

Babergh District Council

House Condition Survey 2001/02

Executive Summary

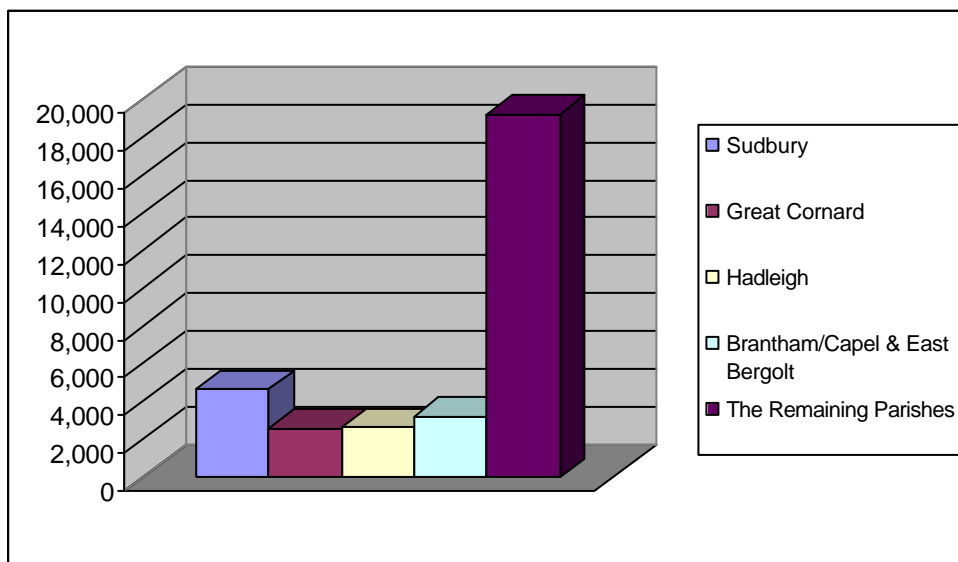
Profile and Conditions in the Housing Stock

<p>House condition surveys as a means of identifying housing stock condition have long been recognised as an essential part of housing strategy development</p> <p>The government undertakes a national five yearly house condition survey and imposes a statutory duty on councils to review conditions annually.</p> <p>The Council have met their statutory obligation to review housing conditions in the District at a time of legislative change and a fully competitive bidding process under the Housing Investment Programme.</p>	<p>A house condition survey allows the Council to monitor its housing strategy and policies in the light of legislative and other related changes. It allows the Council to review its strategy for meeting the requirements of the Home Energy Conservation Act(HECA).</p> <p>The survey results identify the extent of existing problems in the housing stock and indicate the level of resource needed to make an impact.</p> <p>The survey methodology utilised follows Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) guidelines. It addresses physical house conditions, socio-economic, environmental and energy efficiency issues.</p>
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Survey Methods The survey was carried out during 2001/02. The House Condition Survey included the production of a random sample of 1,503 property addresses and the sub-division of the District into five study areas. Within each study area the stock was identified separately to facilitate subsequent analysis of gathered data. Analysis was carried out using the BRELASS software package supplied to the consultants for the purpose by the Council. This computer software was developed specifically to implement the government recommendations on the conduct of local house condition surveys. The sub areas and the rate of distribution are shown below.

Distribution of Dwellings by the Survey Areas (%).

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

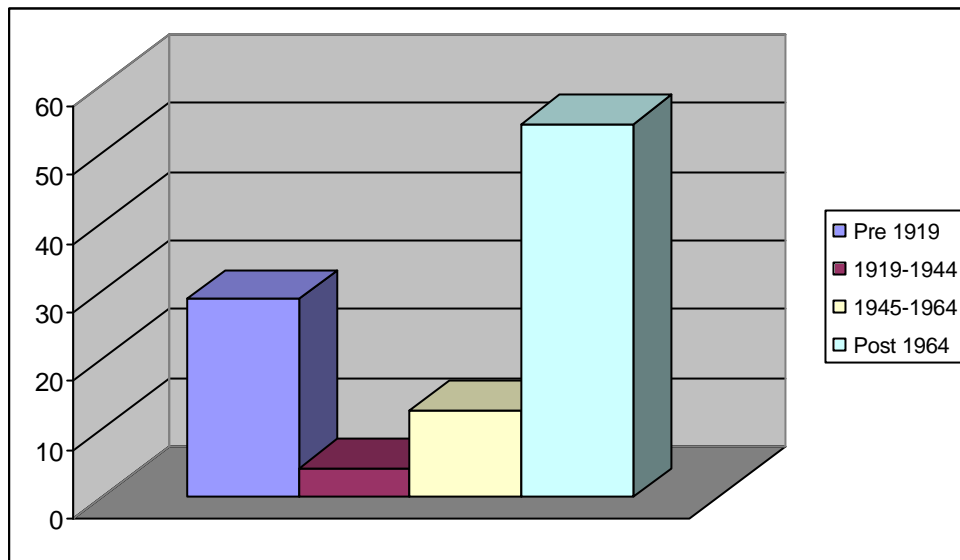


MAIN FINDINGS

Construction Date

Distribution of Dwellings by Construction Date. (%)

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)



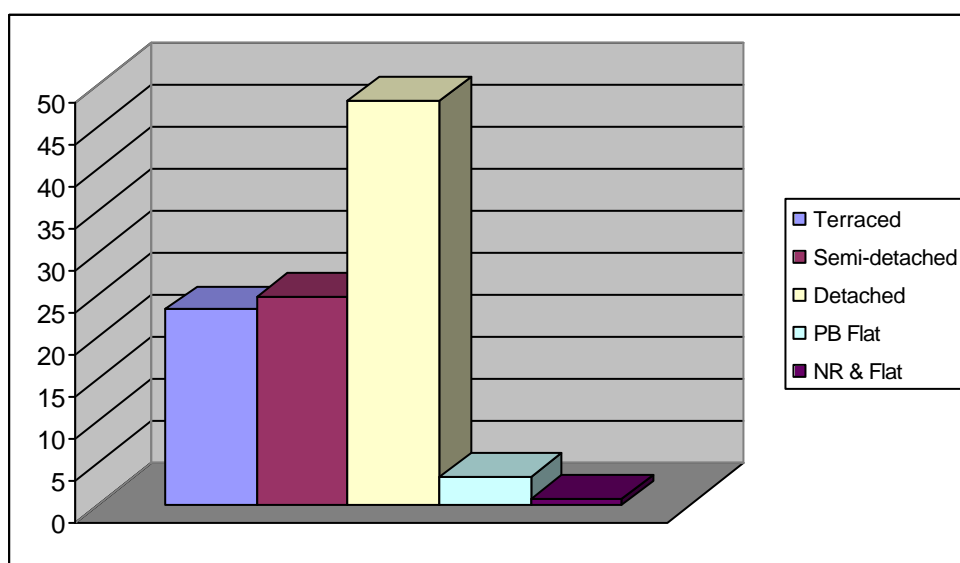
Comment: Construction Period

There are an estimated 32,301 dwellings. The survey findings reveals that the profile of construction date varies considerably between sub areas. For example, although on a District basis 28.8% of all private sector dwellings in Babergh have been constructed before 1919 in Great Cornard the figure is 10.0%, the lowest rate, compared to 34.0% in The Remaining Parishes, the highest rate. Notably, there is higher incidences of inter war stock in Great Cornard and Brantham/Capel & East Bergolt at 6.0%. The newest stock occurs, by significant rates across the whole district with the highest rate at 68.0% in Great Cornard.

Built Form

The Distribution of Dwellings by Building Type. (%)

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)



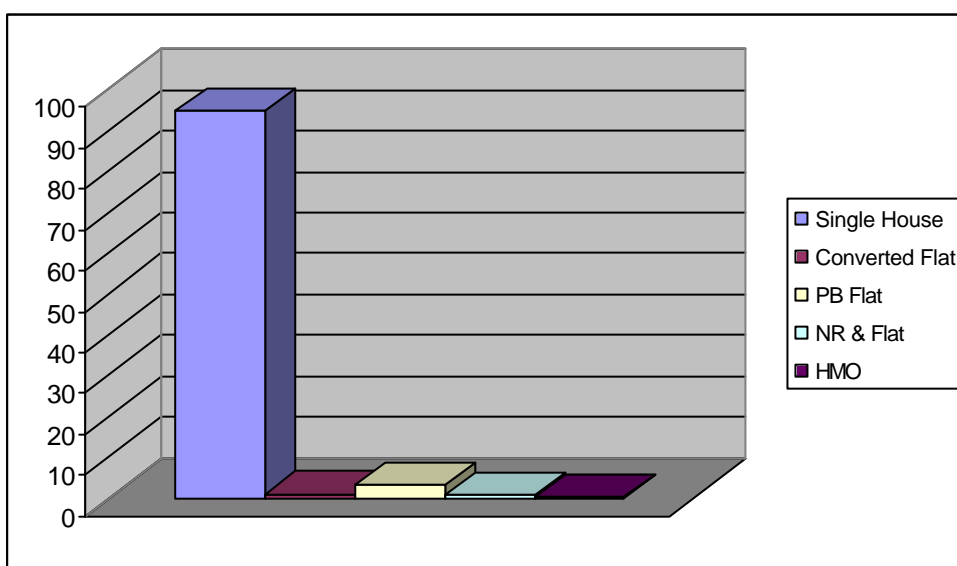
Comment: Built Form

Traditional houses, accounting for 96% of the stock, dominate Babergh District’s private stock. The remainder of the private sector stock in Babergh comprises purpose built flats and other types of flat at 4.0%. None of the profiles for the sub areas exactly mirrors the profile for the District as a whole but Hadleigh comes closest. The dwelling building type profile is dissimilar across the sub area analysis to the extent that it is only in Brantham/Capel & East Bergolt that the detached built form is dominant with a 68.0% share of the housing stock. Elsewhere, with the exception of Sudbury, it is the semi-detached type that returns the next highest rates followed by terrace type. As far as flats are concerned the two sub areas in which the highest incidence occurs are Sudbury and Great Cornard at 10.0% and 6.0% respectively.

Building Use

The Distribution of Dwellings by Building Use for the District (%).

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)



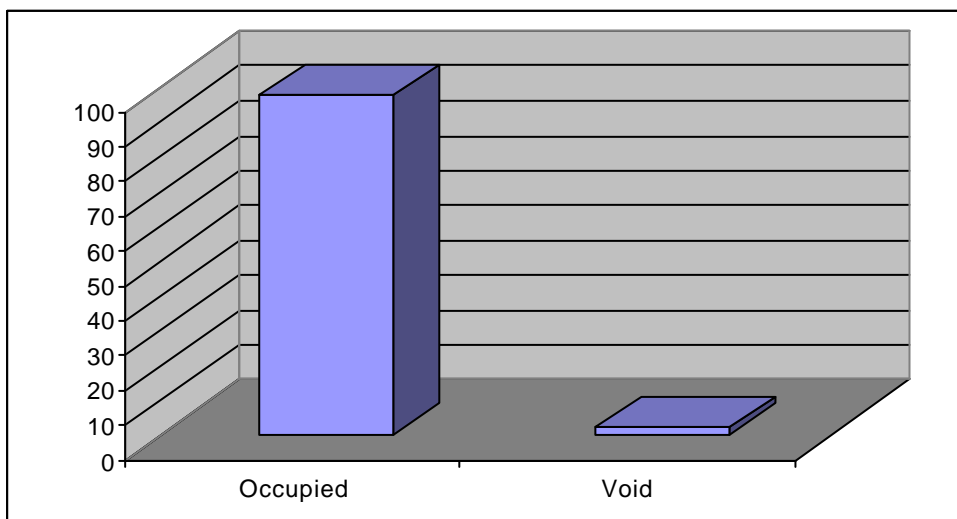
Comment: Building Use.

The distribution of the single-family use (individual houses not sub divided) alone as a category varies within sub areas although in all cases this usage is the most common by a substantial margin. In this respect the sub areas profiles generally follow the profile for the District. Sudbury is the exception.

Empty Property

Distribution of Dwellings by Occupation for the District. (%).

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)



Comment: Empty Property

The level of empty houses in the stock in Babergh now is estimated to stand at 2.3% which based on the estimated stock total of 32,301 would translate in the region of some 735 dwellings. This result, (2.3%), compares favourably to the national overall position of 3.9% (derived from the English House Condition Survey 1996). Notably, the recent HCS estimate of 735 empty dwellings can be compared to the Council's current estimate of empty dwellings (Source - HIP at 1st April 2001) of 658 dwellings. There is a close correlation.

Of the overall stock, properties which are empty (estimated at 735 in the BRELASS software statistical pack) are distributed amongst those awaiting sale (17.8%), those being modernised (17.4%), those being newly vacant (35.2%), those being mid term vacant (15.6%) and those classified as being long term vacant (18.9%).

Tenure

Distribution of Dwellings by Tenure for the District. (%)

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Babergh	Owner/ Occupied	RSL	Private Rented
	%	%	%
Total	88.2	3.8	8.0

Age by Tenure.

Distribution of Dwellings of Age by Tenure for the District. (% of Age).

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Date	Owner Occupied		RSL		Private rented		Stock profile	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Pre 1919	7,760	83.7	227	2.4	1,284	13.8	9,271	28.8
1919-1944	1,265	93.5	0	0.0	88	6.5	1,353	4.2
1945-1964	3,752	91.2	69	1.7	292	7.1	4,114	12.7
Post 1964	15,724	89.5	935	5.3	906	5.1	17,564	54.4
% District	88.2		3.8		8.0		100.0	
District Number	28,502		1,231		2,569		32,301	

Distribution of Dwellings of Age by Tenure for the District. (% of Tenure).

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Date	Owner Occupied	RSL	Private rented
Pre 1919	27.2	18.4	49.9
1919-1944	4.4	0.0	3.4
1945-1964	18.2	5.6	11.4
Post 1964	55.2	76.0	35.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Comment: Tenure

The survey shows that 88.2% of the housing stock is owner occupied, 3.8% is owned by Registered Social Landlords, 8.0% is privately rented. The important figure is the high level of owner occupation in Babergh in the private sector alone at 88.2%.

49.9% of tenants (distribution) in the private rented sector live in dwellings constructed pre 1919 compared to 27.2% and 18.4% for owner occupiers and RSL respectively.

Unfit and Defective Property

Rates of Unfitness by Dwelling Age: National/Local Position. (%)

(Source: English House Condition Survey 1996)

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Dwelling Age	% unfit national all dwellings	% unfit local Survey 2001	
Pre 1850	16.1	11.3	11.5 (966)
1850-1899		11.0	
1900-1918		6.7	
1919-1944	9.6	6.5 (87)	
1945-1964	5.1	2.1 (85)	
Post 1964	2.1	0.1 (11)	
All Dwellings	7.5	3.5 (1,146)	

Rates of Unfitness by Tenure. (%)

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Tenure	% Unfit of tenure	% Unfit of unfit distribution
Owner/occupied	2.8	69.1
RSL	1.9	2.1
Private rented	8.7	28.8
District	3.5	100.0

Rates of Defective by Tenure. (%)

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Tenure	% Defective of tenure	% Defective of unfit distribution
Owner/occupied	11.0	89.6
RSL	4.5	1.6
Private rented	8.0	8.8
District	10.8	100.0

Combined Rates of Unfitness and Defective by Sub Area. (%)

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Sub Area	Dwellings	Unfit		not unfit 1 or more defective		unfit + defective combined	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Babergh							
Sudbury	4,638	134	2.9	432	9.3	466	12.2
Great Cornard	2,594	42	1.6	264	10.1	306	11.7
Hadleigh	2,611	66	2.5	326	12.5	392	15.0
Brantham/Capel & East Bergolt	3,222	112	3.5	307	9.5	419	13.0
The Remaining Parishes	19,237	792	4.1	2,157	11.2	2,949	15.3
Total	32,301	1,146	3.5	3,486	10.8	4,632	14.3

- Figures rounded for report in this table

Comment: Unfitness and Disrepair

The national rate of unfitness for all stock is 7.6% and for the private sector alone 6.2%. The survey estimates the comparative figure for Babergh to be 3.5%. Progress has been made rectifying unfitness and disrepair in the District. However, 10.8% of the stock is categorised as being 'unfit' and 'not unfit but seriously defective'. The latter are premises

that without intervention and significant expenditure have potential to descend into unfit. These figures may have serious implications for future housing strategy. Premises may be unfit due to failure to meet the specified criteria under more than one heading.

Unfit dwellings were found to have poor energy efficiency and in particular condensation and associated problems were most prevalent in the private rented sector.

Projected Repair Costs

Repair Costs for the Housing Stock in Babergh. (£'s).

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Category	Total (£'s) m
Make fit only	9.75
Urgent repair	36.33
General repair	68.94
Comprehensive repair (10 years)	170.83
Long term (30 years)	1,102.85

Average Repair Costs for the Private Sector Housing Stock by Construction Date. (£'s).

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Construction Date	General Repair
	£
Pre 1919	4,553.25
1919 - 1944	2,696.25
1945 - 1964	1,798.66
Post 1964	577.38
Total	2,136.00

Average Repair Costs for the Private Sector Housing Stock by Tenure. (£'s).

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Tenure	General Repair
	£
Owner/occupier	1,704.39
RSL	814.23
Private rented	3,031.86
Total	2,136.00

Average Repair Costs/Dwelling for the Private Sector Housing Stock by Building Type. (£'s).

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Building Type	General Repair
	£
Terraced	1,825.95
Semi-detached	1,621.10
Detached	1,951.25
PB Flat	451.78
NR + Flat	2,631.64
Total	2,136.00

Comment: Projected Repair Costs

The unfitness rate for the stock is 3.5%. There is an immediate need for £9.75 millions to deal with the backlog repairs associated with unfit housing (the minimum statutory repair level). Beyond the “backlog repair” level an investment of over £68.94 millions is needed to bring the District up to a reasonable state of general repair.

The **average** expenditure (per unfit dwelling) required is £8,512.00 compared to the national figure for all tenures of £5,233.00. Costs vary between the sub areas.

The repair costs are highest in the oldest stock age band. However, there are significant costs in the inter war stock age band. For the oldest stock (pre 1919) costs are nearly twice the District average.

There is a variation in the cost of repairing owner/occupied houses compared to the private rented sector. The lowest repair costs are in the RSL sector.

The highest repair costs are found in the NR +Flat accommodation (home over the shop), followed by the detached house, terraced and semi-detached. The lowest repair costs occur in the purpose built flat category.

Socio-Economic Factors

Gross Income Banding (Head/ Partner) by Respondents.(%) Distribution.

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Income Band	% of Respondent (1) Head of Household	% of Respondent (2) Partners	% of Respondent (3) Total Household
Under £3,500	5.5	24.0	3.8
£3,500-£4,499	9.4	11.4	7.6
£4,500-£5,999	11.1	12.1	9.1
£6,000-£7,499	9.9	12.7	8.2
£7,500-£9,999	14.6	15.2	12.6
£10,000-£12,499	18.8	12.7	13.0
£12,500-£19,999	17.4	9.0	17.7
£20,000-£50,000	6.6	2.3	13.7
£50,000 and over	6.8	0.5	14.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Benefits by Percentage Respondent.(%)

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Benefit Receipt	Yes	No	Refused	Unknown	Total
	%	%		%	%
Income Support	4.5	89.5	4.1	1.9	100
Housing Benefit	4.2	89.8	4.1	1.9	100
Working Family Credit	3.4	90.6	4.1	1.9	100
Council Tax Benefit	10.1	83.8	4.1	1.9	100
Disability Working Allowance	0.1	93.8	4.1	1.9	100
Disability Living Allowance	3.3	90.7	4.1	1.9	100
Job Seekers Allowance	0.6	93.3	4.1	1.9	100

Comment: Socio-Economic Factors

One half (49.6%) of Heads of Households are in receipt of incomes greater than £10,000 and 24.5% Partners are in the same category. For incomes over £50,000 one in fifteen (6.8%) of Heads of Households are in this category whilst the figure for Partners is one in two hundred (0.5%). For total household incomes combined where there is a head and partner some 41.3% of households in Babergh are in receipt of income levels lower than

£10,000 per year. For 'Heads' alone and 'Partners' alone the figures are 50.4% and 75.6% respectively.

In the survey area it is estimated that some 4.5% of all households interviewed are in receipt of Income Support, 4.2% Housing Benefit, 3.4% of Working Family Tax Credit, 10.1% Council Tax Benefit, 0.1% Disability Working Allowance, 3.3% Disability Living Allowance and 0.6% Job Seekers Allowance.

4.5% of respondents in the survey received Income Support. Of those in receipt of this benefit, 10.6% lived in housing classified as being 'unfit'. Of those not in receipt of this benefit, 3.5% lived in housing classified as being 'unfit'.

4.2% of respondents in the survey received Housing Benefit. Of those in receipt of this benefit, 15.2% lived in housing classified as being 'unfit'. Of those not in receipt of this benefit, 3.3% lived in housing classified as being 'unfit'.

These figures can firstly be compared to the District average rate of unfitness at 3.5%. They illustrate that those in receipt of these benefits are more likely to live in poor housing compared to those respondents who don't receive these benefits.

Disability and Mobility

Degree of Disability - Descriptions of Disability (Frequency).

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Description	Person 1	Person 1	Person 2	Person 2
	%	Number	%	Number
Bed bound	0.0	0	0.0	0
A total wheelchair user	0.9	29	0.0	0
Mainly uses a wheelchair but can stand for short periods	3.6	109	12.6	28
A wheelchair user ONLY outdoors	6.4	195	0.0	0
Walks only with frame or other aid	19.2	586	4.9	11
Walks unaided but unsteadily or blind or deaf	27.6	843	26.0	58
Fully mobile	40.1	1,224	56.5	126
Not known	2.3	69	0.0	0
Total	100.0	3,055	100.0	223

Comment: Disability and Mobility

The survey investigated the extent and nature of disability in the District and the effects upon mobility that this demonstrated. Of those interviewed, in 91.5% of cases respondents do not have any long-standing illness or infirmity. There are an estimated 3,055 disabled persons (person 1 in household) plus a further 223 (person 2 in household).

Disabled facility grants play a major role in enabling people with disabilities, in many cases the elderly and infirm, to remain living in their own homes and to retain their independence. They are an important contributor to "Care in the Community" and as the only mandatory grant within the renovation grant system are given priority. Demand is increasing year upon year as the age profile of the population increases. Any strategic review of the existing policy and procedures for disabled adaptations across all tenures in Babergh will need to take into account issues of equality of treatment, eligibility, demand and funding constraints.

The analysis by distribution of unfitness shows that 11.7% (one in eight) of all unfit dwellings are occupied by persons who consider themselves disabled or infirm. Interestingly, some 4.4% of all disabled households were found to be living in unfit accommodation compared to 3.5% of non-disabled households living in unfit accommodation. Disabled persons are thus more likely to occupy the poorest housing.

Security Issues

Occurrence of Security Measures. - % of Stock/Element.

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Security Element	% of District Babergh
	YES
Strong external door	81.0
Deadlock on front door	74.1
Door viewer	33.9
Door chain	20.6
Window locks	72.2
Burglar alarm	12.6
Burgled last 3 years	2.7
Car crime	3.8

Comment: Security Issues

Whilst security issues are generally treated as the householder's responsibility, as part of the survey, information was gathered through "face to face" interviews. Coupled with the observations of the surveyors the extent of security provision or otherwise in the District was determined.

It is estimated that 2.7% of households (875) have been burgled in the last three years and 3.8% of households (1214), (Table 48), have suffered from crime to their car (whilst parked at home in the usual place). These figures are likely to understate the real position because householders may have only recently moved into the accommodation.

Energy Efficiency

Average SAP and NHER by Area.

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Area	Average NHER	Average SAP
All	5.2	47
Sudbury	5.1	45
Great Cornard	5.3	48
Hadleigh	5.5	51
Brantham/Capel & East Bergolt	5.2	49
The Remaining Parishes	4.9	46

Average SAP and NHER by tenure.

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Tenure	Average NHER	Average SAP
All	5.2	47
Owner Occupied	5.2	48
RSL	5.2	45
Private Rented	4.3	38
Other / not specified	5.5	51

Average SAP and NHER by Age Band.

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Age Band	Total number of properties	Average NHER	Average SAP
Pre 1900	5,904	3.9	38
1900-29	1,270	4.0	38
1930-49	1,579	4.4	42
1950-65	4,462	5.1	47
1966-76	8,823	5.4	49
1977-81	2,162	5.8	53
1982-90	3,536	5.8	52
1991-95	2,128	6.0	53
Post 1995	2,437	6.5	58

Energy Consumption.

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Area	Average GJ/year
All	126
Sudbury	105
Great Cornard	116
Hadleigh	116
Brantham/Capel & East Bergolt	142
The Remaining Parishes	140

Carbon Dioxide Emissions.

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Area	Average CO ₂ emissions (tonnes/year)
All	9.1
Sudbury	7.2
Great Cornard	7.8
Hadleigh	7.8
Brantham/Capel & East Bergolt	9.5
The Remaining Parishes	11.5

Average Fuel Costs.

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Area	Average Fuel Cost (£/year)
All	£811
Sudbury	£709
Great Cornard	£745
Hadleigh	£741
Brantham/Capel & East Bergolt	£849
The Remaining Parishes	£930

Expenditure on Fuel Costs/Income Bands (All of household income).

(Source – District of Babergh - HCS)

Gross Income Band (Head of Household)	Percentage of respondents	Average NHER	Average SAP	Average Fuel Cost (£/year)
1: Under £3,500	5.5%	4.7	42	£767
2: £3,500 - £4,499	9.4%	4.0	36	£866
3: £4,500 - £5,999	11.1%	4.7	43	£741
4: £6,000 - £7,499	9.9%	5.4	47	£690
5: £7,500 - £9,999	14.6%	4.9	45	£787
6: £10,000 - £12,499	18.8%	5.3	48	£757
7: £12,500 - £19,999	17.4%	5.4	50	£774
8: £20,000 - £50,000	6.6%	5.4	51	£931
9: Over £50,000	6.8%	5.9	57	£979

Comment: Energy Efficiency

The NHER and SAP both give a measure of energy efficiency based on the estimated fuel running costs under standard occupancy conditions. The overall averages are 5.2 on the NHER scale of 0-10 and 47 on the SAP scale of 1-120. These results are slightly better than the national averages of NHER between 4.0 and 4.5 and SAP of 44. The results for the five sub-areas indicate that properties in the Hadleigh area have slightly higher energy efficiency on average and those in the “Remaining Parishes” have slightly worse energy efficiency on average compared to the rest of the District.

There is some difference in the average energy efficiency of properties in the different tenures. This indicates that private rented properties have significantly lower energy efficiency on average than properties in other tenures.

Total energy consumption estimated under standard occupancy conditions is the main performance indicator for the Home Energy Conservation Act. The results of this survey estimate this at an average of 126 GJ/year per property. The breakdown of estimated average energy consumption by area is shown in Table 56. N.B. the variations between the sub-areas will reflect the average floor areas of the properties as well as the energy efficiency of the properties.

Carbon dioxide is the main “greenhouse gas” and the reduction of CO₂ emissions is a key objective of the Home Energy Conservation Act. Estimated reductions in CO₂ emissions have to be quoted by local authorities each year in their HECA progress reports. The estimated total CO₂ emissions for the private sector housing stock in the Babergh District based on the results of this survey are an average of 9.1 tonnes per property per year.

NHER and SAP ratings rise as income rises. Average fuel costs also generally fall as income rises, except for those on the highest incomes, when average fuel costs are higher due to larger average property sizes.

The Council is committed to improving energy efficiency through grant assistance to eligible applicants.

It is estimated that there are over 3,500 elderly households in the District in dwellings where the SAP is less than 40, of which over 2,000 have a SAP of less than 30. With average fuel costs of almost £22 per week that elderly householder’s in homes where the SAP is less than 30 are likely to be at risk of fuel poverty unless they have incomes of at least £220 per week. These households will be those most vulnerable to health problems resulting from fuel poverty and should be the first target for any assistance that can be provided through the Council’s strategy for tackling fuel poverty.

There is a correlation between energy efficiency and household income, with those households in the lowest income bands occupying homes having worse energy ratings than average.

The total number of homes estimated to be at risk of fuel poverty is 7,138, or 22.1% of the total number of households.

The estimated annual fuel cost is an average of £930 per dwelling per year (or about £17.80 per week).

Householders on benefits generally have slightly worse than average energy efficiency.

Assuming an even uptake of the above improvement measures, the cost of achieving a 30% improvement is almost £50million.

An improvement in energy efficiency of 30% would result in total savings in CO₂ emissions of about 80,000 tonnes per year.

An average SAP of 65 for the existing private sector stock is also technically achievable. An average SAP of 65 would therefore be a reasonable long-term target to set, especially if new homes built from now on were included in the assessment.

Most of the households in the three lowest income bands are likely to be at risk of fuel poverty. This is because with income less than £6,000 per year they are very likely to need to spend more than 10% of their net income on fuel to achieve the standard occupancy conditions. Some of those with higher incomes will also come into this category, especially those with larger homes. There is also the likelihood that some households will be in severe fuel poverty (fuel costs > 20% of income) or even extreme fuel poverty (fuel costs > 30% of income).

The types of household most at risk of fuel poverty are those where the head of household is over 80 and those with incomes of less than £7,500 per year. These should therefore be the first priority for the Council's strategy to tackle fuel poverty.

Energy Summary

Energy Summary	All	Area				
		Sudbury	Great Cornard	Hadleigh	Brantham/ Capel & E. Bergolt	Remaining Parishes
Average SAP	47	45	48	51	49	46
Poor energy efficiency <30 SAP	10.5%	3.6%	12.2%	7.1%	9.1%	15.9%
Unfits by SAP < 40	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Owner occupied with SAP<30	9.3%	3.6%	11.1%	5.7%	8.5%	14.0%
Private rented with SAP <30 *	17.5%	7.1%	25.0%	23.1%	0.0%	25.0%
RSL with SAP <30 *	14.6%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	16.7%	25.0%
Average energy consumption per dwelling (GJ/year)	126	105	116	116	142	140
Average CO ₂ emissions (tonnes/year)	9.1	7.2	7.8	7.8	9.5	11.5
Average total fuel costs (£/year)	£811	£709	£745	£741	£849	£930

Conclusions and discussions drawn from the house condition survey.

Conclusions have been drawn on the following issues and should be read in conjunction with the above details.

- Unfit and defective dwellings;
- Energy Efficiency;
- Enforcement;
- Empty Properties;
- Disability;
- Socio-economic factors;

Unfit and Defective Dwellings

The current fitness standard is based on an assessment of the physical condition of the dwelling and takes little account of the comfort or hazards experienced by the occupants. It therefore falls well below the standards imposed by the “decent homes” target standard for public sector properties. The survey reveals that 3.5% of Babergh’s private sector stock is statutorily unfit and when taken in isolation compares favourably with the national figure of 6.2%.

In 1992 the unfit figure was 10.4% of the stock. The reduction in the number of unfit properties can be credited to action in the intervening period by the Council (500 properties improved with renovation grant), the introduction of 5,500 new and Right to Buy properties into the private sector, and a buoyant market increasing owners’ confidence to buy and improve property.

The prevailing reasons for unfitness in the Babergh district are disrepair, dampness and “on going” instability. The incidence of unfitness due to disrepair outnumbers unfit damp properties by a ratio of four to one, and ongoing instability by a ratio of ten to one. Unfitness due to missing amenities, inadequate food preparation or drainage make up the remaining reasons for unfitness but in much less significant numbers.

The breakdown by tenure shows that the proportion of unfit properties is three times greater in the private rented stock than in the owner-occupied stock.

The majority of unfitness irrespective of house type or tenure is restricted to the older pre-1919 dwelling.

Any strategy based solely on unfitness levels would be short-sighted. The strict interpretation of unfitness precludes a large percentage (10.8%) of dwellings, which have major problems but just fall outside the category of unfit. Further deterioration of such properties would substantially increase the percentage of unfit properties across the district

The defective properties, moving towards unfitness, are again dominated by those properties in disrepair. However the ratio of three to one, between defective dwellings due to disrepair, and defective dwellings due to dampness or “on going” instability is substantially less.

At 10.8%, the percentage of defective dwellings in Babergh is worse than the national average of 7.5%. In the worst case scenario where nothing is done to remedy disrepair, dampness or structural instability then the percentage of unfit properties would rise from 3.5% to 14.3%.

Energy Efficiency

The Energy Report outlines the findings of the housing survey that was carried out alongside the House Condition Survey between December 2001 and February 2002.

The overall energy efficiency of the housing stock is slightly better than the national average with an average NHER of 5.2 and an average SAP of 48 (compared to the national averages of NHER between 4.0 and 4.5 and SAP 44). Tables showing the energy efficiency of properties in different age bands and with different built forms are provided in the appendices to the report.

There is a clear correlation between energy efficiency and household income, with those households in the lowest income bands occupying homes having significantly worse energy ratings than average.

The total number of homes estimated to be at risk of fuel poverty is 7138 or 22.1% of the total number of households. This represents a significant number of residents and the Council should consider, in partnership with other agencies, the formal adoption of a strategy to address this situation.

The average annual fuel cost within Babergh is £811 per year compared to the UK average of £694, some 17% greater. In the rural areas this differential increases to 34% more than the national average annual fuel cost.

The increased costs in the more rural areas probably coincide with the unavailability of gas thus restricting fuel options for heating. Over 28% of the properties surveyed were not heated by gas.

The survey identified the need to totally review the assessments of the energy efficiency of the private sector stock undertaken in 1996. The national averages used at that time clearly did not represent the energy efficiency of the Babergh stock.

The discrepancies do highlight opportunities for improvement since the survey identifies 40% more cavity walls that could be insulated to improve energy efficiency. Conversely the 1996 figures identified twice the number of single glazed windows than extrapolated figures from the survey. The provision of double-glazing is rarely a cost effective measure for energy efficiency purposes but when undertaken (usually for other reasons) does have a beneficial effect on energy efficiency. Two-thirds of homes already have their windows double glazed.

The survey highlighted that many homes could still benefit from cavity wall insulation (46%) and loft insulation top-ups (21%).

The most effective measure for reducing carbon dioxide emissions and fuel costs is the replacement of old boilers with substantially more energy efficient condensing boilers.

The energy efficiency SAP rating of a property is based on the energy used for heating and hot water. The survey suggests there are 3500 elderly households in Babergh with a SAP rating less than the UK average for all households.

Private rented properties have significantly lower energy efficiency compared to other tenures and as expected energy efficiency improves from the older to new age bands of properties.

With respect to the potential for achieving the improvements required under the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA), the results of the survey confirm that a saving in energy consumption of over 30% is technically achievable. However, this is dependent on a high proportion of homes installing condensing boilers, which are only cost effective when boilers need replacing. The Council should consider how it could best facilitate the promotion of these measures to householders.

Enforcement

The survey findings indicate that the rate of unfitness within Babergh's privately rented sector is worse than other tenure types by a factor of three. Based on the survey findings, 8.7% of privately rented properties are unfit and significantly, some 8% are classified as being in serious disrepair. 15.2% of households in receipt of housing benefit are unfit. Condensation problems are also most prevalent in this sector. Currently, enforcement is reactive apart from some empty property work.

The survey clearly identifies a need for a more proactive approach to the privately rented sector to combat the disproportionate levels of unfitness and substantial disrepair.

Future grant and enforcement policy should address and herald a more proactive approach to deal with defective private rented dwellings.

A notable finding of the House Condition Survey is the low level of accommodation classified as being in multiple occupation (the HMO). In BRELASS (general report) analysis (where rounding is taken into account) the level represents less than 1% of the district stock (it is rounded to zero whilst the estimated figure is 55 properties). However, care must be taken in the interpretation of this finding. The BRELASS recording mechanism refers solely to (Bedsit – Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) Category A type accommodation) and does not include other types of HMO's including self contained flats converted from houses. The Council estimate for (Bedsit – (CIEH)) Category A type' accommodation is at least 55. This is based on the number on the Council's (HMO risks) list and therefore gives a more accurate picture of the extent of multiple occupation in the district, or demonstrates that it is underestimated.

It is generally recognised that HMO's represent the poorest condition housing in the private rented sector. As insufficient numbers exist within the District for a survey at this level to identify any significant findings, it is recommended that the Council undertake a further (desktop) survey to establish the extent and nature of HMO's in the district. Further to this the Council needs to provide resources to re-establish a proactive HMO inspection programme to upgrade these properties to a suitable standard.

Empty Properties

The incidence of vacant property in the District at 2.3% in overall terms is below the national position at 3.9%. It equates to an estimate of over 735 dwellings, which are currently vacant for one reason or another in the district, and some of these will represent an under-utilised resource. However, the distribution of reason for vacancy has to be taken into account in the interpretation of the result. They are distributed amongst those awaiting sale (131), those being modernised (128), newly vacant (259), mid term vacant (115) and long term vacant (102) dwellings.

In order to bring significant numbers of long term vacant back into use the Council may need to increase its activity in this work area. Long-term vacant properties brought back into use are a 'best value performance indicator'.

Disability

Over 11.7% of households are estimated to have a disabled occupant. There is an identified need for the Council to be involved in awarding Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's). There is a perceived need to deal with the better provision of personal washing facilities for disabled persons and, based on the estimated demand, a total of £522,000 may be required for personal washing facilities alone. This equates to two years current budget for just one element of work provided under disabled facilities grants (DFG's). Self-assessment traditionally provides a conservative estimate of an individual's true needs, which are assessed by a professional Occupational Therapist before a DFG is awarded. With an ageing population and society's desire to keep people in their own homes demand for funding will continue to grow.

Socio-Economic Factors

37.2% of the private sector occupiers have lived in their home for less than five years with just over one tenth having moved into their home in the last year.

41% of those households interviewed claimed to have total incomes of less than £10,000.

4.5% of all households are estimated to be in receipt of Income Support and one tenth of these occupy unfit properties. Remedying unfitness in this small sample alone would cost £1.3million.

Any new proposals under the Regulatory Reform Order to secure a reduction in unfit and defective properties will need to take account of those already needing Income Support for existing living costs.

Recommendations.

Consideration should be given to the following recommendations:-

- Prevent those properties currently in a defective state sliding towards unfitness by arresting decline in all sectors due to disrepair, dampness and instability.
- Review private sector housing policies in accordance with the regulatory reform order to provide a range of options to encourage, educate and enforce owners to achieve the above recommendation.
- Review the base line figure used to determine progress required under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1996 (HECA) in line with the findings of the Private Sector House Condition Energy Survey.
- Increase the amount of proactive work undertaken in the private rented sector to address the disproportionate unfitness levels in this sector.
- Promote the installation of condensing boilers to achieve improved energy efficiency and reduced fuel costs.
- In partnership with other agencies to adopt and actively pursue a strategy to reduce fuel poverty across the district.
- Continue to seek partnerships to secure the installation of cavity wall and loft insulation to reduce fuel costs and improve energy efficiency.
- Review the Council's Housing Strategy to reflect the above recommendations.