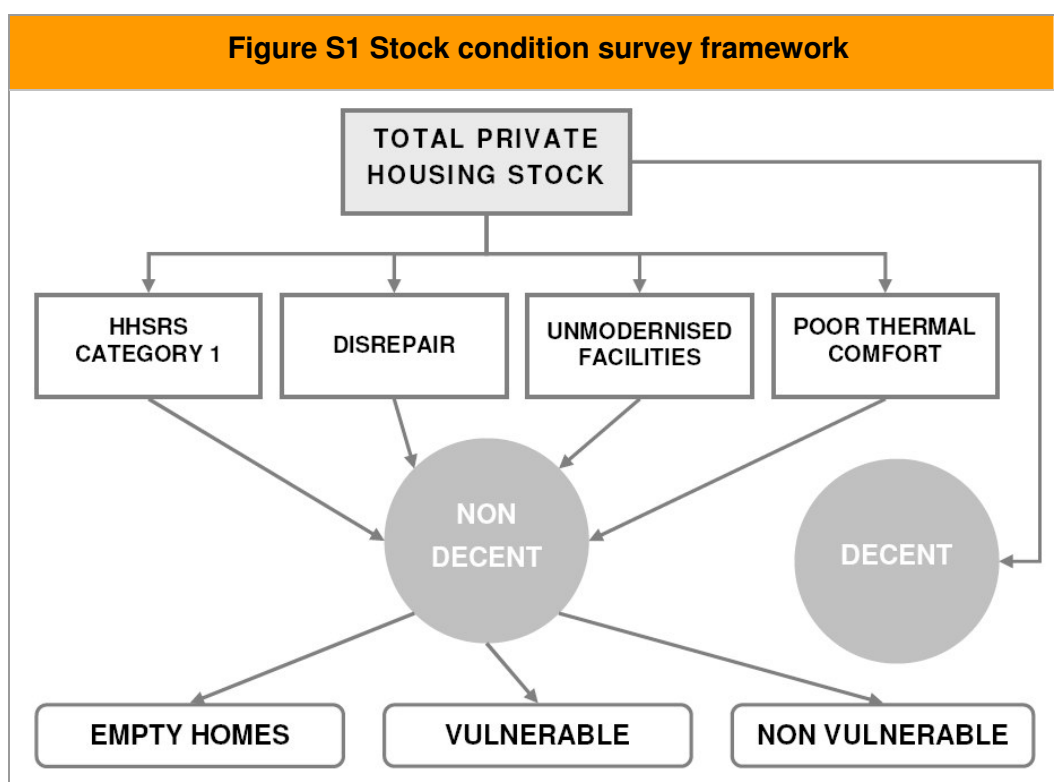


Executive Summary

Background

- S1 This document provides an account of the findings from a comprehensive private sector stock condition survey carried out on behalf of Fenland District Council by Fordham Research. The survey covered private sector dwellings (excluding RSL-owned stock) across the whole of the District.
- S2 One of the main outputs of the report is an assessment of housing and occupants under the decent homes standard (the figure below shows the general framework for assessing non-decency).



Source: Fenland District Council Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008

- S3 The survey comprised a physical survey of dwellings and a short socio-economic interview of inhabitants and in total 988 survey forms were completed (although this number was subsequently reduced to 968 as a number of properties were in RSL ownership or other non-typical private sector dwellings (hostels/B&Bs or Registered homes). The survey data was weighted by dwelling and household variables so as to be representative of all private sector dwellings in Fenland. In total, it is estimated that there are 37,234 private sector dwellings in the District; of these 840 are empty, leaving a total of 36,394 occupied dwellings.

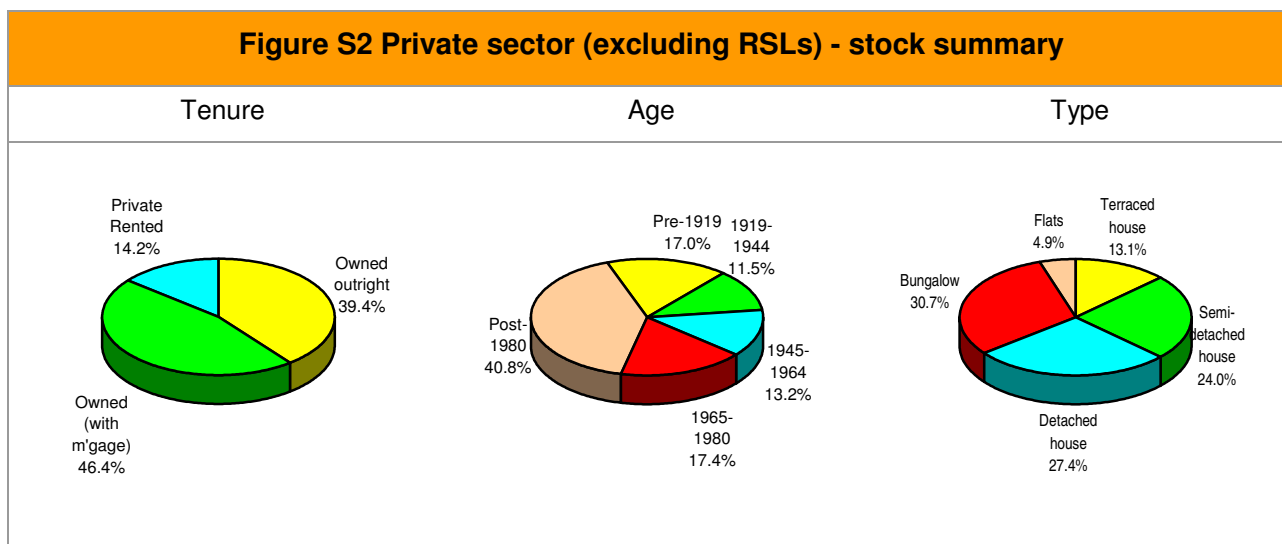
S4 Over a fifth of empty dwellings are newly vacant; with some 29.6% of empty homes appearing to be long-term vacant. Only a small number of holiday or second homes were found as part of the survey sample.

Table S1 Length of vacancy (private sector excluding RSLs)		
Length of vacancy	Number	%
Newly vacant (less than a month)	176	21.0%
Mid term vacant (1 to 6 months)	393	46.8%
Long term vacant (6 months or more)	248	29.6%
Second/holiday home	22	2.7%
All empty homes	840	100.0%

Source: Fenland District Council Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008

Profile of the housing stock

S5 It is estimated that some 85.8% of the private sector housing stock (excluding RSL dwellings) is owner-occupied; the remaining 14.2% is private rented. The most common type of dwellings are post-1980 detached houses. The figure below summarises the main stock profile characteristics of the private sector (excluding RSLs) in Fenland.



Source: Fenland District Council Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008

S6 The picture below shows a typical post-1980 detached house in the District. There are also a significant number of bungalows in this age group.



Source: Fenland District Council Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008

- S7 Data from the survey suggests that the private sector housing stock in Fenland has a slightly different profile to the housing stock nationally. When compared with national data some of the main differences found were:
- Fenland has a higher proportion of bungalows (and also detached houses) and a lower proportion of all other dwelling types (Fenland notably has a very low proportion of flats within the private sector stock).
 - The District has a similar proportion of private rented accommodation, with 14.2% of all private sector dwellings being in this sector, compared to 14.5% across England. The proportion of private rented accommodation does however appear to be slightly above the most recent regional estimate (11.6%).
 - Housing in Fenland has a different age profile with 40.8% of dwellings having been built since 1980 (this compares to 18.4% nationally and 22.8% across the East of England).
- S8 The survey also considered the size of dwellings and it is estimated that on average, private sector dwellings have 4.8 habitable rooms and the average floor space is 105m².

Housing Health and Safety Rating System

S9 The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) takes 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. Once each dwelling has been assessed for each potential hazard the data is banded to provide more useful data. The bands suggested in CLG guidance are shown in the box below.

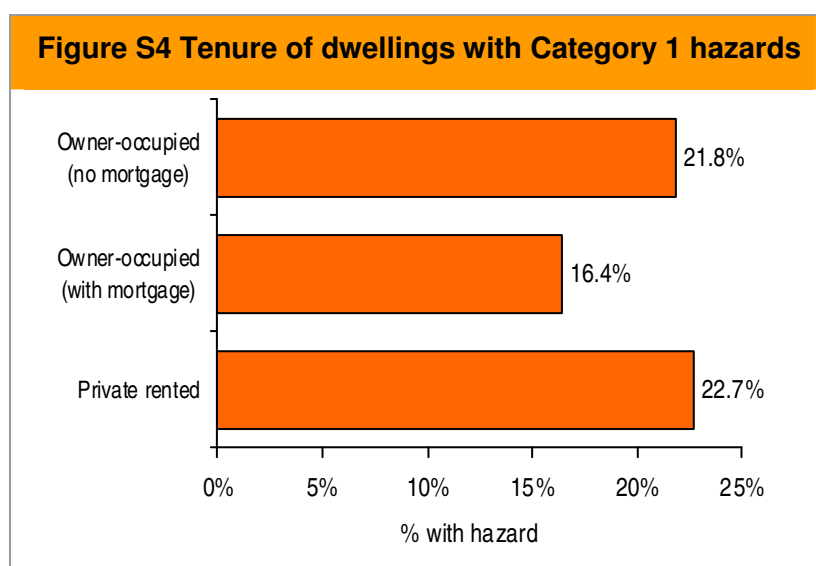
Band	Score	Equivalent annual risk of death	Response
A	5,000 or more	1 in 200 or more	Category 1
B	2,000 – 4,999	1 in 200 – 1 in 500	
C	1,000 – 1,999	1 in 500 – 1 in 1,000	
D	500 – 999	1 in 1,000 – 1 in 2,000	Category 2
E	200 – 499	1 in 2,000 – 1 in 5,000	
F	100 – 199	1 in 5,000 – 1 in 10,000	
G	50 – 99	1 in 10,000 – 1 in 20,000	
H	20 – 49	1 in 20,000 – 1 in 50,000	
I	10 – 19	1 in 50,000 – 1 in 100,000	
J	Less than 10	Less than 1 in 100,000	

S10 It is estimated that around 19.4% of private sector dwellings have a Category 1 hazard, accounting for 7,227 dwellings in Fenland. This figure is below the estimated figure for England of 23.5% (2006). Below are some characteristics of ‘hazardous’ homes:

- The main hazards relate to excess cold, falls (on stairs, on the level and between levels) and fire; broadly the same pattern as found nationally
- The most costly Category 1 hazard to remedy is excess cold at an estimated total cost of £5.6m. In total it is estimated that to remedy all Category 1 hazards in the private sector would cost £12.9m (£2.2m of this being in the private rented sector)
- Older dwellings appear particularly likely to be ‘hazardous’ – 42.5% of pre-1919 dwellings have a Category 1 hazard
- Vulnerable households are surprisingly less likely to live in ‘hazardous’ homes – 17.6% of all vulnerable households live in a home with a Category 1 hazard (compared with 19.6% of other households)
- The total cost of remedying Category 1 hazards for vulnerable households is estimated to be £3.7m

S11 The data collected shows 19.4% of dwellings have at least one hazard described as Category 1, a further 19.6% of dwellings having Category 2 hazards. The council should consider high scoring Category 2 hazards where the hazard score may increase within the subsequent 12 months from the inspection date to become a Category 1 hazard during that period.

S12 The figure below shows the tenure of dwellings with category 1 hazards. The table shows that private rented dwellings are most likely to contain Category 1 hazards whilst those which are owned with a mortgage show the lowest proportion.



Source: Fenland District Council Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008

Disrepair

S13 The survey studied faults to dwellings and associated repair costs. Repair costs are based on a standard schedule provided by the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) and have been updated to a base of the middle of 2008 base for the East of England region. These are assessed by three categories of urgent repair, basic repair and comprehensive repair. The overall findings are summarised in the table below.

Table S2 Overall repairs cost in Fenland (private sector excluding RSLs)

Repairs category	Owner-occupied		Private rented sector	
	Cost per dwelling	Total cost	Cost per dwelling	Total cost
Urgent repair	£1,106	£35.3m	£1,456	£7.7m
Basic repair	£1,641	£52.4m	£2,148	£11.4m
Comprehensive repair	£4,239	£135.4m	£4,935	£26.1m
Standardised repair cost (/m ²)	£16.9	-	£27.2	-

Source: Fenland District Council Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008

S14 Some of the main findings of the analysis relating to disrepair were:

- The average cost per dwelling of urgent repairs (i.e. those needing to be done within the next year) was £1,156 – this totals £43.0m across the whole District.
- The average cost per dwelling for basic repairs (i.e. all work needing to be done within the next five years) was £1,713 – totalling £63.8m across the District.
- The main problem areas (in terms of the amount needing to be spent) were heating systems (14.1% of the overall basic repair cost District-wide), external walls (11.7%) and bathrooms (10.1%).
- Empty homes showed the highest repair costs (£7,609 basic repair cost per dwelling), as did older dwellings (£4,513 average basic repair cost for pre-1919 dwellings).
- Vulnerable and support needs households also have higher average repair costs with average basic repair costs of £1,976 and £1,761 per dwelling respectively.

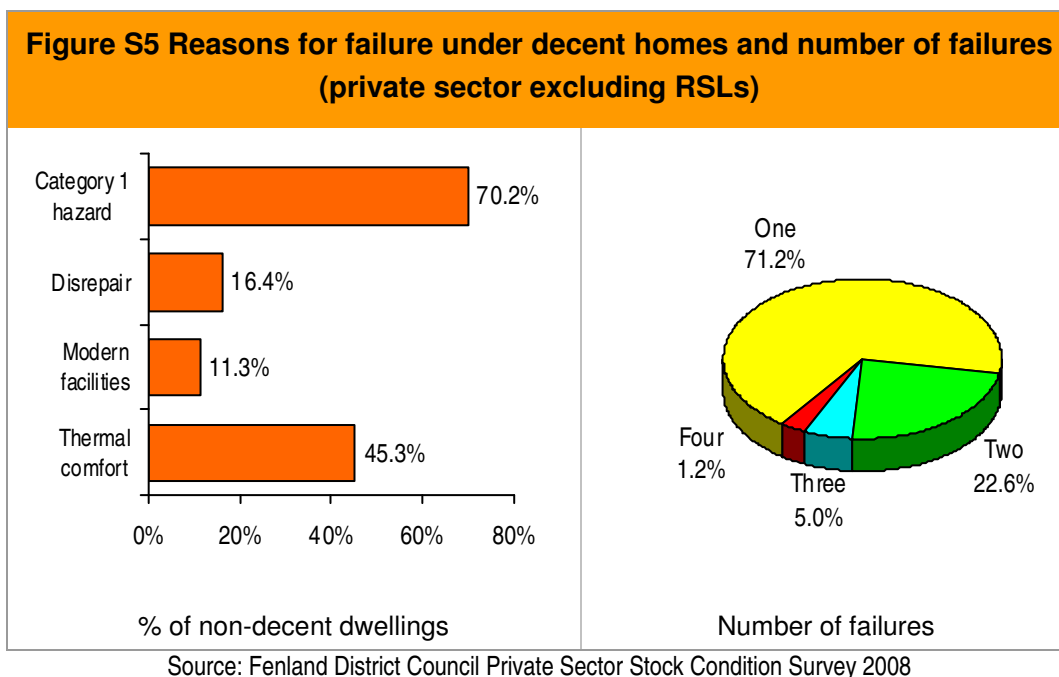
Decent homes

S15 The Government defines a home as ‘decent’ if it meets all of the following four criteria:

- No Category 1 hazards
- Is in a reasonable state of repair
- It has reasonably modern facilities and services
- It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

S16 The results suggested that 27.7% of dwellings in the private sector failed the standard under one or more of these headings. This figure compares with a national estimate (for private sector dwellings) of 36.3%. Some of the main findings relating to ‘non-decent’ homes in Fenland were:

- The main reason for failure was a category 1 hazard, 70.2% of non-decent homes failed under this heading.
- Some 68.2% of ‘non-decent’ homes fail on only one of the four factors.



S17 In addition, the survey looked at non-decency and dwelling/household characteristics with key findings presented below:

- Dwellings with high levels of 'non-decency' included: empty homes, pre-1919 dwellings and flats (both purpose-built and converted).
- Households that show high levels of non-decency include single non-pensioners, support needs and vulnerable households.

S18 The table below summarises the costs to make decent split between tenure and vulnerable households. To this has been added empty homes for reasons of completeness. The table shows that there is a big different between vulnerable and non-vulnerable households with vulnerable households being estimated to have an average cost to make decent of around double the equivalent figure for non-vulnerable households. Overall, owner-occupied (no mortgage) households have the highest average costs (excluding empty homes which show very high costs to make decent). The total cost of remedying non-decent homes in the District is estimated to be £30.6m (which equates to approximately £2,974 per non-decent dwelling).

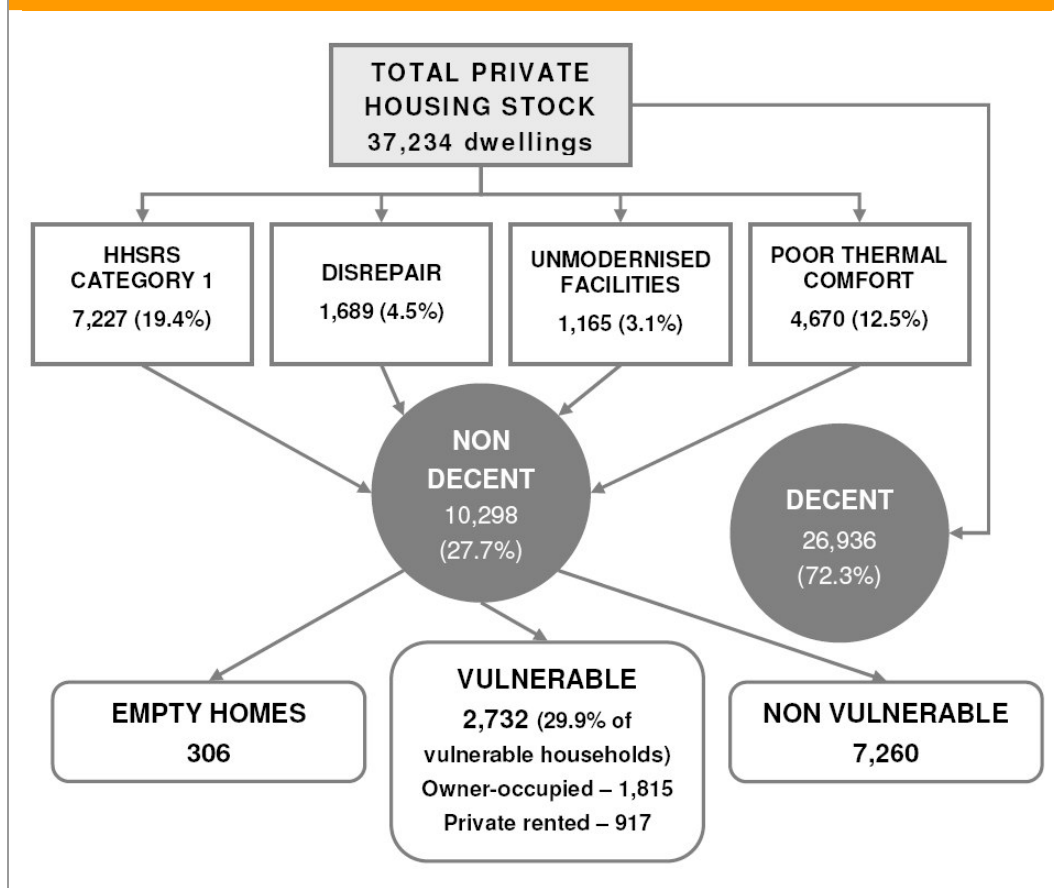
Table S3 Costs for remedying non-decent homes in Fenland by tenure and vulnerability (private sector excluding RSLs)

Tenure	Vulnerable	Not vulnerable	All households /dwellings
Owner-occupied (no mortgage)	£5,089	£2,375	£2,980
Owner-occupied (with mortgage)	£22,42	£1,612	£1,757
Private rented	£3,778	£1,884	£2,772
Empty homes	-	-	£19,347
Average/total	£3,738	£1,996	£2,974

Source: Fenland District Council Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008

S19 The key measure in terms of decent homes and the local authority is the proportion of vulnerable households living in decent accommodation and this survey estimates that 70.1% of vulnerable households live in decent housing. The figure below summarises the decent homes situation in Fenland.

Figure S6 Decent Homes – summary of results (private sector excluding RSLs)



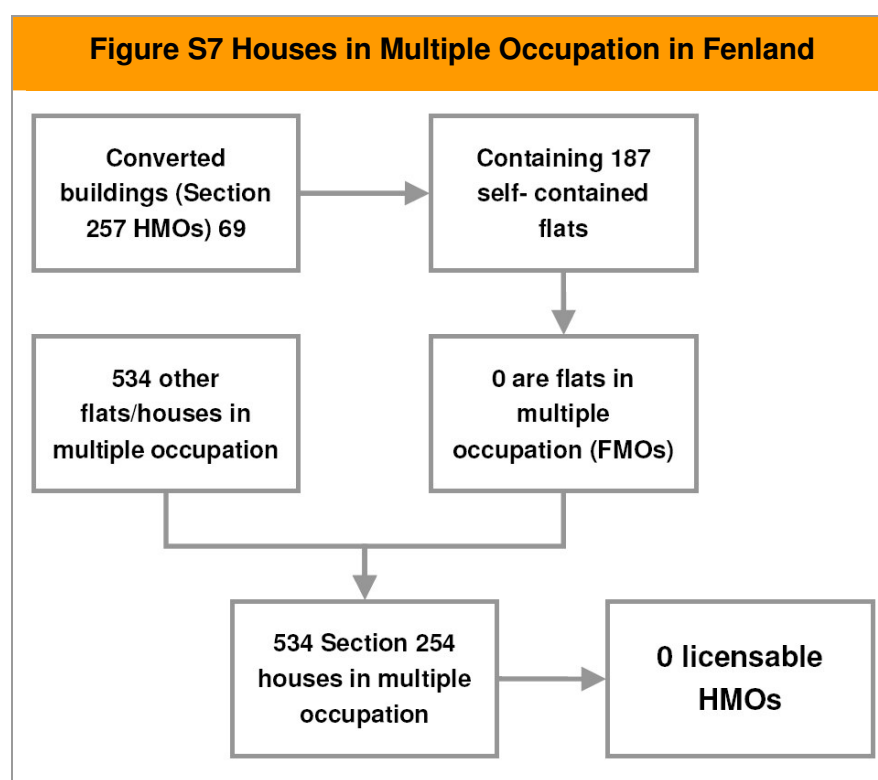
Source: Fenland District Council Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

S20 In the survey particular attention is given to Houses in Multiple Occupation. The Housing Act 2004 provides the legal definition of HMOs (covered under Sections 254 and 257). The definitions can be summarised as:

- Section 254 HMOs would mainly be described as bedsit or shared house/shared flat accommodation
- Section 257 HMOs are buildings converted entirely into self contained flats which do not meet the 1991 Building Regulations and less than two-thirds of the flats are owner-occupied.

S21 The figure below shows the survey's estimates of the number of HMOs in each of these two categories and the degree of overlap between them. The figure also provides an estimate of the number of licensable HMOs. The definition of a licensable HMO is an HMO "which comprises three storeys or more and is occupied by five or more persons, who comprise two or more households".



Source: Fenland District Council Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008

S22 Overall, the survey picked up very few HMOs in the district – a total of 69 Section 257 HMOs and 534 Section 254 HMOs. None of these properties were considered to be licensable (none contained both five or more people and were three or more storeys in height).

S23 Although the estimated number of HMOs is small the sample size is large enough to provide some broad analysis (a sample of 39). This proportionately large sample size has arisen due to the way in which the sample was drawn (with an over-sample of dwellings known to the Council to be HMOs). The analysis below considers both Section 254 and Section 257 HMOs together. Characteristics of HMOs in Fenland are therefore summarised below:

- HMOs were far more likely than other dwellings to be old with 63.2% estimated to be pre-1919 dwellings.
- HMOs are more likely to have a Category 1 hazard than other private sector dwellings and levels of non-decency are also significantly higher.
- Energy efficiency levels were also worse in HMOs with an average SAP of 47 compared with 53 for the rest of the private sector stock.
- An estimated 113 (all Section 254) HMOs share amenities at a ratio of worse than 1 per 5 lets.

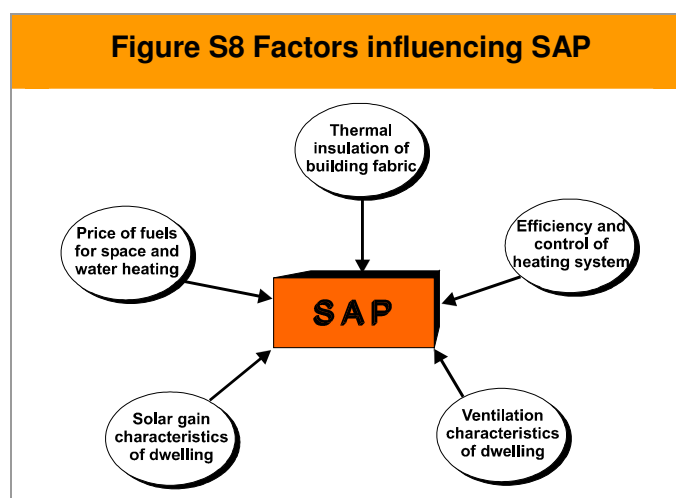
Energy efficiency

S24 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 based on a scale of 1 to 100. A high score means that a dwelling is more energy efficient. SAP ratings were previously assessed on a scale up to 120 and so any comparisons should be treated with caution due to the changes in SAP calculations (although differences in scores for any particular dwelling are expected to be slight).

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 1-100 scale. The higher the number the better the standard.

S25 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 below.



S26 The average SAP rating for the private sector in Fenland is 53. This is higher than the most recent national figures available which puts this at 47. Other findings for the private sector stock in Fenland include the following:

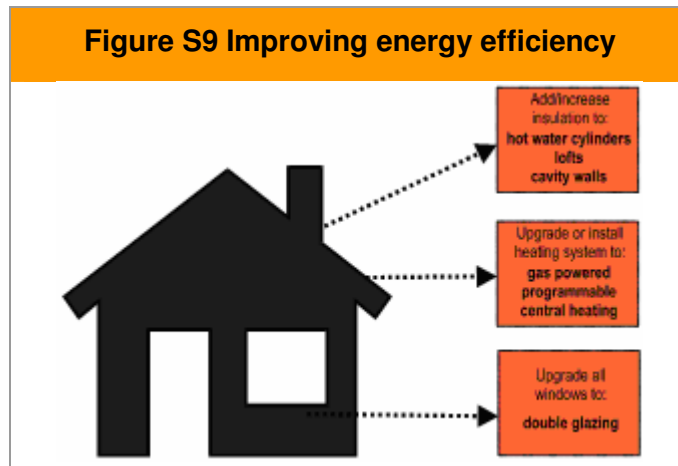
- 96.7% of dwellings have central or programmable heating.
- 94.3% of dwellings have full or partial double-glazing.
- Older dwellings typically display lower SAP ratings.

S27 Additionally, it is estimated that households' current heating systems make for an average (mean) requirement to spend £616 on space and water heating per year (£616 is the average amount a household would need to spend in order to keep their dwelling to a temperature of 21 degrees if regulated properly). Households may choose to spend more (or indeed less) on heating/hot water and so the £616 figure does not represent what is actually spent on heating in the home. Further data suggests that at optimum efficiency the average dwelling would produce 6.7 tonnes of CO₂ per year.

S28 Households are defined as in fuel poverty if, to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, they are required to spend more than 10% of their income on all households fuel use. Overall, 5,032 private sector households in Fenland are in fuel poverty; this represents 13.8% of private sector households in the District. Households in the private rented sector are most likely to be fuel poor, 1,100 households are in fuel poverty, accounting for 21.8% of the private rented sector. In terms of household type, single pensioners and lone parents are particularly likely to be fuel poor with around a quarter of these households in fuel poverty. Additionally, 29.9% of vulnerable households are in fuel poverty.

Improving energy efficiency

S29 The survey also suggested ways of improving the energy efficiency of dwellings across 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 below.



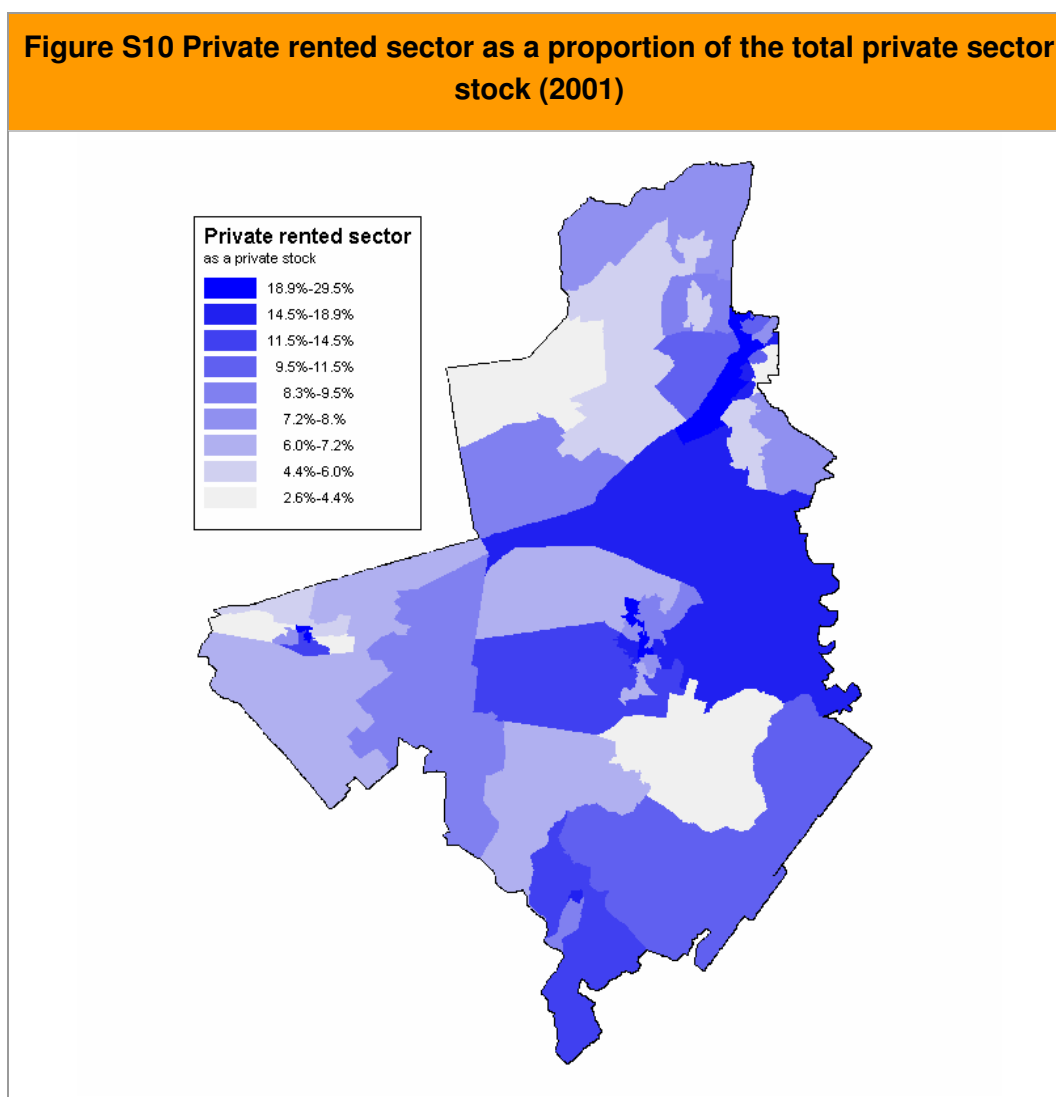
S30 The analysis looked at the costs and savings of each of these measures in isolation as well as in combination.

S31 There are significant potential improvements which can be made to the energy efficiency of private sector dwellings in the District. An improvement in SAP of around 20% appears possible although this will be difficult to achieve. The figure of 20% is based on the average SAP rating of dwellings once a full range of insulation, double-glazing and central heating measures have been carried out and would mean improving virtually every dwelling in the area to some degree (this would entail increasing the average SAP rating from 53 to 64).

S32 The most cost effective package of measures is likely to concentrate on insulation and central heating. By applying these two measures it would be possible to increase the average SAP rating in the District from 53 to 64. The further improvements that could be made through double-glazing are not very cost-effective.

The private rented sector

S33 Throughout the analysis information is provided on stock condition and energy efficiency for the whole of the District and for individual tenure groups. Specific data from the private rented sector was also extracted for further analysis. In total 201 surveys were conducted in private rented dwellings and it is estimated that this number is representative of around 5,288 dwellings (including 229 empty homes). The map below shows the locations of private rented dwellings (as a proportion of all private sector dwellings in the District) based on 2001 Census data.



S34 Key findings from analysis of the private rented sector include the following:

- Over half of all private rented dwellings are terraced or semi-detached houses and 23.9% are flats; the majority (52.2%) are occupied by non-pensioner households without children (although the sector does have a high proportion of lone parents).

- An estimated 22.7% of private rented dwellings have a Category 1 hazard (1,202 dwelling). The average cost per dwelling to remedy these hazards is estimated to be £1,794, with a total cost District-wide of £2.2m.
- The average SAP rating in the private rented sector is 52 – this compares with an average for other private sector properties of 54.
- 38.4% of private rented dwellings were found to be non-decent; significantly higher than in the rest of the private sector and the costs to remedy non-decency (on a per dwelling basis) are slightly higher (£3,022 per dwelling compared with £2,962 for the rest of the private sector).
- It is estimated that 917 vulnerable households live in non-decent accommodation in the private rented sector – this represents 41.7% of all vulnerable households in the sector. The average cost to make these homes decent is £3,778 per dwelling – making for a total District-wide of £3.5m.

Intervention and financial assistance

S35 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 improvements required for vulnerable owner-occupiers to meet the Decent Homes Standard.

S36 The data showed that vulnerable owners (in non-decent homes) typically had lower levels of income and similar levels of equity than other owners. However, the financial data would suggest that there is considerable potential scope for owners to meet the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard through their own means (largely due to equity levels).

S37 Overall, it was estimated that for all vulnerable owner-occupiers to meet the Decent Homes Standard there would be a need to spend £6.8m. When income is taken into account this figure is reduced to £6.2m. Around two-fifths of the relevant households also stated that they would be prepared to use equity release and so the grant requirement after taking this into account reduces to £3.7m.

Table S4 Likely grant requirement to meet Decent Homes Standard for vulnerable owner-occupiers (with potential use of equity release)

Income band	Number of households	Average cost	Total cost	Grant requirement	After equity release
Under £15,050	1,275	£4,596	£5.9m	£5.9m	£3.5m
£15,050 to £30,100	259	£2,376	£0.6m	£0.3m	£0.2m
Over £30,100	281	£977	£0.3m	£0.0m	£0.0m
Total	1,815	£3,718	£6.8m	£6.2m	£3.7m

Source: Fenland District Council Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008

- S38 Therefore it is suggested that at least £3.1m of the cost needed to meet the Decent Homes Standard could reasonably be expected to come from owner-occupiers. There is also considerable additional equity available which some owners are currently stating they are not prepared to release for home improvements.
- S39 In the private rented sector, the data suggested that there are 917 vulnerable households living in non-decent accommodation. With an average cost to make decent of £3,778 there is a total spend requirement for these households of £3.5m.

Conclusions

- S40 The Stock Condition Survey in Fenland generally shows better dwelling conditions than those found nationally. The costs of making the necessary improvements to dwelling conditions and the suggested improvements to energy efficiency may however be quite onerous.
- S41 The Council will therefore need to consider a wide range of measures (including finance from the local authority and the use of landlords'/owners' own finances, as well as advice) to achieve improvements to the housing stock and, importantly, to prevent further deterioration.
- S42 The Council does not possess the resources to identify each individual dwelling requiring action and therefore requires policies to bring those that require assistance to their attention. Information and education can play an important role in this, as will advice to ensure occupants can carry out required improvements with as little financial involvement from the Council as possible.