




Filling Voids?

Making better use of the existing stock






Outline of the Session

- Where does empty homes feature in AC work?
 - One Place
 - Strategic Housing Inspections
 - Short Notice Inspection
- What is the context for empty homes work?
- Assessing empty homes work
- ‘Building blocks’ for filling voids






Where does empty homes feature in AC work?

One Place


- Delivered jointly by the six inspectorates
- Focused on the **local priorities** identified by the LSP & the **35 local targets** in the LAA
- Evidence gathered around 10 key themes including ‘How well is housing need met?’
- Reports on **OUTCOMES** delivered by services on their own or in partnership – districts & county, private landlords, developers, landlord functions & housing associations
- Focus is on the future delivery with green & red ‘flags’ to identify innovation or concern about future outcomes





One Place



Somerset's local priorities







Living sustainably

Red flags - significant concerns, action needed

Working together to provide good quality, affordable homes


There is serious shortage of homes which Somerset people can afford. Councils have successfully provided more affordable housing this year including some in rural areas. This is good news for Somerset, but it still falls well short of the total needed.

Most social housing tenants receive a satisfactory service from their landlord but there are still too many homes which fail to meet minimum quality standards. Councils could do more to boost the number of available homes by bringing empty homes back into use. In some areas of the county it takes too long to adapt the homes of disabled people to make them safer and easier to live in.

Strategic Housing KLOE

- New Strategic Housing KLOE published in January 2010
 - to be used from 12th April 2010
- Builds on previous KLOE, with an increased emphasis on:
 - Role of housing in **place shaping**
 - Increased focus on **sub-regional & regional working**
 - Changes to the **planning framework** e.g. move to local development frameworks, core strategies & SPDs
 - Greater emphasis on **making better use of the existing stock** recognising that **the main gains will come from working with the existing stock**



More than just new homes

99% of the housing stock is already there.



Short notice inspection

- Recommended by the Elton review (Spring 2006) & likely to be used from April for councils but do not replace 'traditional' inspections
- Stretch the limited **inspection resources** & increase the number of inspections for the same resources
- **Reduce** the resources spent on preparing with a **focus resources on weaker performing services**
- Scopes of SNIs could include:
 - the delivery of **Disabled Facilities Grants**
 - improvement of **non decent** Private Sector Housing
 - supporting **improvement in the PRS**
 - reducing the number of **empty homes** OR
 - inspection of homelessness, housing needs, neighbourhood management etc

Short notice inspection

- The fundamental approach to SNIs is the **same as our 'traditional' inspections** - same KLOEs & same focus on outcomes & value for money
- Telephoned **5 days** in advance – required to provide **5 key documents** plus 5 of own choosing within 2 days
- Inspection team usually on site for 3 days, with initial briefing & final feedback provided
- Draft report on judgement one within 2 weeks - **no overall score or star-rating** but a separate word-based judgement for each area inspected
- Report on judgement two follows 2/3 months later. The organisation **encouraged to consult its customers** on an action plan that we will assess before making final judgement on 'prospects' (standard approach to wording)

What is the context for empty homes work?



Context

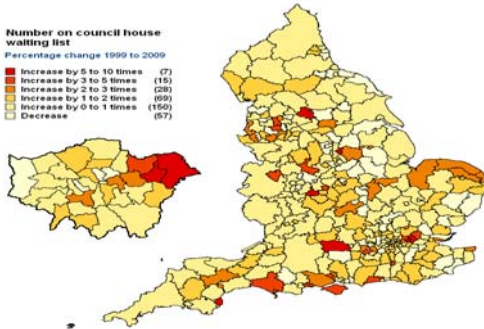
- Greater **demands** & higher **expectation** arising from demographic change & the affordability gap
- The new economic reality & its impact on both housing **supply & demand**
- Increased emphasis on **local priorities** & an increased focus on local partnerships to act as **'place-shapers'**
- **Long-term sustainability** of stock & support for **sustainable communities**
- The need to deploy resources cost effectively, **demonstrate value for money** & deliver efficiencies
- The need to provide **customer-focused** services that are responsive to local concerns e.g. crime & ASB
- The need for a **bigger & better private rented sector**
- **A new focus on empty homes work?**

Context

- Number of households in England expected to grow by 223,000 a year until 2026
- Ageing population, migration & growing numbers of single person households are adding to housing demand
- Homes already built will *still* form two-thirds of the housing stock in 2050
- CSR 2007 target to build **240,000 net new homes p.a.**
- Housing completions for year 2008/09 totalled **166,000**
- **565,000 households** living in overcrowded conditions
- **1.76 million** households on social housing waiting lists (a 70% increase in last decade) & 64,000 households living in temporary accommodation

Growth in social housing waiting lists

Number on council house waiting list
Percentage change 1999 to 2009



Unaffordable housing

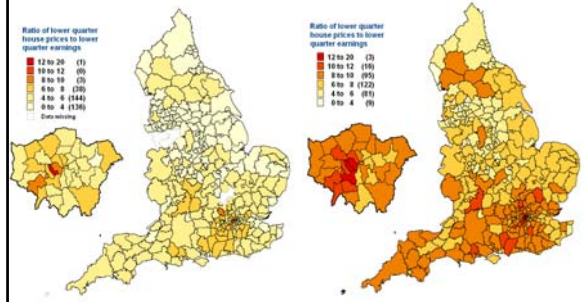
1999

2009

Ratio of lower quarter house prices to lower quarter earnings



Ratio of lower quarter house prices to lower quarter earnings



Context

- England has over **750,000 empty homes** with nearly half long-term empty - *enough to house a million people*
- Often perceived as an urban problem – less visible in rural areas
- If only **5% of empty homes** could be brought back into use, annual homelessness costs would fall by **£½ billion**
- **No national target**: & only **6%** of LAAs include **empty homes** – does this reflect community needs & aspirations?
- **One Place identified red flags in 48 areas**. Housing was identified as a concern in 17 areas with **SEVEN** relating to private sector housing including empty homes
- Performance on empty homes consistently identified as **weaker area** in strategic housing inspections

Assessing empty homes work



Assessing empty homes work

Do you have a **clear understanding** of the empty homes issues?

- **How many** empty homes are there & how many are long-term? **Who owns them?** Are there **area concentrations**?
- How is your **data** kept 'fresh' e.g. sharing data & 'intelligence' - surveys, HCS, refuse, utilities, feedback from local people

Is there a **strategic approach** to dealing with empty homes?

- Robust strategy with **clear goals** linked to local needs e.g. larger PRS, starter homes, PSL or reducing crime & ASB
- **Clear prioritisation of work** – length of time empty, condition, complaints, family-sized or in priority area?
- **Building momentum** – go for 'quick wins' to establish credibility or target high profile or high risk properties

Assessing empty homes work

- **Links to other strategies?** – renewal/energy efficiency, homelessness, ASB & partners decent homes or neighbourhood management programmes
- Do outcomes include more difficult cases, measures to create new homes (LOTs, 'Home on the Farm') as well as the 'quick wins'?
- Are targets **challenging** & do they *reflect the scale of the problem?* e.g. half the number of homes empty for more than 2 years over the life of the strategy
- Do you have clear **policies & procedures** & access to *specialist resources* for more complex work?
- Are you using **enforcement** as a strategic tool? Evidence that all housing/public health powers used as necessary
- How well do you **respond to complaints & support people** affected by empty homes?
- How well is the work & success **promoted & publicised**?

'Building blocks' for filling voids



'Building blocks' for filling voids

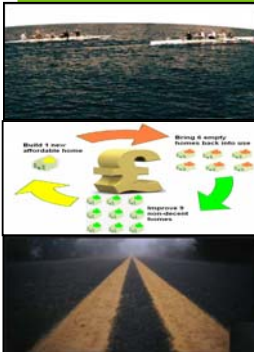


Effective & visible **leadership** – the case for empty homes work is understood & **championed** at top table

A 'live', **ambitious** strategy based on up-to-date information & informed by local people

Manage performance - targets that are both **realistic & challenging** - reflecting the scale of the problem – **linked to the LSP priorities**

'Building blocks' for filling voids



Capacity to deliver - working well in partnership (sharing skills & resources) to maximise **competency & capacity**

Benchmark your resources & demonstrate the **value for money** of the service – challenge others to match your offer

'Stick at it' - build **credibility** by maintaining **focus** on your priorities (the more difficult cases?)

'Building blocks' for filling voids



Know **what works locally**, **learn** from best performers & embed the skills & knowledge needed in your service

Communicate! Create advocates among local people & partners & stress the impact of **NOT** doing your work when budgets are tight

Challenge current service delivery (resources & structures), use peer reviews OR

Ask for an inspection!

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