KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

EAST KENT EMPTY PROPERTIES INITIATIVE

THANET REPORT

May 2005

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1. General character

1

1.1 Introduction

This section looks at the general characteristics of empty homes in Thaney only. In total 1,275 vacant properties in Kent were surveyed, of which 346 were located in Swale. According to HIP data, this represents 9.7% 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. Over three quarters of all dwellings surveyed (77.5%) were thought to have been built between before 1919. This gives Thanet the oldest dwelling profile of the four local authority areas included in the whole survey. 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	268	77.5%
1919-1944	20	5.8%
1945-1964	13	3.8%
1965-1980	35	10.1%
Post 1980	10	2.9%
Total	346	100.0%

The table below profiles the dwelling types of the home surveyed. Some 44.2% of all dwellings were flats (the highest proportion of any local authority area); 17.3% were non-residential (e.g.

commercial properties) and the remaining 38.5% were houses. Overall, the high proportion of converted flats is typical of a sample containing many older dwellings.

Table 1.2 Dwelling types

Dwelling type	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
End terraced	19	5.5%
Mid-terraced	57	16.5%
Semi- detached	32	9.2%
Detached	25	7.2%
Purpose-built flats	27	7.8%
Converted flat	126	36.4%
Non-residential + flat	60	17.3%
Total	346	100.0%

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

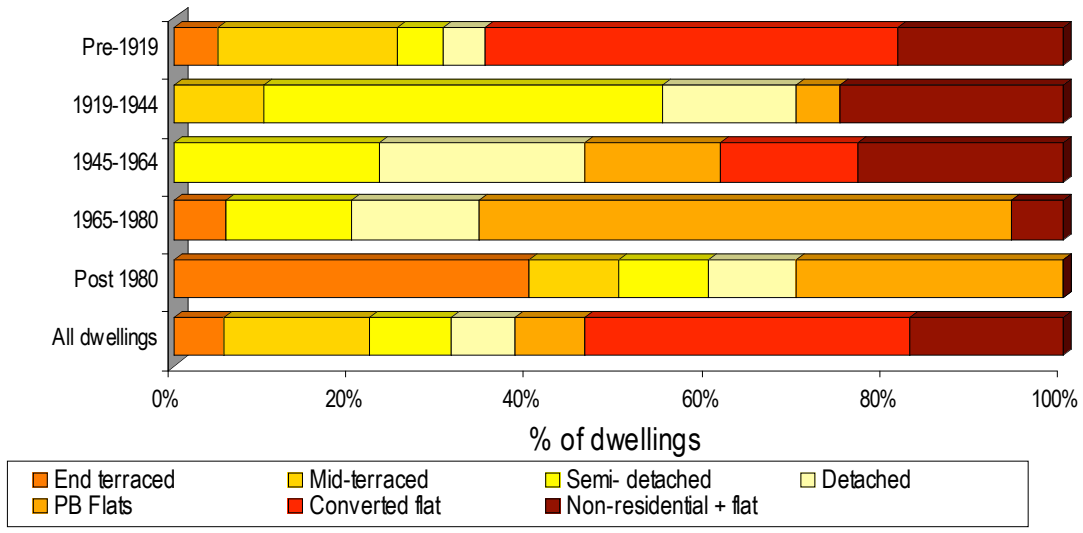
1.3 General characteristics - crosstabluations

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 converted flats being built before 1919 with purpose-built flats only being built in significant quantities 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	13	54	14	13	0	124	50	268
1919-1944	0	2	9	3	1	0	5	20
1945-1964	0	0	3	3	2	2	3	13
1965-1980	2	0	5	5	21	0	2	35
Post 1980	4	1	1	1	3	0	0	10
Total	19	57	32	25	27	126	60	346

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 66.2m². Of all the local authority areas covered in the survey, Thanet has the smallest average floor size, and the greatest variation in floor sizes.

There is a significant degree of variation in property size according to type. Detached houses and, unusually, mid-terraced houses have by far the largest average sizes; whilst converted and flats show sizes much smaller than other types. Houses show much greater variations in dwelling sizes than flats.

Table 1.4 Floor space and dwelling types

Dwelling type	25th percentile	50th percentile (ie. Average)	75th percentile
End terraced	69.0	91.1	151.3
Mid-terraced	88.4	127.9	151.5
Semi- detached	84.5	99.5	121.9
Detached	74.9	137.7	171.7
PB Flats	61.7	63.8	66.1
Converted flat	42.6	51.5	63.3
Non-residential + flat	46.3	57.2	80.2
Total	51.2	66.2	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 and natural slates were the most common types found, each being used on around a third of all the dwellings surveyed. The remaining dwellings were split between a number of different kinds of material.

Table 1.5 Roof covering

Roof covering	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Natural slate	113	32.7%
Artificial slate	43	12.4%
Clay tile	36	10.4%
Concrete tile	112	32.4%
Asphalt	26	7.5%
Felt	14	4.0%
Other	2	0.6%
Total	346	100.0%

The table below presents the kind of wall structure found. Over half of all dwellings were found to have four-and-a-half inch masonry walls. In total, 98% were found to have masonry walls.

Table 1.6 Wall structure

Wall structure	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Masonry cavity	53	15.3%
Masonry single (4.5")	202	58.4%
Masonry solid (9")	78	22.5%
Masonry solid (>9")	6	1.7%
Concrete panels	5	1.4%
Timber panels	2	0.6%
Total	346	100.0%

The table below shows the kind of finishes used on external walls for the dwellings surveyed. The vast majority (98.8%) had either rendered walls, or masonry pointing.

Table 1.7 Wall finish		
Wall finish	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Masonry pointing	229	66.2%
Render	113	32.7%
Tile hung	1	0.3%
Other	3	0.9%
Total	346	100.0%

The final table examines the types of windows installed in the dwellings surveyed. A majority had single glazing. Over three-quarters of all dwellings had either wooden sashed single-glazed windows, or PVCu-framed double glazed windows.

Table 1.8 Window type			
Window type		Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Single glazed	wood casement	52	15.0%
	wood sash	144	41.6%
	metal	10	2.9%
Double glazed	Wood	4	1.2%
	PVCu	128	37.0%
	Metal	8	2.3%
Total		346	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 (77.5%) were thought to have been built before 1919, giving the Thanet sample the oldest dwelling profile of the four local authority areas
- Some 44.2% of all dwellings were flats (the highest proportion of any local authority area); 17.3% were non-residential (e.g. commercial properties) and the remaining 38.5% were houses
- The median average floor area was 66.2m², with Thanet dwellings showing a much greater variation in sizes than the whole sample, and a much lower average size
- Detached houses and, unusually, mid-terraced houses have by far the largest average sizes; whilst converted and flats show sizes much smaller than other types
- Certain structural materials were particularly common – such as concrete tiles and natural slates for roof coverings, 4.5-inch-thick solid masonry walls finished with rendering or masonry pointing, and double-glazed PVCu or single-glazed, wooden sash 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 £2,678 per dwelling, this figure rises to £5,435 for comprehensive repairs – these costs include dwellings requiring no work. These urgent and basic repair costs are high when compared to those estimated in the other local authority areas, and may reflect the high proportion of older dwellings in the sample.

Table 2.1 Overall external repairs costs for Kent empty homes

Repairs category	Total cost for all sample	Average cost per dwelling
Urgent repair	£924,000	£2,678
Basic repair	£1,219,000	£3,534
Comprehensive repair	£1,875,000	£5,435

Calculating the total cost of external repairs for all dwellings sampled shows that urgent repair costs to external elements sum to £924,000. Including basic repairs and comprehensive repair costs, a total of almost £1,875,000 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	£1,576	44.7%
Roofs	£951	27.0%
External walls	£532	15.1%
Walls, fences, paved areas and outbuildings	£155	4.4%
Chimneys	£145	4.1%
Foundations	£58	1.6%
Damp proof course	£56	1.6%
Drainpipes and soil & waste pipes	£50	1.4%
Total	£3,524	100.0%

External doors and windows account for almost half of the basic repair cost, with the mean cost estimated to be £1,576. The next most expensive aspects of repair are 'roofs', 'external walls', and 'walls, fences, paved areas and outbuildings', which together account for almost 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 219 dwellings surveyed. As might be expected, repair costs are closely related to age of dwelling. The cost of urgent repairs differs more between groups, but for comprehensive and basic repairs there is a more linear correlation between level of costs and dwelling age.

By dwelling type, houses show higher external repair costs, and detached houses in particular. The estimated level of urgent repair costs for detached houses is a staggering £8,571.

Table 2.3 Repair costs by age of dwelling			
Dwelling age	Urgent repairs	Basic repairs	Comprehensive repairs
	Repair cost per dwelling		
Pre-1919	£3,327	£4,141	£6,030
1919-1944	£493	£3,500	£6,294
1945-1964	£1,051	£1,277	£5,499
1965-1980	£340	£505	£1,677
Post-1980	£31	£904	£904
Average	£2,678	£3,534	£5,435

Table 2.4 Repair costs by building type			
Building type	Urgent repairs	Basic repairs	Comprehensive repairs
	Repair cost per dwelling		
End terrace	£3,617	£4,688	£5,241
Mid terrace	£5,267	£6,984	£8,793
Semi-detached	£1,969	£3,051	£5,574
Detached	£8,571	£10,415	£12,086
Purpose-built flat	£114	£139	£690
Converted flat	£475	£821	£2,709
Non-residential plus flat	£3,669	£4,562	£7,377
Average	£2,678	£3,534	£5,435

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 60 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	£248,000	£4,140
Basic repair	£497,000	£8,283
Comprehensive repair	£666,000	£11,097

This indicates that in addition to the mean urgent repair costs of £3,669 for flats attached to non-residential properties, a mean of £471 is required for the non-residential elements. Therefore the average flat with part non-residential will require an average of £4,140 to repair all external elements urgently. This raises the total urgent repair costs for the sample from £220,000 to £248,000.

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 £2,678 – this totals £924,000 for the 346 dwellings surveyed
- The average cost per dwelling for basic repairs (i.e. all work needing to be done within the next 5 years) was £3,534 – totalling £1,219,000 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 £5,435 – totalling £1,875,000 for the sample
- Doors and windows were the main elements (in terms of the amount needing to be spent) requiring repair, accounting for almost half of the average basic repair cost
- Older dwellings, and houses, particularly detached properties, show higher than average repair costs
- Dwellings with non-residential elements require on average an additional £471 to repair these elements within the next year. This would bring the total average urgent cost up to £4,140 per dwelling.

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 4.3% of dwellings surveyed had disabled access already in place, 32.7% had the potential for installing disabled access. As was the case for the whole sample, 10.7% of dwellings were found to have access problems.

Table 3.1 Access to the dwelling

Feature	Present	Not present
Garden/space vehicular	17.3%	82.7%
Garden/space pedestrian	61.0%	39.0%
Immediately on street	33.2%	66.8%
Shared with other dwellings	44.2%	55.8%
Disabled access in place	4.3%	95.7%
Disabled access potential	32.7%	67.3%
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	259	74.9%
1-2	61	17.6%
3-5	17	4.9%
5-9	7	2.0%
10 or more	2	0.6%
Total	346	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 (68.2%) have strong entrance doors; and a majority have deadlocks fitted on the entrance door and some form of lighting near the external entrance. 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	68.2%	31.8%
Deadlocks to entrance external doors	59.8%	40.2%
Door viewer to main entrance door	20.2%	79.8%
Burglar alarm	6.1%	93.9%
Fanlight or glazing to/ adjacent to an entrance external door	53.8%	46.2%

Additionally, of the 213 flats surveyed, well over half, 62.0%, had controlled access.

3.4 Summary

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

- Around three-quarters of dwellings do not have a potential car parking space
- A majority of properties had access via a garden space
- Whilst less than 5% of all dwellings had disabled access in place, and around one in ten had an access problem
- The majority of dwellings surveyed have strong entrance doors, deadlocks, and lighting near an external entrance
- Of the 213 flats surveyed, around two-thirds 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. The recommendations were spread relatively evenly between different options, with minor repair being the most frequent choice. Renewal was recommended in 22% of cases, a high proportion of cases.

Table 4.1 Heating and Hot Water System

Action	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
No repair	77	22.3%
Minor repair	131	37.9%
Major repair	36	10.4%
Renew	76	22.0%
Install	26	7.5%
Total	346	100.0%

The table below shows the same evaluation process being carried out against kitchen amenities. The spread of recommendations was less even, with a higher proportion requiring minor repair only (41.0%), but significant proportions requiring either renewal or outright installation of facilities.

Table 4.2 Kitchen Amenities		
Action	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
No repair	69	19.9%
Minor repair	142	41.0%
Major repair	34	9.8%
Renew	75	21.7%
Install	26	7.5%
Total	346	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	68	19.7%
Minor repair	144	41.6%
Major repair	33	9.5%
Renew	75	21.7%
Install	26	7.5%
Total	346	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 third of the dwellings were deemed to be worse, whilst only 7% were thought to be better.

Table 4.4 Condition relative to neighbouring dwellings		
Condition	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Worse than	129	37.3%
Same	193	55.8%
Better than	24	6.9%
Isolated	0	0.0%
Total	346	100.0%

The survey also considered condition relative to dwellings in the area – this might include up to 500 dwellings, where appropriate. Results were slightly more polarised than those produced by looking at immediate surroundings. Some 42.8% were thought to be worse than those in their wider vicinity; 9.0% were thought to be better.

Table 4.5 Condition relative to dwellings in area		
Condition	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Worse than	148	42.8%
Same	167	48.3%
Better than	31	9.0%
Isolated	0	0.0%
Total	346	100.0%

4.3 Summary

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

- Surveyors recommended actions on heating and hot water systems. The recommendations were spread relatively evenly between different options, with minor repair being the most frequent choice, and a relatively high proportion of dwellings requiring renewal being found
- Regarding kitchen and bathroom amenities, around two-thirds were thought to need minor repair, and a fifth renewal
- Around half of dwellings surveyed were deemed to be of similar condition to those neighbouring dwellings; around a third were deemed to be worse
- Comparing the condition of the sample dwellings relative to those in the area, fewer properties were thought to be in the same condition

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, 98 dwellings were found to be in 'poor' or 'very poor' condition (28.3%), and only 0.9% (or 3) 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	3	0.9%
Good	102	29.5%
Fair	143	41.3%
Poor	63	18.2%
Very Poor	35	10.1%
Total	346	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	76	22.0%
B	117	33.8%
C	87	25.1%
D	48	13.9%
E	18	5.2%
Total	346	100.0%

It can be seen that relatively few dwellings – 19.1% - are in categories D and E (i.e. low priority), and that over 55% (193) 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 two-fifths of all those surveyed are currently in a 'fair' state, 34.1%, a high proportion, are in a 'poor' or 'very poor' state. After any possible refurbishment, 288 dwellings were thought to be able to be classed as 'excellent' or 'good' (83.2%). 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	3	0.9%	41	11.8%
Good	76	22.0%	247	71.4%
Fair	149	43.1%	56	16.2%
Poor	67	19.4%	2	0.6%
Very Poor	51	14.7%	0	0.0%
Total	346	100.0%	346	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'; however the dwellings were marginally more likely to be rated as being below average than above average.

Table 5.6 Visual quality of local area

Category	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings
Best	0	0.0%
2	8	2.3%
3	62	17.9%
Average	201	58.1%
5	71	20.5%
6	4	1.2%
Worst	0	0.0%
Total	346	100.0%

Table 5.7 Evidence of anti-social behaviour						
Problem	Extent of problem					
	Not applicable	Minor	2	3	Major	Total
Litter/rubbish/dumping	31	194	86	29	6	346
Graffiti	180	111	55	0	0	346
Vandalism	179	140	24	3	0	346
Substance misuse	253	85	8	0	0	346
Other ASB	268	60	13	2	3	346

The above table shows that relatively few dwellings are in locations where anti-social behaviour has a significant impact on the local environment. Having said this, 'litter / rubbish / dumping' was a significant problem, with 6 cases of major problems, and 115 cases where the problem was less than major, but greater than minor.

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	161	122	60	3	0	346
Non-conforming uses	261	70	12	0	3	346
Vacant/boarded-up buildings	211	82	49	4	0	346
Ambient air quality	188	114	44	0	0	346
Heavy traffic	120	146	80	0	0	346
Intrusive m/ways or A roads	287	26	32	1	0	346
Railway/aircraft noise	269	54	23	0	0	346
Nuisance from street parking	46	117	129	53	1	346
Scruffy gardens/landscaping	97	175	67	7	0	346
Scruffy/neglected buildings	104	167	64	11	0	346
Dog/other excrement	176	148	19	3	0	346
Vacant sites	217	81	39	9	0	346

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', 'scruffy gardens/landscaping' and 'scruffy/neglected buildings'. In three cases 'non-conforming uses' were deemed to be creating a major problem.

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 100 dwellings (just under 30% of the sample). The types of building are shown in the table below. The most common types of building were shops, those in the 'other' category, and vacant plots of land.

Table 5.9 Type of building suitable for conversion

Type	Number of dwellings
Warehouse	6
Shop	49
Small hotel	11
Large hotel	1
Offices	0
Pub	5
Community hall	4
Vacant land	26
Other	28

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 98 dwellings were found to be in 'poor' or 'very poor' condition (28.3%)
- 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; around a fifth are low priority status
- around two-fifths of all those surveyed are currently in a 'fair' state of lettability, whilst 34.1%, a high proportion, are in a 'poor' or 'very poor' state
- After any possible refurbishment only two dwellings would have less-than-'fair' lettability
- The survey found the properties in the sample to be of average visual quality overall
- 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 most significant problems in the vicinity of the dwellings surveyed were ''nuisance from street parking' 'scruffy gardens/landscaping' and 'scruffy/neglected buildings'. Littering was by far the most common and problematic kind of anti-social behaviour encountered
- Surveyors reported that 100 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 23% of dwellings in the top two priority groups are in Thanet, although this is partly due to the larger sample size in this area.

Some 92 of the dwellings surveyed in Swale fall into priority categories 1 or 2 – 26.6% of the sample. On average there are 58 dwellings from the Swale area in each category, and the results range from 34 for category 1 to 102 for category 6.

Table 6.2 Priority category by area						
Category	Number of dwellings in category					
	Dover	Shepway	Swale	Thanet		Total
				Number	%	
1	90	41	35	34	9.8%	200
2	73	37	32	58	16.8%	200
3	46	42	50	62	17.9%	200
4	65	52	35	48	13.9%	200
5	70	50	38	42	12.1%	200
6	85	59	29	102	29.5%	275
Total	429	281	219	346	100.0%	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. Detached and non-residential properties are particularly likely to be placed in the lowest two priority categories.

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	6	3	6	3	8	8	0	34
2	1	10	6	1	9	23	8	58
3	4	6	7	3	3	33	6	62
4	1	5	3	1	6	22	10	48
5	2	5	4	6	0	19	6	42
6	5	28	6	11	1	21	30	102
Total	19	57	32	25	27	126	60	346
% in category 1 or 2	36.8%	22.8%	37.5%	16.0%	63.0%	24.6%	13.3%	26.6%

The table below shows the distribution by dwelling age. Sample 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. Some 80% of all dwellings built after 1980 were deemed to be in category 1.

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	15	2	2	7	8	34
2	43	3	2	10	0	58
3	48	4	2	7	1	62
4	34	3	3	8	0	48
5	34	3	2	2	1	42
6	94	5	2	1	0	102
Total	268	20	13	35	10	346
% in category 1 or 2	21.6%	25.0%	30.8%	48.6%	80.0%	26.6%

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 Thanet are make up around a quarter of the dwellings in categories 1 and 2

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

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