KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

EAST KENT EMPTY PROPERTIES INITIATIVE

SWALE REPORT

May 2005

Fordham Research Ltd, 16 Woodfield Road, London, W9 2BE
T. 020 7289 3988 F. 020 7289 3309 E. info@fordhamresearch.com
www.fordhamresearch.com

Table of Contents

Executive summary

Context of the Study

??:

i) ??????????????????????????

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

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

Borough of <…> study area

1. General character

1

1.1 Introduction

This section looks at the general characteristics of empty homes in Swale only. In total 1,275 vacant properties in Kent were surveyed, of which 219 were located in Swale. According to HIP data, this represents 31.2% of the vacant homes in the Borough.

The figures presented in this report are based on the results for Swale 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 Swale, 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. Just under two thirds of all dwellings surveyed (64.4%) were thought to have been built between before 1919. Just 4.1% had been built between 1919 and 1944, the lowest proportion of any local authority area. Pre-1919 dwellings are typically much more likely to be in poor condition; 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	141	64.4%
1919-1944	9	4.1%
1945-1964	21	9.6%
1965-1980	27	12.3%
Post 1980	21	9.6%
Total	219	100.0%

The table below profiles the dwelling types of the home surveyed. Some 9.6% of all dwellings were flats; 7.3% were non-residential (e.g. commercial properties) and the remaining 83.1% were houses.

The properties surveyed in Swale contained a much higher proportion of terraced and semi-detached houses than the survey as a whole did.

Table 1.2 Dwelling types

Dwelling type	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
End terraced	34	15.5%
Mid-terraced	105	47.9%
Semi- detached	31	14.2%
Detached	12	5.5%
Purpose-built flats	9	4.1%
Converted flat	12	5.5%
Non-residential + flat	16	7.3%
Total	219	100.0%

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

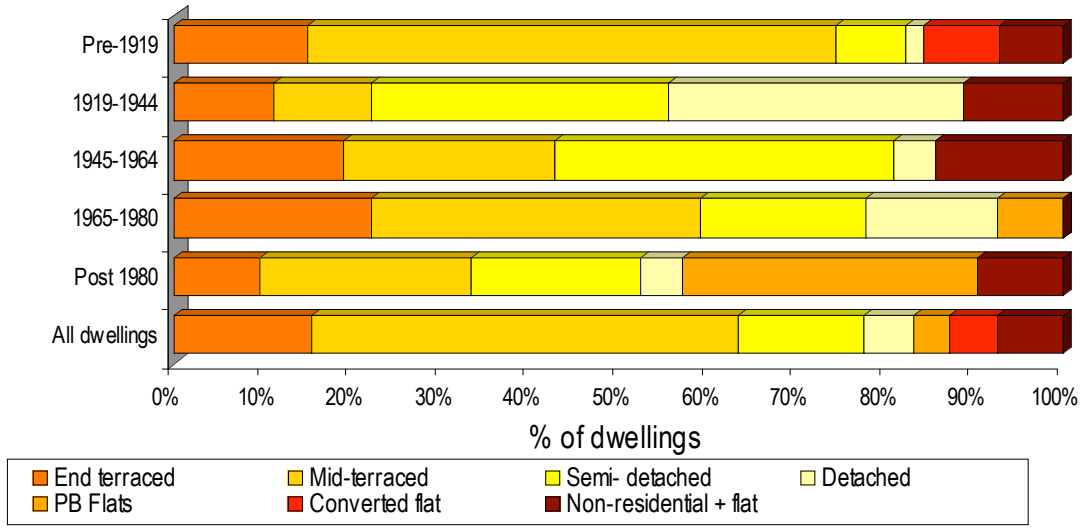
1.3 General characteristics - crosstabluations

The following tables correlate some of the dwelling type and age. 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 only 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	21	84	11	3	0	12	10	141
1919-1944	1	1	3	3	0	0	1	9
1945-1964	4	5	8	1	0	0	3	21
1965-1980	6	10	5	4	2	0	0	27
Post 1980	2	5	4	1	7	0	2	21
Total	34	105	31	12	9	12	16	219

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 75.9m², 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. Houses show greater variations in dwelling sizes.

Table 1.4 Floor space and dwelling types

Dwelling type	25th percentile	50th percentile (ie. Average)	75th percentile
End terraced	68.9	79.3	101.0
Mid-terraced	69.3	78.0	86.1
Semi- detached	67.0	81.0	98.1
Detached	85.1	98.2	126.4
PB Flats	44.8	54.2	63.9
Converted flat	43.5	48.2	55.5
Non-residential + flat	34.7	44.2	61.1
Total	62.3	75.9	88.6

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 three-quarters of all dwellings. Natural slates and clay tiles were also found in significant proportions.

Table 1.5 Roof covering

Roof covering	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Natural slate	26	11.9%
Artificial slate	5	2.3%
Clay tile	21	9.6%
Concrete tile	163	74.4%
Asphalt	2	0.9%
Felt	2	0.9%
Other	0	0.0%
Total	219	100.0%

The table below presents the kind of wall structure found. Almost two-thirds of all dwellings were found to have nine-inch or thicker solid masonry walls. The only other kind of wall structure to be found in significant numbers were masonry walls with a cavity, which account for approximately a third of all dwellings.

Table 1.6 Wall structure

Wall structure	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Masonry cavity	77	35.2%
Masonry single (4.5")	0	0.0%
Masonry solid (9")	135	61.6%
Masonry solid (>9")	6	2.7%
Concrete panels	0	0.0%
Timber panels	1	0.5%
Total	219	100.0%

The table below shows the kind of finishes used on external walls for the dwellings surveyed. The vast majority (95.4%) had either rendered walls, or masonry pointing.

Table 1.7 Wall finish		
Wall finish	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Masonry pointing	138	63.0%
Render	71	32.4%
Shiplap Timber	4	1.8%
Tile hung	4	1.8%
Plastic	2	0.9%
Total	219	100.0%

The final table examines the types of windows installed in the dwellings surveyed. A majority had double glazing, with the most popular single type being double-glazed windows with a PVCu frame.

Table 1.8 Window type			
Window type		Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Single glazed	wood casement	42	19.2%
	wood sash	37	16.9%
	metal	10	4.6%
Double glazed	Wood	10	4.6%
	PVCu	116	53.0%
	Metal	4	1.8%
Total		219	100.0%

1.5 Summary

This chapter laid out and analysed results for the main dwelling characteristics of the 219 dwellings in the survey:

- Around two thirds of all dwellings surveyed (64.4%) were thought to have been built before 1919, whilst particularly few dwellings were built between 1919 and 1944
- Some 9.6% of all dwellings were flats; 7.3% were non-residential (e.g. commercial properties) and the remaining 83.1% were houses
- The median average floor area was 75.9m^2, with detached houses found to have by far the biggest floor sizes and non-residential properties with 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 double-glazed PVCu 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 £787 per dwelling, this figure rises to £2,643 for comprehensive repairs – these costs include dwellings requiring no work. These costs are low when compared to those estimated in the other local authority areas.

Table 2.1 Overall external repairs costs for Kent empty homes

Repairs category	Total cost for all sample	Average cost per dwelling
Urgent repair	£172,000	£787
Basic repair	£299,000	£1,366
Comprehensive repair	£579,000	£2,643

Calculating the total cost of external repairs for all dwellings sampled shows that urgent repair costs to external elements sum to £172,000. Including basic repairs and comprehensive repair costs, a total of almost £580,000 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	£683	50.0%
External walls	£293	21.4%
Roofs	£142	10.4%
Walls, fences, paved areas and outbuildings	£100	7.3%
Drainpipes and soil & waste pipes	£70	5.1%
Chimneys	£61	4.5%
Foundations	£17	1.3%
Damp proof course	£0	0.0%
Total	£1,366	100.0%

External doors and windows account for almost a third of the basic repair cost, with the mean cost estimated to be £683. The next most expensive aspects of repair are 'roofs', 'external walls', and 'walls, fences, paved areas and outbuildings', which together account for around 40% 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 219 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 all pre-1965 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	£891	£1,537	£2,682
1919-1944	£937	£2,521	£9,814
1945-1964	£834	£1,498	£2,919
1965-1980	£758	£920	£1,763
Post-1980	£17	£160	£163
Average	£787	£1,366	£2,643

Table 2.4 Repair costs by building type			
Building type	Urgent repairs	Basic repairs	Comprehensive repairs
	Repair cost per dwelling		
End terrace	£934	£1,366	£2,204
Mid terrace	£581	£1,119	£2,189
Semi-detached	£1,210	£2,237	£3,930
Detached	£2,115	£3,200	£6,488
Purpose-built flat	£35	£64	£70
Converted flat	£54	£300	£1,131
Non-residential plus flat	£988	£1,453	£3,755
Average	£787	£1,366	£2,643

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 16 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	£17,000	£1,066
Basic repair	£90,000	£5,613
Comprehensive repair	£127,000	£7,915

This indicates that in addition to the mean urgent repair costs of £988 for flats attached to non-residential properties, a mean of £78 is required for the non-residential elements. Therefore the average flat with part non-residential will require an average of £1,066 to repair all external elements urgently. This raises the total urgent repair costs for the sample from £172,000 to £239,000.

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 £787 – this totals £172,000 for the 219 dwellings surveyed
- The average cost per dwelling for basic repairs (i.e. all work needing to be done within the next 5 years) was £1,366 – totalling £299,000 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 £2,643 – totalling £579,000 for the sample
- Doors and windows were the main elements (in terms of the amount needing to be spent) requiring repair
- Dwellings built before 1965, and houses, particularly detached properties, show higher than average repair costs
- Dwellings with non-residential elements require on average an additional £78 to repair these elements within the next year. This would bring the total level of urgent costs up to £239,000

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. Whilst only 1.8% of dwellings surveyed had disabled access already in place, 48.4% had the potential for installing disabled access. No dwellings were found with access problems, compared to around 10% of dwellings in the whole East Kent survey.

Table 3.1 Access to the dwelling

Feature	Present	Not present
Garden/space vehicular	22.4%	77.6%
Garden/space pedestrian	63.0%	37.0%
Immediately on street	38.8%	61.2%
Shared with other dwellings	13.2%	86.8%
Disabled access in place	1.8%	98.2%
Disabled access potential	48.4%	51.6%
Access problems	0.0%	100.0%

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	145	66.2%
1-2	58	26.5%
3-5	12	5.5%
5-9	3	1.4%
10 or more	1	0.5%
Total	219	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 (68.5%) have strong entrance doors and a similar amount (77.6%) have deadlocks fitted on the entrance door. Much smaller proportions were found to have either a door viewer, or a burglar alarm.

Table 3.3 Security of dwelling		
Feature	Present	Not present
Strong entrance/external doors	68.5%	31.5%
Deadlocks to entrance external doors	77.6%	22.4%
Door viewer to main entrance door	15.5%	84.5%
Burglar alarm	16.9%	83.1%
Fanlight or glazing to/ adjacent to an entrance external door	71.2%	28.8%

Additionally, of the 37 flats surveyed, less than half 43.2% 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 two-fifths had access immediately onto the street
- Whilst less than 2% of all dwellings had disabled access in place, almost half had the potential for disabled access
- The majority of dwellings surveyed have strong entrance doors, deadlocks, and lighting near an external entrance
- Of the 37 flats surveyed, around two-fifths have controlled access

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. In the majority of cases 'minor repair' was recommended (whereas in the whole survey 'no repair' was the most common recommendation). Some 13.7% were thought to need a major repair, renewal, or outright installation of heating and hot water systems, a comparatively low proportion.

Table 4.1 Heating and Hot Water System

Action	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
No repair	54	24.7%
Minor repair	135	61.6%
Major repair	7	3.2%
Renew	5	2.3%
Install	18	8.2%
Total	219	100.0%

The table below shows the same evaluation process being carried out against kitchen amenities. Again, whilst some action was recommended in a high proportion of cases, the majority only required minor repairs. Renewal and major repair were recommended in around 10% of cases each.

Table 4.2 Kitchen Amenities		
Action	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
No repair	41	18.7%
Minor repair	127	58.0%
Major repair	24	11.0%
Renew	23	10.5%
Install	4	1.8%
Total	219	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	36	16.4%
Minor repair	132	60.3%
Major repair	26	11.9%
Renew	22	10.0%
Install	3	1.4%
Total	219	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 a quarter of the dwellings were deemed to be worse, whilst only 5% were thought to be better.

Table 4.4 Condition relative to neighbouring dwellings		
Condition	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Worse than	55	25.1%
Same	151	68.9%
Better than	11	5.0%
Isolated	2	0.9%
Total	219	100.0%

The survey also considered condition relative to dwellings in the area – this might include up to 500 dwellings, where appropriate. Again, a quarter or so of those dwellings surveyed were deemed to be worse, whilst 11.4% were thought to be in better general condition.

Table 4.5 Condition relative to dwellings in area		
Condition	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Worse than	53	24.2%
Same	139	63.5%
Better than	25	11.4%
Isolated	2	0.9%
Total	219	100.0%

4.3 Summary

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

- In the majority of cases 'minor repair' was recommended to heating and hot water systems, and just 13.7% were thought to need major repair, renewal, or outright installation
- Regarding kitchen and bathroom amenities, again the majority were thought to need minor repair, and around one in five require either major repairs or renewal
- Around two-thirds of dwellings surveyed were deemed to be of similar condition to those neighbouring dwellings; around a quarter were deemed to be worse
- Comparing the condition of the sample dwellings relative to those in the area, around twice as many dwellings surveyed were thought to be in better condition than those around it

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, 47 dwellings were found to be in 'poor' or 'very poor' condition (21.5%), and only 2.3% (or 5) 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	5	2.3%
Good	65	29.7%
Fair	102	46.6%
Poor	35	16.0%
Very Poor	12	5.5%
Total	219	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	43	19.6%
B	111	50.7%
C	46	21.0%
D	14	6.4%
E	5	2.3%
Total	219	100.0%

It can be seen that relatively few dwellings – 29 - are in categories D and E (i.e. low priority), and that over 70% (154) are in the highest two categories 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 around half or all those surveyed are currently in a 'fair' state, and around a quarter are poor or very poor. After any possible refurbishment, 186 dwellings were thought to be able to be classed as 'excellent' or 'good' (84.9%). Only 2 dwellings would still have less-than-'fair' 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	5	2.3%	53	24.2%
Good	50	22.8%	133	60.7%
Fair	109	49.8%	31	14.2%
Poor	27	12.3%	2	0.9%
Very Poor	28	12.8%	0	0.0%
Total	219	100.0%	219	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 below 'average' visual quality. None were classed as 'worst' or 'best'; however the dwellings were much more likely to be in a poor quality area.

Table 5.6 Visual quality of local area

Category	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings
Best	0	0.0%
2	0	0.0%
3	12	5.5%
Average	69	31.5%
5	115	52.5%
6	23	10.5%
Worst	0	0.0%
Total	219	100.0%

Table 5.7 Evidence of anti-social behaviour						
Problem	Extent of problem					
	Not applicable	Minor	2	3	Major	Total
Litter/rubbish/dumping	45	117	50	7	0	219
Graffiti	155	44	20	0	0	219
Vandalism	206	7	6	0	0	219
Substance misuse	219	0	0	0	0	219
Other ASB	219	0	0	0	0	219

The table above shows that relatively few dwellings are in locations where anti-social behaviour has a significant impact on the local environment – although with a sample of the size it is difficult to assess the full extent of any such problems. Rubbish appears to be the main problem, although graffiti and vandalism were deemed to be issues in a number of cases as well.

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	157	31	27	4	0	219
Non-conforming uses	219	0	0	0	0	219
Vacant/boarded-up buildings	194	10	10	2	3	219
Ambient air quality	176	35	7	1	0	219
Heavy traffic	85	75	48	10	1	219
Intrusive m/ways or A roads	178	13	19	8	1	219
Railway/aircraft noise	207	5	6	1	0	219
Nuisance from street parking	58	49	66	45	1	219
Scruffy gardens/landscaping	71	110	38	0	0	219
Scruffy/neglected buildings	61	124	31	0	3	219
Dog/other excrement	209	10	0	0	0	219
Vacant sites	212	1	3	3	0	219

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.

Overall, few problems were found. The aspects most likely to be problematic in the vicinity of the dwellings surveyed were 'nuisance from street parking' and 'heavy traffic'. 'Scruffy gardens/landscaping' and 'scruffy/neglected buildings' were also problems in a considerable number of cases.

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 22 dwellings (just over a tenth 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	0
Shop	5
Small hotel	0
Large hotel	0
Offices	3
Pub	1
Community hall	2
Vacant land	11
Other	3

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'; whilst 47 dwellings were found to be in 'poor' or 'very poor' condition (21.5%), and only 2.3% (or 5) were deemed 'excellent'
- Around 70% of those dwellings surveyed (154 dwellings) are in the highest two categories in terms of being brought back into use easily at minimal cost; relatively few dwellings (29) are low priority status
- Around half or all those surveyed are currently in a 'fair' state of lettability, and around a quarter are poor or very poor.
- After any possible refurbishment, 186 dwellings were thought to be able to be classed as 'excellent' or 'good' (84.9%)
- 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'
- Although there were few problems caused by anti-social behaviour beyond littering, the majority of dwellings surveyed were deemed to be of worse visual quality than average
- The only significant problems in the vicinity of the dwellings surveyed were ''nuisance from street parking' and 'heavy traffic'
- Surveyors reported that 22 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 around one in six of dwellings in the top two priority groups are in Swale, although this is partly due to the smaller sample size in this area.

Some 67 of the dwellings surveyed in Swale fall into priority categories 1 or 2. On average there are 37 dwellings from the Swale area in each category, and the results range from 29 for category 6 to 50 for category 3.

Table 6.2 Priority category by area						
Category	Number of dwellings in category					
	Dover	Shepway	Swale		Thanet	Total
			Number	%		
1	90	41	35	16.0%	34	200
2	73	37	32	14.6%	58	200
3	46	42	50	22.8%	62	200
4	65	52	35	16.0%	48	200
5	70	50	38	17.4%	42	200
6	85	59	29	13.2%	102	275
Total	429	281	219	100.0%	346	1,275

The table below shows the distribution of Swale dwellings in the 6 groups by dwelling type. As is the case with all East Kent empty homes surveyed, purpose-built flats are particularly likely to be in category 1. Of the non-residential properties surveyed, just one was estimated to be in the top two categories. Given the very high proportions of semi-detached and terraced houses in the Swale survey, most of the dwellings in the highest two priority categories are these types of dwelling.

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	5	10	9	3	4	3	1	35
2	8	17	3	1	3	0	0	32
3	9	27	5	1	2	4	2	50
4	3	18	4	1	0	4	5	35
5	5	20	5	1	0	1	6	38
6	4	13	5	5	0	0	2	29
Total	34	105	31	12	9	12	16	219
% in category 1 or 2	38.2%	25.7%	38.7%	33.3%	77.8%	25.0%	6.3%	30.6%

The table below shows the distribution by dwelling age. Again, sample size and bias towards pre-1919 properties make it hard to be certain about the trends – however it is clear that post-1965 properties are much more likely to be in the top two categories for bringing back into use.

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	10	0	2	11	12	35
2	18	0	3	7	4	32
3	38	2	3	3	4	50
4	22	2	9	1	1	35
5	30	4	2	2	0	38
6	23	1	2	3	0	29
Total	141	9	21	27	21	219
% in category 1 or 2	19.9%	0.0%	23.8%	66.7%	76.2%	30.6%

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 Swale are make up 17.2% of the whole survey, and 16.8% of the dwellings in categories 1 and 2

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

- High proportions of purpose-built flats (77.8%) were ranked in categories 1 and 2; although houses make up most of the top priority group
- Dwellings built after 1965 are much more likely to be in the higher priority groups