 'good' (86.0%). Only 1 dwelling would still have 'poor' or 'very poor' lettability potential after refurbishments.

Table 5.5 Impressions: lettability

Lettability	Lettability in present state		Lettability after refurbishment	
	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings
Excellent	49	11.4%	132	30.8%
Good	135	31.5%	237	55.2%
Fair	137	31.9%	59	13.8%
Poor	64	14.9%	1	0.2%
Very Poor	44	10.3%	0	0.0%
Total	429	100.0%	429	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 5.6 Visual quality of local area

Category	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings
Best	0	0.0%
2	17	4.0%
3	129	30.1%
Average	213	49.7%
5	67	15.6%
6	3	0.7%
Worst	0	0.0%
Total	429	100.0%

Table 5.7 Evidence of anti-social behaviour						
Problem	Extent of problem					
	Not applicable	Minor	2	3	Major	Total
Litter/rubbish/dumping	92	254	75	8	0	429
Graffiti	293	131	5	0	0	429
Vandalism	287	132	8	0	2	429
Substance misuse	396	30	3	0	0	429
Other ASB	402	21	6	0	0	429

The 'other ASB' category primarily includes problems with groups or gangs of young people or noise. The table shows that relatively few dwellings are in locations where anti-social behaviour has a significant impact on the local environment. Rubbish appears to be the main problem, although the only major problems found were associated with vandalism. Substance misuse and 'other ASB' were the problems least likely to affect the dwellings surveyed.

5.3 Environmental problems

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

Table 5.8 Environmental problems in local area						
Problem	Level of Problem					
	Not applicable/ no problem	Minor	3	4	Major	Total
Intrusive Industry	231	134	54	10	0	429
Non-conforming uses	374	47	1	2	0	429
Vacant/boarded-up buildings	357	50	17	3	2	429
Ambient air quality	257	110	62	0	0	429
Heavy traffic	214	122	93	0	0	429
Intrusive m/ways or A roads	326	67	36	0	0	429
Railway/aircraft noise	354	43	27	5	0	429
Nuisance from street parking	88	108	186	47	0	429
Scruffy gardens/landscaping	213	165	46	3	2	429
Scruffy/neglected buildings	175	206	45	1	2	429
Dog/other excrement	302	113	14	0	0	429
Vacant sites	243	116	54	12	4	429

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 'nuisance from street parking' and 'scruffy gardens/landscaping' or 'scruffy/neglected buildings'. Those aspects with which the fewest problems were reported were 'non-conforming uses', and 'vacant/boarded up buildings'.

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 104 dwellings (just under a quarter of the sample). The types of building are shown in the table below. The most common types of building were shops and those in the 'other' category.

Table 5.9 Type of building suitable for conversion

Type	Number of dwellings
Warehouse	12
Shop	35
Small hotel	7
Large hotel	1
Offices	16
Pub	16
Community hall	2
Vacant land	10
Other	38

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 (67.8%) of dwellings surveyed were classed as either 'good' or 'fair'. Some 94 (or 22.0%) of dwellings were found to be in 'poor' or 'very poor' condition, and 10.3% were deemed 'excellent'
- Around a third of those dwellings surveyed (131 dwellings) are in the highest category in terms of being brought back into use easily at minimal cost. Relatively few dwellings (69) are low priority status
- It is estimated that 42.9% of dwellings fall into the highest two categories of 'lettability' and so would not be difficult to let without further work. After possible refurbishment, an estimated 86.0% 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; rubbish and vandalism are the main problems
- The aspects most likely to be problematic in the vicinity of the dwellings surveyed were 'nuisance from street parking' and 'scruffy gardens/landscaping' or 'scruffy/neglected buildings'
- Surveyors reported that 104 buildings in the vicinity had the potential for conversion to living accommodation

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 almost half of the dwellings in the 1st priority group are in Dover, although this is partly due to the larger sample size in this area.

Some 163 of the dwellings surveyed in Dover fall into priority categories 1 or 2. On average there are 72 dwellings from the Dover area in each category, and the results range from 46 for category 3 to 90 for category 1.

Table 6.2 Priority category by area						
Category	Number of dwellings in category					
	Dover		Shepway	Swale	Thanet	Total
	Number	% of total				
1	90	21.0%	41	35	34	200
2	73	17.0%	37	32	58	200
3	46	10.7%	42	50	62	200
4	65	15.2%	52	35	48	200
5	70	16.3%	50	38	42	200
6	85	19.8%	59	29	102	275
Total	429	100.0%	281	219	346	1,275

The table below shows the distribution of Dover dwellings in the 6 groups by dwelling type. Almost half (98) of the dwellings in the highest priority group (group 1) are flats. As is the case with all East Kent empty homes surveyed, purpose-built flats are particularly likely to be in category 1. Detached houses are the other group that show a majority in the first two categories; whilst non-residential properties with a flat, and terraced houses, are weighted towards categories 4, 5 and 6.

Table 6.3 Priority category by dwelling type								
Category	Number of dwellings in category							
	End terrace	Mid terrace	Semi-detached	Detached	Purpose built flat	Converted flat	Non residential with flat	Total
1	7	16	7	12	32	12	4	90
2	7	15	11	11	9	16	4	73
3	4	14	6	4	3	8	7	46
4	9	21	2	3	0	19	11	65
5	7	25	5	3	0	11	19	70
6	10	33	8	7	2	8	17	85
Total	44	124	39	40	46	74	62	429
% in category 1 or 2	31.8%	25.0%	46.2%	57.5%	89.1%	37.8%	12.9%	38.0%

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	32	1	14	17	26	90
2	49	5	12	5	2	73
3	33	6	5	1	1	46
4	60	2	2	0	1	65
5	56	3	8	3	0	70
6	71	6	5	3	0	85
Total	301	23	46	29	30	429
% in category 1 or 2	26.9%	26.1%	56.5%	75.9%	93.3%	38.0%

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 and terraced dwellings in the survey, in absolute terms such dwellings make up a significant 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 Dover are more polarised than those found through the whole survey; with larger than average proportions in categories 1 and 6.

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

- High proportions of detached houses (57.5%) and purpose-built flats (89.1%) were ranked in categories 1 and 2
- Terraced houses 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

Despite these finding, the large proportion of pre-1919 and terraced dwellings in the survey mean that in absolute terms such properties make up a significant element of all those in categories 1 and 2.