South Derbyshire District Council

Stock Condition Survey

August 2004
Executive Summary

South Derbyshire

At the Heart of The National Forest
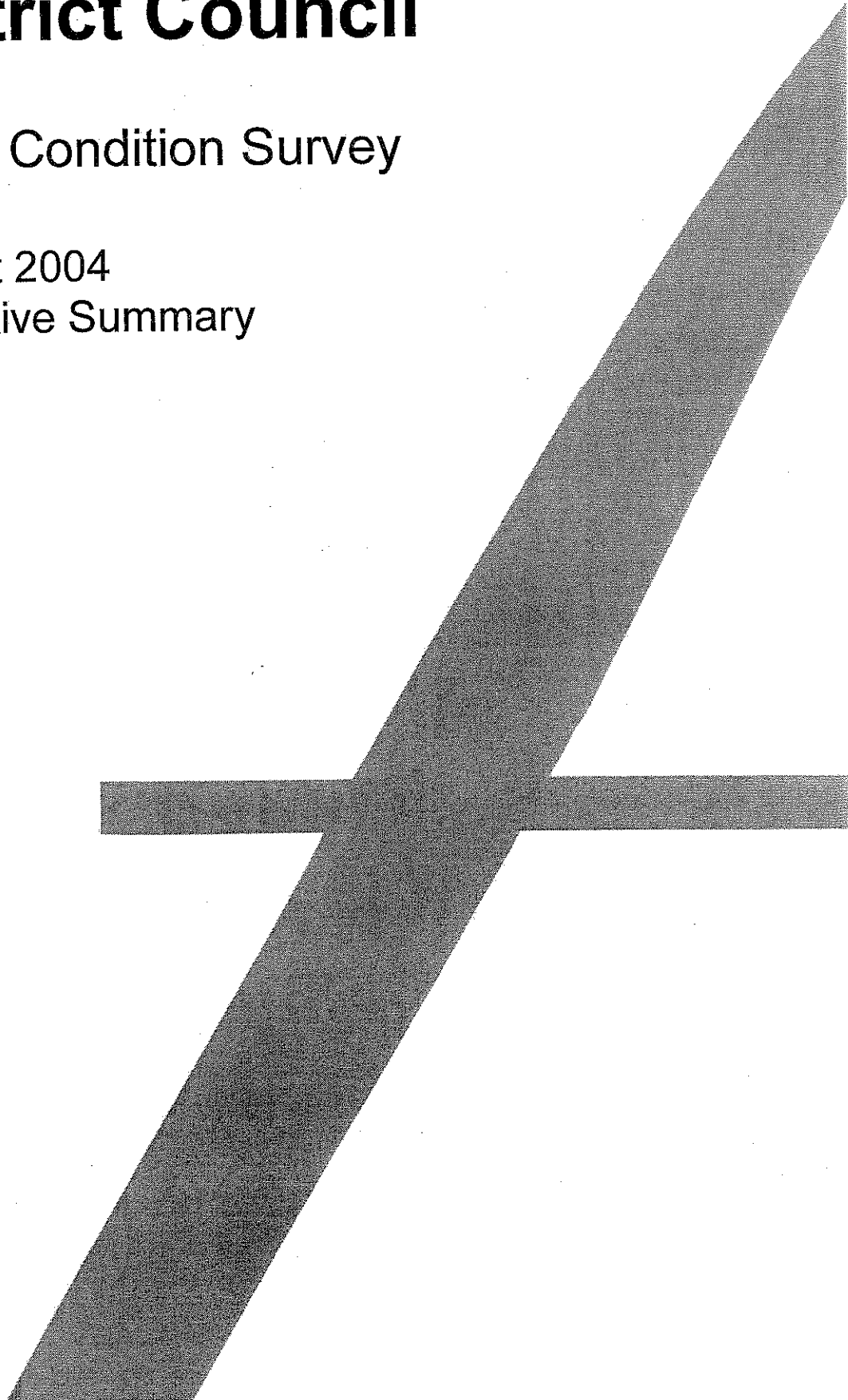
South Derbyshire District Council

2004 STOCK
CONDITION SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document provides a Summary Overview of a comprehensive stock condition survey carried out on behalf of South Derbyshire District Council. The study has been conducted on behalf of the Council by *Fordham Research Ltd.*

In stock condition surveys it is usual to describe the physical condition of the housing stock in terms of two main indicators: unfitness and disrepair. For the purpose of the survey the fitness standard applied was that laid out in Section 604 of the 1985 Housing Act.

Additionally, the survey focuses considerable attention on various other elements relating to stock condition. Notably:

* Energy efficiency
* Decent homes
* HHSRS

Main components of condition survey
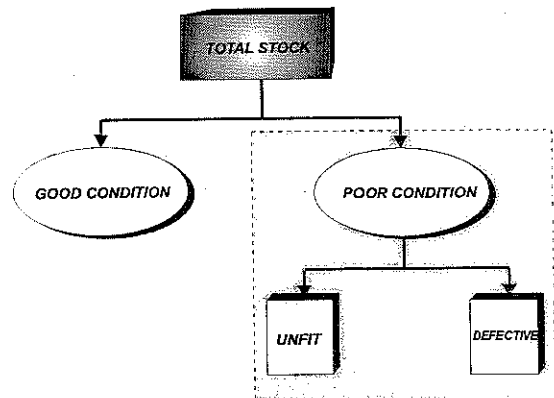
2. SURVEY STRUCTURE AND RESPONSE

The survey comprised two related surveys undertaken simultaneously: a housing needs interview of households and a physical survey of dwellings. The survey set out to complete 1,100 inspections within the private sector stock (including RSLs) over the whole of the District. In total 1,106 were achieved. This allows an accurate and detailed analysis of stock condition across the District.
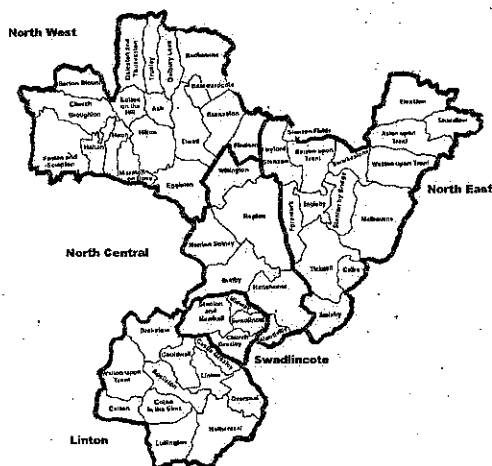
The survey data was weighted so as to be representative of all dwellings in South Derbyshire. In total it is estimated that there are 32,726 dwellings in the District, of these 577 are vacant leaving a total of 32,149 occupied dwellings.

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3. PROFILE OF THE HOUSING STOCK

Some 90.6% of the housing stock is owner-occupied, and another 7.5% is rented from private landlords. The remaining 1.9% is rented from and RSL. Overall, some 98.1% of dwellings are houses and 1.9% flats. The survey estimated that over half of the housing stock (55.5%) was built after 1964, whilst a further 23.3% of dwellings are before 1919. The most numerous dwelling type in the District are post-1980 detached houses, accounting for 20.0% of the stock.

Typology of the housing stock

Building type	Dwelling age			
	Pre-1919	1919-1944	1945-1964	Post-1964

Detached house

Semi-detached house

Terraced

Flats

4. DISREPAIR

The survey studied faults to dwellings and associated repair costs. Repair costs are based on a standard schedule provided by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) and have been updated to a 1st quarter 2004 base for the Midlands region. Some of the main findings of the analysis were:

- The average cost per dwelling of urgent repairs (i.e. those needing to be done within the next year) was £1,151– this totals £37.7m District-wide.
- The average cost per dwelling for basic repairs (i.e. all work needing to be done within the next 5 years) was £1,547 – totalling £50.6m District-wide.
- The main problem areas (in terms of the amount needing to be spent) were Walls, fences, paved areas & outbuildings, bathrooms and heating systems.
- The private rented sector showed the highest standardised repair costs as did pre-1919 dwellings.

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5. UNFITNESS

Under the provisions of Section 604 of the 1985 Housing Act (amended by the 1989 Local Government and Housing Act) a dwelling house is fit for human habitation unless it fails to meet one or more of eleven requirements and as a result of that failure, is not reasonably suitable for occupation.

An estimated 1,148 dwellings are unfit, accounting for 3.5% of the housing stock, this compares to an unfitness rate of 4.2% nationally and 4.0% in the East Midlands (2001 EHCS). The most common reasons for unfitness in South Derbyshire are *disrepair* (570 dwellings – 49.7%) and *bath/shower & wash hand basin* (348 dwellings – 30.3%).

Reasons for unfitness
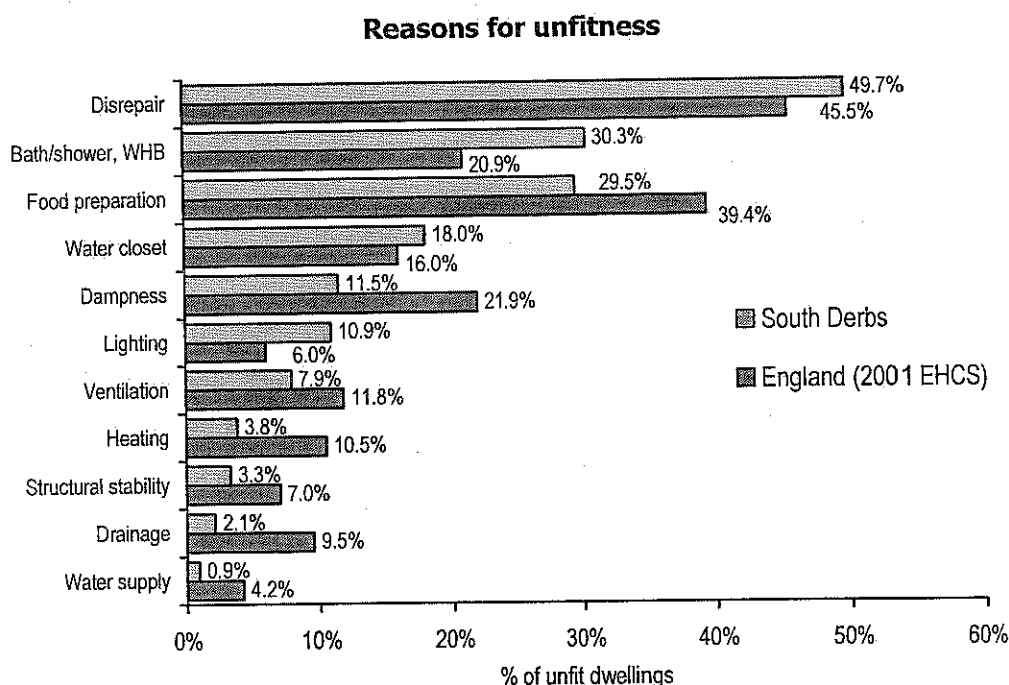
The following were some of the main findings in relation to unfitness in South Derbyshire:

- Private rented dwellings are most likely to be unfit 6.8% of all private rented dwellings were found to be unfit, this compares with 3.3% of owner-occupied dwellings
- Older dwellings were particularly likely to be unfit – 10.5% of pre-1919 were unfit, whilst only 0.2% of dwellings built after 1980 were unfit.
- 20.6% of all vacant dwellings in the District are estimated to be unfit.
- An additional 1,925 dwellings are estimated to be 'fit but defective' (representing 5.9% of the private sector dwelling stock).

6. ENERGY EFFICIENCY

An important part of any stock condition survey is the measurement of energy efficiency. The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is the Government's recommended system for home energy rating – where a high score (on a scale from 1 to 120) means a dwelling is more energy efficient.

> **Definition of SAP rating**
>
> This is a government-specified energy rating for a dwelling. It is based on the calculated annual energy cost for space and water heating. The calculation assumes a standard occupancy pattern, derived from the measured floor area so that the size of the dwelling does not strongly affect the result, which is expressed on a 1-120 scale. The higher the number the better the standard.

The individual energy efficiency Standard Assessment Procedure (or SAP) rating of a dwelling depends upon a range of factors that contribute to energy efficiency. These are shown on the diagram opposite.

The average (mean) SAP rating for all dwellings in South Derbyshire is estimated to be 47. This is comparable with the national average (2001) of 51 and slightly below the average for the East Midlands (49).

Factors influencing SAP
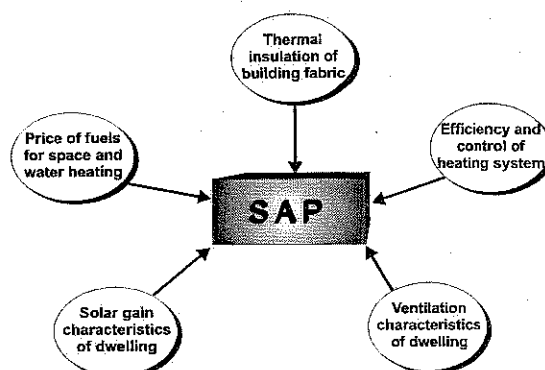
Additionally:

- A total of 10.0% of dwellings have a SAP of below 30 (compared with a national average of 9.4% and a regional average of 11.6%)
- Older (pre-1919) dwellings show particularly low mean SAP ratings, as do detached houses

Dwellings/households with particularly high/low SAP ratings

Low SAP ratings		High SAP ratings	
Group	SAP rating	Group	SAP rating
Private rented	39	Owner-occ (nm) & RSL	50
Pre-1919	36	Post-1980	57
Pensioners	43	2+ adult, no children	57

Additionally, it is estimated that households current heating systems make for an average (mean) requirement to spend £513 on space and water heating and that the average dwelling produces 6.54 tonnes of CO_2 per year.

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7. IMPROVING ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The survey also suggested ways of improving energy efficiency in the District. This is both in terms of improving SAP ratings and reducing the amount required to be spent on fuel. In looking at fuel costs, it is possible to calculate a 'payback' period, which is simply calculating the amount of time it would take for the cost of improvements to equal the cost savings. There are three main ways in which the energy efficiency of dwellings can be improved, these are shown in the diagram opposite.

Improvements to energy efficiency
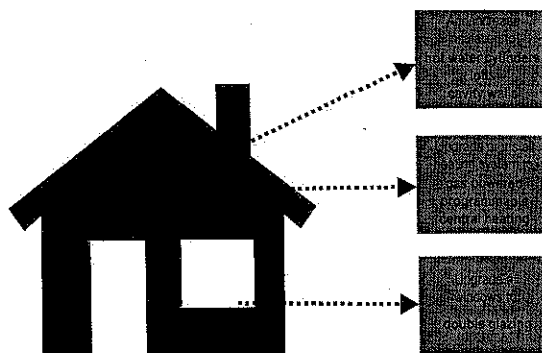
The analysis looked at the costs and savings of each of these measures in isolation as well as in combination. The main aim of improving energy efficiency considered by the survey was:

* Action required and costs of improving average SAP ratings by 30% (to 61)
* Action required and costs of improving average SAP ratings to 65

A 30% improvement in energy efficiency for the stock appears possible but difficult to achieve. A full range of measures will increase the mean SAP rating of dwellings from 47 to 61 (an improvement of 29.5%), however the total cost of this is estimated to be £60.9m. A more realistic aim might be to look at upgrading or installing heating systems to more efficient central heating systems along with a programme of insulation; these two measures would increase the mean SAP rating from 47 to 60 (an improvement of 27.9%) at a total cost of £38.4m. It can be seen therefore that there is a clear trade-off between further improvements to energy efficiency and the cost of bringing about these improvements.

8. DECENT HOMES

The government's housing objective is "to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of a decent home and so promote social cohesion, well being and self-dependence". In 2000 the Government set a standard for 'decent homes' whereby housing should:

i) Meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing (i.e. not unfit)
ii) Be in a reasonable state of repair
iii) Have reasonably modern facilities and services
iv) Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

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The results suggest that 27.2% of dwellings failed the standard under one or more of these headings. This figure compares with a national estimate of 33.1% (all dwellings). Some of the main findings relating to 'non-decent' homes were:

- The main reason for failure was thermal comfort, 76.6% of non-decent homes failed under this heading. This is also the main reason nationally.
- Over four fifths of 'non-decent' homes fail on only one of the four factors.
- Groups with high levels of 'non-decency' included: private rented and pre-1919 dwellings, as well as lone parent and vulnerable households.
- The District-wide cost of remedying non-decent homes is £25.5m.

Reasons for failure under decent homes and number of failures
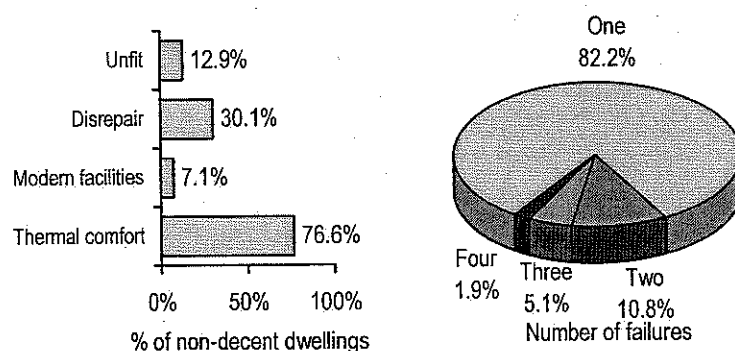
9. HOUSING HEALTH AND SAFETY RATING SYSTEM

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System is an alternative method for looking at the condition of dwellings in an area taking into account the potential hazards of a dwelling in relation to any persons using it rather than a study of the fabric condition of the home.

It is estimated that around 4.7% of dwellings require a mandatory response, which is above the estimated level of unfitness in the District of 3.5%. Below are some characteristics of 'hazardous' homes:

- The main hazards in South Derbyshire relate to excessive cold and falls on stairs.
- Private rented and pre-1919 dwellings appear particularly likely to be 'hazardous'.
- There is some link between unfitness and the hazard rating although a number of dwellings fail on only one of the two measures.

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10. INTERVENTION AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

One important issue in the stock condition survey was to consider to what extent households are able to fund any necessary improvements. The analysis looked at the total costs of repairs and energy efficiency improvements required. Some of the main findings were:

- To carry out all urgent repairs required to unfit owner-occupied dwellings (occupied dwellings) would cost an estimated £4.9m.
- Households' income levels could reduce this figure to a potential demand for financial assistance of £3.5m whilst including the scope for equity release would reduce this figure to £2.1m.
- To carry out all urgent repairs required to owner-occupied dwellings (occupied dwellings) would cost an estimated £30.3m. Again, this figure could be reduced dramatically when taking into account households income and equity levels to £17.8m and £10.0m respectively.
- In the private rented sector the total bill for carrying out all urgent repairs comes to £4.8m. The equivalent figure for RSL dwellings is £0.3m.

11. CONCLUSIONS

The Stock Condition Survey in South Derbyshire generally shows similar dwelling conditions and energy efficiency levels compared to those found nationally (2001 EHCS). The costs of making the necessary improvements to dwelling condition and the suggested improvements to energy efficiency, may however be quite prohibitive. The Council will therefore need to consider a package of measures (including both grants and the use of owners' own finances) to achieve considerable improvements to the housing stock and, indeed, to prevent further deterioration.

In determining a strategy to implement an appropriate package of measures, account could be taken of those categories where the highest incidence of unfitness/disrepair/low energy efficiency was identified, i.e.

- Private rented sector
- Older dwellings
- Vacant dwellings
- Single pensioners
- Vulnerable households

Summary of condition assessment

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