KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

EAST KENT EMPTY PROPERTIES INITIATIVE

MAIN REPORT

May 2005

f o r d h a m
R E S E A R C H

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Executive summary

Context of the Study

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Borough of <…> study area

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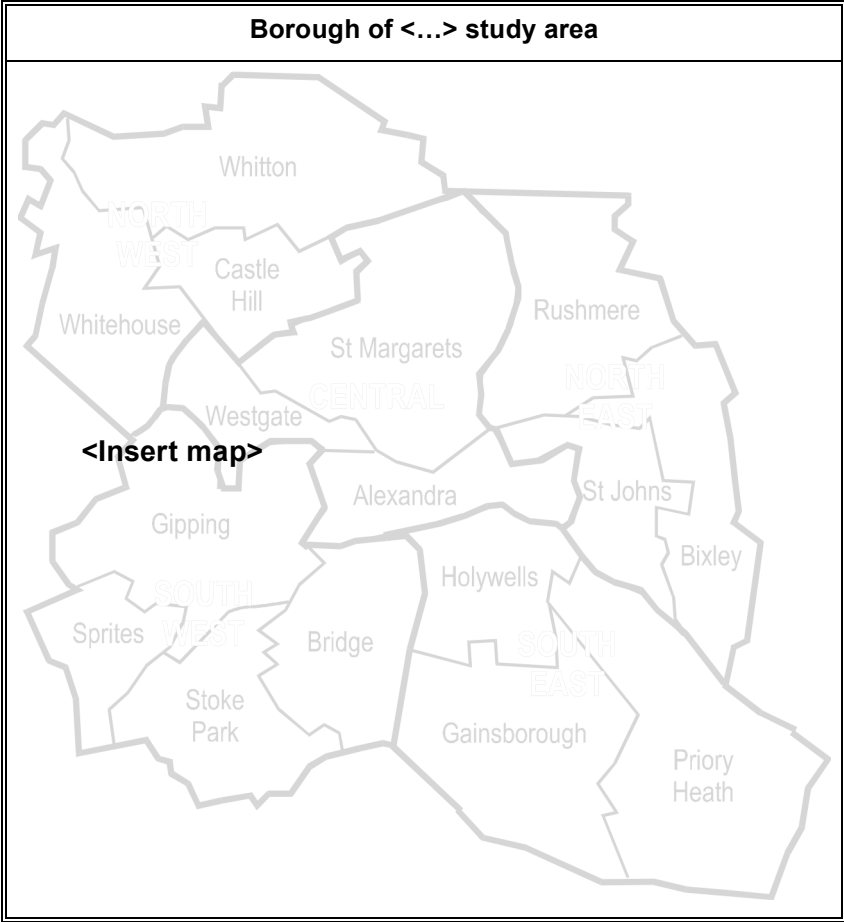
1. General character

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1.1 Introduction

This section looks at the general characteristics of empty homes. The data presented below is based on the 1,275 surveys carried out on vacant dwellings, presented as both absolute numbers found in each group, and the relevant proportions these figures correspond to.

The survey covered both general characteristics of empty homes in Kent, 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 (68.6%) were thought to have been built between 1851 and 1918. Just 17.4% had been built after 1964, when building regulations were introduced. Older 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	875	68.6%
1919-1944	84	6.6%
1945-1964	95	7.5%
1965-1980	126	9.9%
Post 1980	95	7.5%
Total	1,275	100.0%

The table below profiles the dwelling types of the home surveyed. Some 32.4% of all dwellings were flats; 14.5% were non-residential (e.g. commercial properties) and the remaining 53.1% 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	122	9.6%
Mid-terraced	311	24.4%
Semi- detached	120	9.4%
Detached	123	9.6%
Purpose-built flats	123	9.6%
Converted flat	291	22.8%
Non-residential + flat	185	14.5%
Total	1,275	100.0%

Finally, this section looks at the spatial distribution of empty homes between the four local authority areas covered in the survey. The table below shows that around a third of the homes surveyed were from the Dover area; compared to just over a sixth from the Swale area.

Table 1.3 Local Authority of Dwellings Surveyed		
Local authority	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Dover	429	33.6%
Shepway	281	22.0%
Swale	219	17.2%
Thanet	346	27.1%
Total	1,275	100.0%

The table below looks at the number of private sector vacant dwellings registered on Housing Investment Programme (HIP) data, gathered from the local authorities themselves. Although the rest of the report only deals with those properties surveyed, it is worth noting that the lower proportion of Swale properties surveyed reflects the much lower number registered on the HIP data. Thanet appears to have the highest number of empty homes in the Area, at 3,583.

| Table 1.4 Local Authority of all private-sector vacant dwellings		
Local authority	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Dover	2,074	23.8%
Shepway	2,358	27.0%
Swale	703	8.1%
Thanet	3,583	41.1%
Total	8,718	100.0%

1.3   General characteristics - crosstabluations

The following tables correlate some of the above variables. Dwelling type and age have a significant impact on use and condition of a dwelling, and so the tables below present data by these two variables.

The table below presents dwelling age by dwelling type. The most significant trends include the high proportion of terraced houses and converted flats in pre-1919 built dwellings. Furthermore, purpose-built flats are much more likely to be found in dwellings built after 1965.

Table 1.5 Dwelling age by dwelling type								
	Type of dwelling							
Age of dwelling	End terraced	Mid-terraced	Semi-detached	Detached	PB Flats	Converted flat	Non-residential + flat	Total
Pre-1919	85	264	38	44	13	282	149	875
1919-1944	2	12	21	23	2	7	17	84
1945-1964	14	12	29	12	17	2	9	95
1965-1980	10	13	19	22	54	0	8	126
Post 1980	11	10	13	22	37	0	2	95
Total	122	311	120	123	123	291	185	1,275

Figure 1.1 Dwelling age by dwelling type
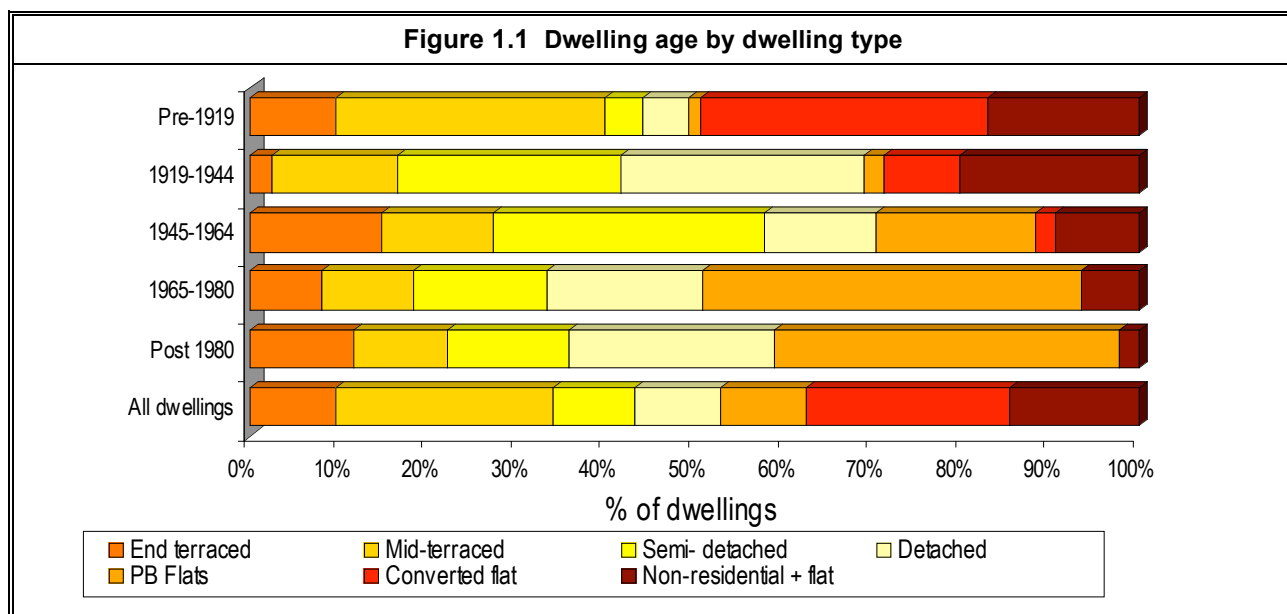
The table and figure below present the geographical location of different types of home. The profile of property types surveyed in Dover, Shepway and Thanet and broadly similar; however

those surveyed in Swale were much more likely to be terraced houses, and much less likely to be purpose-built flats.

Table 1.6 Local authority by dwelling type							
Local authority	Type of dwelling						
	End terraced	Mid-terraced	Semi-detached	Detached	PB Flats	Converted flat	Non-residential + flat	Total
Dover	44	124	39	40	46	74	62	429
Shepway	25	25	18	46	41	79	47	281
Swale	34	105	31	12	9	12	16	219
Thanet	19	57	32	25	27	126	60	346
Total	122	311	120	123	123	291	185	1,275

Figure 1.2 Local authority by dwelling type
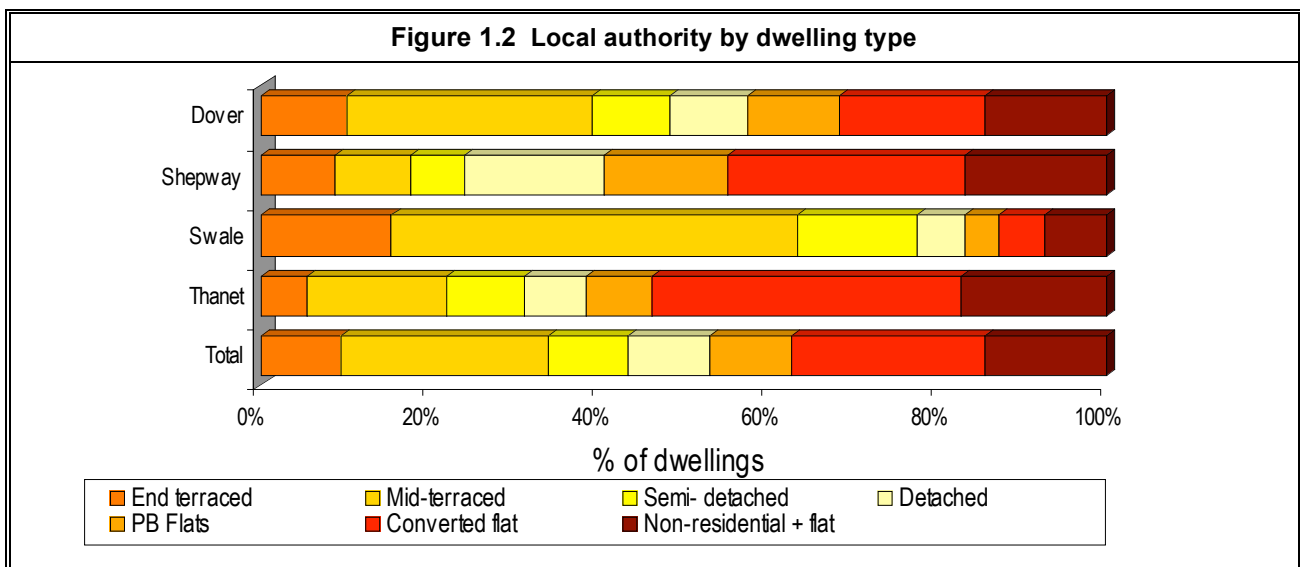
The table and the figure below present the geographical distribution of the dwellings in the survey according to when the dwellings are estimated to have been built. Thanet shows the oldest profile of dwellings, with just under 3% built since 1980.

Table 1.7 Local authority by dwelling age						
Local authority	Age of dwelling					
	Pre-1919	1919-1944	1945-1964	1965-1980	Post 1980	Total
Dover	301	23	46	29	30	429
Shepway	165	32	15	35	34	281
Swale	141	9	21	27	21	219
Thanet	268	20	13	35	10	346
Total	875	84	95	126	95	1,275

Figure 1.3 Local authority by dwelling Age
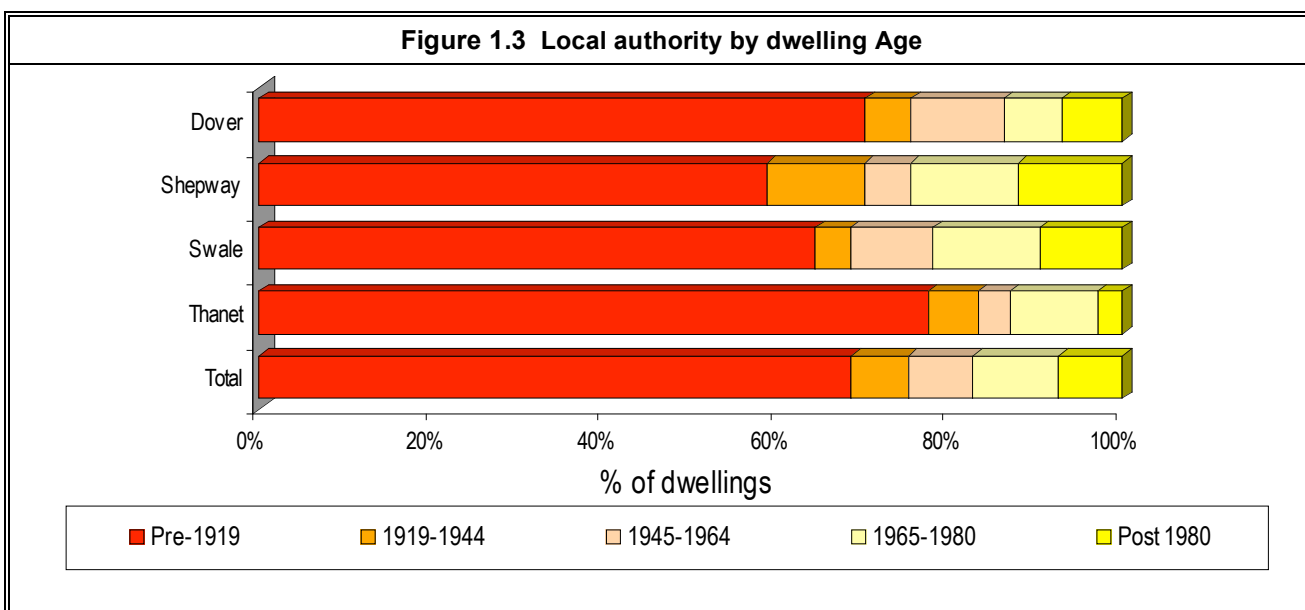
1.3 Physical characteristics

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 76.5m². The 25th percentile is 60.0 m² suggesting that smaller properties are bunched around this size, whilst the 75th percentile is 100.8 m² suggesting that there is a wider range of sizes for those properties that are larger than average.

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

Table 1.8 Floor space and dwelling types			
Dwelling type	25th percentile	50th percentile (ie. Average)	75th percentile
End terraced	69.7	84.0	104.3
Mid-terraced	71.7	83.0	100.9
Semi- detached	75.5	88.5	107.5
Detached	75.8	105.8	144.5
PB Flats	59.1	68.8	84.7
Converted flat	47.0	59.7	77.1
Non-residential + flat	45.8	66.2	93.1
Total	60.0	76.5	100.8

The table below correlates floor size with local authority. Dover and Shepway vacant homes are somewhat larger than average; those in Swale and Thanet are smaller than average. Swale has a more normal distribution of dwelling sizes, with fewer very large dwellings than other authorities.

Table 1.9 Floor space and local authority			
Local authority	25th percentile	50th percentile (ie. Average)	75th percentile
Dover	65.6	79.5	102.5
Shepway	60.0	80.8	110.3
Swale	62.3	75.9	88.6
Thanet	51.2	66.2	102.5
Total	60.0	76.5	100.8

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

Table 1.10 Roof covering		
Roof covering	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Natural slate	314	24.6%
Artificial slate	127	10.0%
Clay tile	165	12.9%
Concrete tile	549	43.1%
Asphalt	70	5.5%
Felt	39	3.1%
Other	11	0.9%
Total	1,275	100.0%

The table below presents the kind of wall structure found. Over half of all dwellings were found to have nine-inch-thick 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 1.11 Wall structure		
Wall structure	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Masonry cavity	338	26.5%
Masonry single (4.5")	1	0.1%
Masonry solid (9")	670	52.5%
Masonry solid (>9")	239	18.7%
In-situ concrete	7	0.5%
Concrete panels	7	0.5%
Timber panels	12	0.9%
Metal sheet	1	0.1%
Total	1,275	100.0%

The table below shows the kind of finishes used on external walls for the dwellings surveyed. The vast majority (97.7%) had either rendered walls, or masonry pointing.

Table 1.12 Wall finish		
Wall finish	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Masonry pointing	804	63.1%
Render	441	34.6%
Shiplap Timber	10	0.8%
Tile hung	9	0.7%
Plastic	4	0.3%
Other	7	0.5%
Total	1,275	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 1.13 Window type			
Window type		Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Single glazed	wood casement	195	15.3%
	wood sash	427	33.5%
	metal	43	3.4%
Double glazed	Wood	45	3.5%
	PVCu	523	41.0%
	Metal	42	3.3%
Total		1,275	100.0%

1.5 Summary

This chapter laid out and analysed results for the main dwelling characteristics of the 1,275 dwellings in the survey:

- Almost two thirds of all dwellings surveyed (68.6%) were thought to have been built between before 1919; such dwellings are particularly likely to be converted flats, or terraced houses

- Some 32.4% of all dwellings were flats; 14.5% were non-residential and the remaining 53.1% were houses

- The median average floor space was 76.5 m² respectively. Detached houses were found to have by far the biggest floor sizes; converted flats the smallest

- Dover and Shepway vacant homes are somewhat larger than average; those in Swale and Thanet are smaller than average

- The Swale dwellings surveyed were particularly likely to be terraced houses; whilst the Thanet dwellings are more likely than average to be built before 1919

- 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 £1,649 per dwelling, this figure rises to £5,412 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	£2.1m	£1,649
Basic repair	£3.1m	£2,440
Comprehensive repair	£6.9m	£5,412

Calculating the total cost of external repairs for all dwellings sampled shows that urgent repair costs to external elements sum to £2.1 million. Including basic repairs and comprehensive repair costs, a total of £6.9 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	£921.37	37.8%
Roofs	£590.76	24.2%
External walls	£449.58	18.4%
Walls, fences, paved areas and outbuildings	£196.70	8.1%
Chimneys	£98.30	4.0%
Foundations	£70.23	2.9%
Damp proof course	£58.35	2.4%
Drainpipes and soil & waste pipes	£54.61	2.2%
Total	£2,439.89	100.0%

External doors and windows account for over a third of the basic repair cost, with the mean cost estimated to be £921. This item along with the two other most expensive ones (repairs to roofs and walls) account for around 80% of the total basic repair cost.

2.5   Repair costs and dwelling characteristics

The tables below show repair costs by age of dwelling, local authority area and building type for the 1,275 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 - closely followed by pre-1919 dwellings - and the lowest costs in post-1980 dwellings.

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

Table 2.3 Repair costs by age of dwelling			
Dwelling age	Urgent repairs	Basic repairs	Comprehensive repairs
	Repair cost per dwelling		
Pre-1919	£2,013	£2,883	£5,627
1919-1944	£2,276	£4,013	£11,696
1945-1964	£790	£1,302	£4,516
1965-1980	£467	£631	£2,777
Post-1980	£162	£505	£2,274
Average	£1,649	£2,440	£5,412

Table 2.4 Repair costs by sub-area			
Sub-area	Urgent repairs	Basic repairs	Comprehensive repairs
	Repair cost per dwelling		
Dover	£1,017	£1,781	£5,066
Shepway	£2,027	£2,949	£8,091
Swale	£787	£1,366	£2,643
Thanet	£2,671	£3,523	£5,419
Average	£1,649	£2,440	£5,412

Table 2.5 Repair costs by building type			
Building type	Urgent repairs	Basic repairs	Comprehensive repairs
	Repair cost per dwelling		
End terrace	£2,352	£3,269	£5,549
Mid terrace	£1,721	£2,619	£4,671
Semi-detached	£1,871	£3,011	£7,082
Detached	£4,477	£5,707	£13,373
Purpose-built flat	£91	£223	£863
Converted flat	£548	£992	£3,244
Non-residential plus flat	£1,806	£2,800	£6,628
Average	£1,649	£2,440	£5,412

2.6 Non-residential repair costs

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

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

A total of 185 dwellings were surveyed with non-residential elements. It must be remembered that not all the above elements will apply to the dwellings surveyed. The table below shows the average repair costs for these elements. The same three repair categories as above have been used (e.g. urgent repair, basic repair and comprehensive repair).

Table 2.6 Repairs costs for non-residential elements		
Repairs category	Total cost for the 185 dwellings	Average cost per dwelling
Urgent repair	£69,300	£374
Basic repair	£760,300	£4,110
Comprehensive repair	£760,300	£4,110

This indicates that in addition to the mean urgent repair costs of £1,806 for flats attached to non-residential properties, a mean of £374 is required for the non-residential elements. Therefore the average flat with part non-residential will require an average of £2,180 to repair all external elements urgently. This raises the total urgent repair costs for the sample from £2.10 million to £2.17 million.

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 £1,649 – this totals £2.1m for the 1,275 dwellings surveyed
- The average cost per dwelling for basic repairs (i.e. all work needing to be done within the next 5 years) was £2,440 – totalling £3.1 m for the sample
- The average cost per dwelling for comprehensive repairs (i.e. all work needing to be done within the next 10 years) was £5,412 – totalling £6.9 m for the sample
- Doors and windows were the main elements (in terms of the amount needing to be spent) requiring repair
- Older dwellings, those in the Thanet Council area and households showed the highest external repair costs
- Dwellings with non-residential elements require on average an additional £374 to repair these elements within the next year

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

3. Security & access

3.1 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	25.1%	74.9%
Garden/space pedestrian	66.4%	33.6%
Immediately on street	31.1%	68.9%
Shared with other dwellings	36.3%	63.7%
Disabled access in place	3.5%	96.5%
Disabled access potential	42.4%	57.6%
Access problems	10.2%	89.8%

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	749	58.7%
1-2	408	32.0%
3-5	93	7.3%
5-9	19	1.5%
10 or more	6	0.5%
Total	1,275	100.0%

3.3   Security of dwellings

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

Table 3.3 Security of dwelling		
Feature	Present	Not present
Strong entrance/external doors	73.0%	27.0%
Deadlocks to entrance external doors	71.6%	28.4%
Door viewer to main entrance door	15.0%	85.0%
Burglar alarm	9.3%	90.7%
Fanlight or glazing to/ adjacent to an entrance external door	58.4%	41.6%

Additionally, of the 599 flats surveyed, less than half 47.8% had controlled access.

3.4   Summary

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

- The majority 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 (73.0%) have strong entrance doors and a similar amount (71.6%) have deadlocks fitted on the entrance door
- Less than a tenth of the sample has a burglar alarm

4. General condition

<div style="text-align: right; font-size: 3em;">**4**</div>

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 just under a third of cases (30.7%), no action was thought to be required. The most common action is 'minor repair', which was thought to apply in two-fifths of all cases, followed by renewal, which applied to one dwelling in eight.

Table 4.1 Heating and Hot Water System		
Action	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
No repair	391	30.7%
Minor repair	500	39.2%
Major repair	111	8.7%
Renew	162	12.7%
Install	111	8.7%
Total	1,275	100.0%

The table below shows the same evaluation process being carried out against kitchen amenities. Again, no action was deemed necessary in just under a third of all cases, and 40.5% 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	380	29.8%
Minor repair	516	40.5%
Major repair	115	9.0%
Renew	190	14.9%
Install	74	5.8%
Total	1,275	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	373	29.3%
Minor repair	526	41.3%
Major repair	117	9.2%
Renew	187	14.7%
Install	72	5.6%
Total	1,275	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% - 384 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	384	30.1%
Same	760	59.6%
Better than	115	9.0%
Isolated	16	1.3%
Total	1,275	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 32.8% were rated worse.

Table 4.5 Condition relative to dwellings in area		
Condition	Number of dwellings	% of all dwellings
Worse than	418	32.8%
Same	654	51.3%
Better than	192	15.1%
Isolated	11	0.9%
Total	1,275	100.0%

4.3 Summary

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

- In just under a third of cases (30.7%), no action was thought to be required regarding heating/hot water systems; the most common action recommended is 'minor repair', which was applied in two-fifths of all cases

- Regarding kitchen amenities no action was deemed necessary in just under a third (29.8%) of all cases, and 40.5% were thought to need only minor repair; only 6% lacked amenities entirely

- Bathroom amenities replicated these figures: no action was deemed necessary in just under a third (29.3%) of cases and 41.3% were thought to need only minor repair; 5.6% lacked amenities entirely

- Around 60% of dwellings surveyed were deemed to be of similar condition to those neighbouring dwellings; around one third (30.1%) were deemed to be worse

- Comparing the condition of the sample dwellings relative to those in the area, fewer dwellings (51.3%) 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, 311 dwellings were found to be in 'poor' or 'very poor' condition, and only 4.9% (or 62) were deemed 'excellent'.

Table 5.1 Impressions: overall dwelling condition		
Condition	Number of dwellings	% of dwellings
Excellent	62	4.9%
Good	404	31.7%
Fair	498	39.1%
Poor	211	16.5%
Very Poor	100	7.8%
Total	1,275	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	338	26.5%
B	417	32.7%
C	322	25.3%
D	135	10.6%
E	63	4.9%
Total	1,275	100.0%

It can be seen that relatively few dwellings are in categories D and E (i.e. low priority), and that over a quarter of those surveyed (338 dwellings) are in the highest category in terms of being brought back into use easily at minimal cost. The priority classification can be considered in terms of area. This is shown in the tables below.

Table 5.3 Priority category by area - percentage					
Category	% of dwellings in category				
	Dover	Shepway	Swale	Thanet	Total
A	30.5%	31.3%	19.6%	22.0%	26.5%
B	26.6%	26.7%	50.7%	33.8%	32.7%
C	26.8%	26.3%	21.0%	25.1%	25.3%
D	11.7%	8.2%	6.4%	13.9%	10.6%
E	4.4%	7.5%	2.3%	5.2%	4.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 5.4 Priority category by area - number					
Category	Number of dwellings in category				
	Dover	Shepway	Swale	Thanet	Total
A	131	88	43	76	338
B	114	75	111	117	417
C	115	74	46	87	322
D	50	23	14	48	135
E	19	21	5	18	63
Total	429	281	219	346	1,275

Dwellings surveyed in Swale were most likely to be in categories A or B, although Dover has the largest number of dwellings in these categories.

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 29.7% (379 dwellings) fall into the highest two categories and so would not be difficult to let without further work. After any possible refurbishment, 1,092 dwellings are classed as 'excellent' or 'good'. Only 9 dwellings 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	63	4.9%	314	24.6%
Good	316	24.8%	778	61.0%
Fair	530	41.6%	174	13.6%
Poor	205	16.1%	8	0.6%
Very Poor	161	12.6%	1	0.1%
Total	1,275	100.0%	1,275	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	35	2.7%
3	295	23.1%
Average	614	48.2%
5	298	23.4%
6	33	2.6%
Worst	0	0.0%
Total	1,275	100.0%

Table 5.7 Evidence of anti-social behaviour						
Problem	Extent of problem					
	Not applicable	Minor	2	3	Major	Total
Litter/rubbish/dumping	214	755	239	59	8	1,275
Graffiti	869	318	0	87	1	1,275
Vandalism	895	325	45	5	5	1,275
Substance misuse	1,132	124	0	18	1	1,275
Other ASB	1,150	97	22	2	4	1,275

The 'other ASB' category primarily includes problems with groups or gangs of young people (20 cases), or anti-social behaviour associated with a town centre location (22 cases). The table shows that relatively few dwellings are in locations where anti-social behaviour has a significant impact on the local environment. Graffiti and rubbish appear to be the main problems, with substance misuse the least likely to affect the local area.

5.3 Environmental problems

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

Table 5.8 Environmental problems in local area						
	Level of Problem					
Problem	Not applicable/ no problem	Minor	3	4	Major	Total
Intrusive Industry	769	322	164	19	1	1,275
Non-conforming uses	1,126	129	15	2	3	1,275
Vacant/boarded-up buildings	983	176	83	15	18	1,275
Ambient air quality	789	359	125	2	0	1,275
Heavy traffic	538	407	255	28	7	1,275
Intrusive m/ways or A roads	1,033	127	104	10	1	1,275
Railway/aircraft noise	1,070	116	76	9	4	1,275
Nuisance from street parking	292	345	428	187	23	1,275
Scruffy gardens/landscaping	437	553	244	35	6	1,275
Scruffy/neglected buildings	390	639	196	37	13	1,275
Dog/other excrement	768	314	127	65	1	1,275
Vacant sites	1,035	155	65	17	3	1,275

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 'dog/other excrement'. Those aspects with which the fewest problems were reported were 'non-conforming uses', 'vacant sites' and 'railway/aircraft noise'.

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 302 dwellings. The types of building are shown in the table below. Most of these are shops.

Table 5.9 Type of building suitable for conversion	
Type	Number of dwellings
Warehouse	23
Shop	137
Small hotel	21
Large hotel	6
Offices	21
Pub	27
Community hall	13
Vacant land	61
Other	74

5.5 Summary

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

- The majority (70.8%) of dwellings surveyed were classed as either 'good' or 'fair'. 311 (or 24.3%) of dwellings were found to be in 'poor' or 'very poor' condition, and only 4.9% (or 62) were deemed 'excellent'
- A quarter of those dwellings surveyed (338 dwellings) are in the highest category in terms of being brought back into use easily at minimal cost. Relatively few dwellings (63) are low priority status
- Dwellings surveyed in Swale were most likely to be in categories A or B (high priority), although Dover has the largest number of dwellings in these categories
- It is estimated that 29.7% (379 dwellings) fall into the highest two categories and so would not be difficult to let without further work. After possible refurbishment, 1,092 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; graffiti and rubbish are the main problems
- The aspects most likely to be problematic in the vicinity of the dwellings surveyed were 'nuisance from street parking' and 'dog/other excrement'
- Surveyors reported that 302 buildings in the vicinity had the potential for conversion to living accommodation; the majority of these are shops

6. Recommended properties to bring back into use

6

6.1 Introduction

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

6.2 The method

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

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

6.3 Dwellings suitable for immediate action

The 1,275 dwellings 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. However, Thanet shows relatively few dwellings in the first group and a relatively high proportion in the last group (6).

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

The table below shows the distribution of dwellings in the 6 groups by dwelling type. Almost half (98) of the dwellings in the highest priority group (group 1) are flats. Purpose built flats are proportionally over-represented in the first group. Over half of all purpose built flats surveyed are in Group 1, and a further 25% are in Group 2.

Table 6.3 Priority category by dwelling type							
Group	Number of dwellings in category						
	End terrace	Mid terrace	Semi-detached	Detached	Purpose built flat	Converted flat	Non residential with flat	Total
1	22	30	25	25	68	25	5	200
2	18	45	25	19	31	47	15	200
3	19	51	21	11	12	65	21	200
4	15	49	12	11	8	66	39	200
5	20	56	18	16	0	49	41	200
6	28	80	19	41	4	39	64	275
Total	122	311	120	123	123	291	185	1,275

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 most post-1980 dwellings are in the first few categories.

Table 6.4 Priority category by dwelling age								
	Number of dwellings in category							
Group	Pre-1900	1900-1918	1919-1944	1945-1964	1965-1980	1981-1990	Post 1990	Total
1	40	22	3	22	45	27	41	200
2	69	53	11	18	34	12	3	200
3	91	59	14	13	17	3	3	200
4	96	55	18	17	12	2	0	200
5	87	74	15	14	9	0	1	200
6	128	101	23	11	9	3	0	275
Total	511	364	84	95	126	47	48	1,275

It seems that dwellings to focus on in particular for bringing back into use quickly and easily are newer dwellings, and flats. It is also worth noting that a higher proportion of dwellings in Dover fell into this priority category.

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:

- Almost half of the dwellings in the 1st priority group are in Dover (although this is partly due to its larger sample size); it also has quite a high proportion in the lowest priority group
- Thanet has the least dwellings in the first group and the highest proportion in the lowest priority group; Shepway's properties also number highest in the lowest priority group
- Swale has 50 properties in the 3rd group; the rest are split relatively equally between the other groups
- Almost half (98) of the dwellings in the highest priority group are flats
- The highest proportion of properties in the lowest priority group occurs in Mid-Terrace housing
- Older dwellings are much less likely to be in the higher priority groups