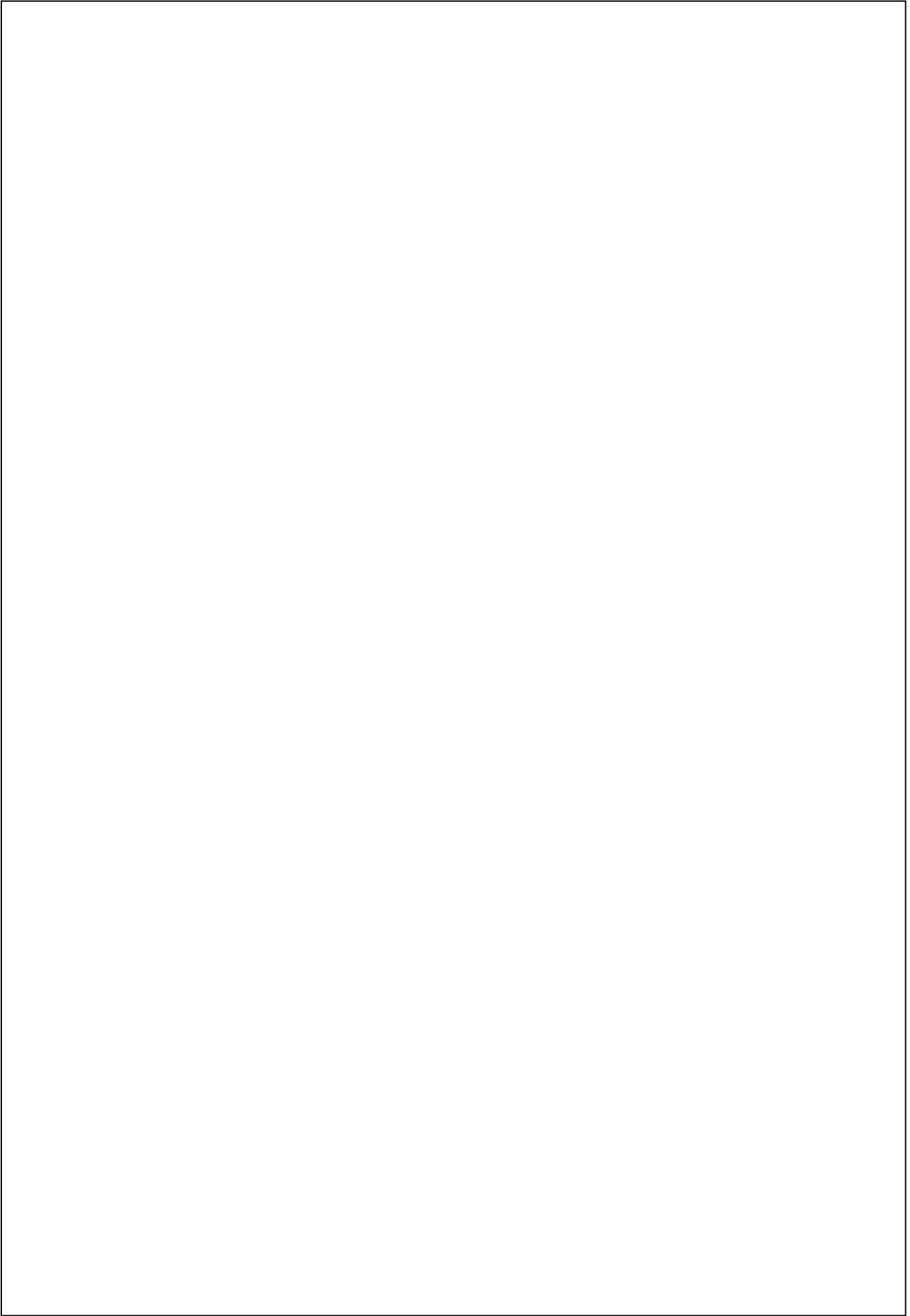


AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE FINAL REPORT

DERELICT LAND AND BUILDINGS INVESTIGATION

JULY 2024





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

As part of the process for identification of the 2023/24 scrutiny work programme, the Committee's attention had been drawn to data¹ in relation to national, regional and local levels of unoccupied properties. Indications being that in 2020, 4.7% of Hartlepool properties (2,078 out of 44,250) had been reported as unoccupied and that when compared to the national rate (2.65%) Hartlepool had been ranked fifth highest in the UK.

The disproportionately high level of empty properties in Hartlepool was a significant concern for the Committee and Members were keen to gain a clearer understanding of the current position and the issues created in terms:

- The health and wellbeing of residents (including mental health) and increased risks of crime and antisocial behaviour with smaller derelict sites in urban communities often have the biggest impact on the wellbeing and safety of communities;
- Damage to community cohesion (communities can feel forgotten) and residents sense of place; and
- Impact on economic growth, with indications that neglected sites can deter investment, or mitigate the introduction of new income streams such as tourism².

With due regard to the information provided, it was clear that the level and potential impact of derelict land and buildings met both the health and crime and disorder criteria for investigation under the Council's statutory scrutiny responsibilities. On this basis, and in response to concerns raised by residents, it was agreed that 'derelict land and buildings in Hartlepool' would be the Committee's sole investigation for 2023/24.

Conclusions

The Audit and Governance Committee concluded that:-

- (a) The local authority's strategy for dealing with derelict land and property has had significant successes and officers are commended their activities. Factors that influence the creation of derelict land and buildings are, however, complex and with no 'one size fits all' solution, the local authority utilises a wide range of actions and intervention. It is timely to explore development of a new, more aggressive, strategy with a clear package of actions and responses to help address the issue.
- (b) Any proposals for the provision of additional activities, or service changes, must be considered alongside the financial challenges facing the local authority and be within available resources.
- (c) The local authority's strategy for dealing with derelict land and property has had significant successes and officers are commended their activities. Factors that influence the creation of derelict land and buildings are, however, complex and with no 'one size fits all' solution, the local authority utilises a wide range of actions and intervention. It is timely to explore development of a new, more aggressive, strategy with a clear package of actions and responses to help address the issue.

¹ Coulters Property (using data from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) 2020

² Head of Policy and Research at the Scottish Land Commission

Conclusions (continued)

The Audit and Governance Committee concluded that:-

- (d) Any proposals for the provision of additional activities, or service changes, must be considered alongside the financial challenges facing the local authority and be within available resources.
- (e) In considering the process for dealing with derelict lands and buildings, the Committee concluded that:
 - i) The provision of incentives, alongside other measures, is an important element of the Council's measures to encourage owners of land and buildings to bring them back in to use. With the aim of expanding the range of incentives available to the local authority, additional incentives that have been successfully implemented by other local authorities need to be explored. These including those referenced in Section 6.6 of this report.
 - ii) Members appreciated the value of the scoring matrix in ensuring the best use of limited Council resources. However, following transfer of the regeneration area to the Hartlepool Development Corporation, a review of the matrix was now required to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the scoring matrix.
 - iii) Consideration needs to be given to whether additional types of debt, and or costs, resulting from activities required to deal with derelict land and buildings can be considered as part of the first charge process. The potential being that the ability to trigger earlier enforcement action.
 - iv) Positive decisions have been made in terms of increasing the council tax liability for empty residential properties, the potential of doing the same for commercial properties and land requires further exploration.
- (f) Following creation of the Hartlepool Development Corporation (HDC), it is essential that strong working partnership are created, and maintained, in relation to the HDC's plans for delivery of a reduction in the level of derelict land and buildings within the HDC area.
- (g) With no requirement to have an Empty Homes Strategy, in the short term it is important that the findings of the investigation be fed into the development of the Housing Strategy. In the longer term, consideration needs to be given to the development of a specific Empty Homes Strategy.
- (h) With due regard to the impact of empty private rented accommodation on communities, and the potential benefits of a landlord licensing scheme on housing quality and number of empty homes, the Committee supported in principle of the introduction of a Hartlepool landlord licensing scheme. However, it was recognised that further work needed to be undertaken to access the viability of any potential Hartlepool scheme.
- (i) Demolition of town centre properties acts to displace problem tenants and emphasis needs to be placed on how tenants are dealt with and supported. To this end, consideration needs to be given to how support services could be provide to tenants, including how landlords and letting agencies could also be helped to support tenants.

- (j) The complexity of legislation and the powers available to the local authority around derelict land and buildings significantly influence / impact the local authority's ability to respond to the issue. In order to allow local authorities to more effectively respond to derelict land and building issues, central government needs to be lobbied to:
 - i) Undertake a review of national legislation and policy.
 - ii) Make the provision of housing support funding a priority.
 - iii) Support regeneration of areas as a key focus, alongside re-development, as part of Capital Programmes.

Recommendations

The Audit and Governance Committee has taken evidence from a wide range of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations. The Committee's key recommendations are as outlined below:-

- (a) That options for the expansion of the range of incentives available to the local authority be explored with consideration of incentives that have been successfully implemented by other local authorities, including those referenced in Section 6.6 of the report.
- (b) That following the transfer of the regeneration area to the Hartlepool Development Corporation, a review of the scoring matrix be undertaken to ensure its ongoing accuracy and effectiveness. The review to also consider incorporation of 'written off' debt as part of the scoring matrix.
- (c) That an exercise be undertaken to identify additional:-
 - i) Types of debt and or costs, resulting from activities required to deal with derelict land and buildings that could be included as part of the first charge process; and
 - ii) Options that can be implemented to increase costs for owners of empty commercial property that could contribute to a 'first charge', similar to those included for residential property.
- (d) That in the short term the findings of the derelict land and buildings investigation be fed into the development of the Housing Strategy and in the longer term consideration be given to the development of a specific Empty Homes Strategy.
- (e) That central government be lobbied to:-
 - i) Undertake a review of national legislation and policy;
 - ii) Make the provision of housing support funding a priority; and
 - iii) Support regeneration of areas as a key focus, alongside re-development, as part of Capital Programmes.

(f) That the Neighbourhood Services Committee explore the viability of:

- i) Re-introducing a Hartlepool landlord licensing scheme and / or tenant registration scheme;
- ii) Establishing a tenant support scheme in partnership with partners, including the voluntary and community sector, to assist landlords and letting agencies in supporting tenants to maintain tenancies and re-establishment of an all agency / cross sector group (Housing providers, social workers) with a focus on individuals.
- iii) Providing support and encouragement to business owners to bring empty property back in to use, including:
 - Guidance on the use of the buildings, where to get help, and advice regarding standards including energy efficiency, amenities and space standards for homes and the best way to secure a building or site;
 - In respect of planning/building control requirements including the use of the One Stop Shop, licence applications, listed building and conservation area consent; and
 - Relevant funding streams.

(g) That the Hartlepool Development Corporation (HDC) provide details of their strategy for the delivery of a reduction in the level of derelict land and buildings within the HDC area.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the findings of the Audit and Governance Committee's investigation in relation to 'Derelict land and buildings in Hartlepool'.

2. MEMBERSHIP OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

- 2.1 Key to the delivery of the Council's overview and scrutiny responsibilities is the selection of investigations that add value to the operation of services provided by the Council and its partners. An essential part of this is the cross party membership of the Audit and Governance Committee which, for the purpose of the Derelict Land and Buildings investigation, consisted of Councillors Allen, Brash (Chair), Cowie, Creevy (Vice Chair), Groves, Hargreaves, Moore, V Nicholson, D Nicholson and Sharp.

3. THE PROCESS FOR CONDUCT OF THE INVESTIGATION

- 3.1 Members of the Audit and Governance Committee met formally on six occasions to receive evidence relating to the investigation and a detailed record of the issues raised is available from the Council's Democratic Services website³.
- 3.2 Key to the success of the investigation was the provision of clarity in terms of the aim for the piece of work, areas of enquiry and sources of evidence and the Committee, at its meeting on the 18th July 2023, agreed the following:
- i) Aim of investigation - To explore options for the development of a new, and far more aggressive, strategy for dealing with derelict land and buildings in Hartlepool.
 - ii) Areas of enquiry, sources of evidence and consultation / community engagement elements of the investigation (attached at **Appendix 1**)

4. DERELICT LAND AND BUILDINGS - WHAT WE KNOW

- 4.1 In order to inform discussions regarding the actions available to the Council to address the prevalence and impact of derelict land and buildings in Hartlepool, Members explored:
- The factors that contribute to homes becoming vacant;
 - Why properties and land stay vacant;
 - Why it is important that they be brought back in to use;
 - How can they be brought back in to use; and
 - The impact they have.
- 4.2 The Committee recognised that levels of derelict land and buildings are an issue for all towns and cities across the country, specifically in terms of:
- Meeting critical housing needs. Derelict land and buildings represent a waste of valuable and limited resources and each is a home that is not available on a housing register or to first-time buyers; and

³ https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/meetings/committee/134/Audit_and_Governance_Committee

- Wider negative impacts on communities. Empty properties can be a catalyst for crime and economic / social degeneration.

4.3 Whilst it was acknowledged that there was a need in some areas for a small supply of empty homes to support housing growth (ideally around 3% of properties), the housing challenge was recognised as a significant for residents. However, in the context of its investigation, the Committee was particularly concerned about the wider impact of derelict land and buildings on individuals and the wider community, including the potential for crime and economic / social degeneration on the role of private sector rented sector.

Why do properties and land become vacant and stay vacant.

4.4 When looking at why land and properties become, and remain, vacant the Committee identified a number of influencing factors:

- Part of Deceased Estate;
- Ownership disputes;
- Properties not in lettable condition/do not meet housing standards;
- Insurance claims;
- Bringing property back into use may be too expensive;
- Low demand/over supply a location; and
- Difficult to let.

4.5 Members recognised that many of the above had contributed to properties becoming vacant in their wards, with the resulting resident concerns about their condition and impact in terms social cohesion and community pride. In addition to this, whilst this was an outcome of last resort for many owners, the Committee was shocked to find that in some cases owners were making a conscious decision leave properties empty.

What are the benefits of bringing derelict land and buildings back in to use?

4.6 With a clearer understanding of the factors that result in empty properties and land, the Committee took the opportunity to explore the benefits of bringing land and buildings back in to use and how this could be achieved.

4.7 Evidence provided by the Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services, emphasised the importance of bringing properties and land back into use from a wider community perspective, in order to:

- Create a stronger, balanced housing market and community sustainability;
- Increase the supply of affordable housing and housing types / tenure options;
- Enhance the viability and vitality of an area; and
- Reduce the risk of vandalism, arson or squatting and the fear of crime.

4.8 Over and above benefits to the wider community, it was recognised that there are also specific benefits for Council and individual home / property owners in terms of the below.

The Council

- Increased Council Tax revenue;
- New Homes Bonus;
- Reduced need for enforcement; and

- Reallocate resources.

Home Owners:

- An income from renting, leasing or selling property;
- The property is more likely to hold its capital value if occupied and maintained; and
- Reduced Council Tax liability.

5. LEVELS OF DERELICT LAND AND BUILDINGS (NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND HARTLEPOOL)

- 5.1 Evidence presented by the Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services provided the Committee with an understanding of how levels of derelict land and buildings in Hartlepool compare to the national and regional position.
- 5.2 For the purpose of data⁴, it was brought to the Committees attention that empty properties were defined as *‘Empty properties classified for council tax purposes, including all empty properties liable for council tax and properties that are empty but receive a council tax exemption’*.
- 5.3 The Committee appreciated that the use of this definition meant that there would be limitations on the accuracy of the data provided, given that some local authorities do not charge for vacant properties. The effect of this being the removal of the incentive to report empty properties, creating the potential for ‘under reporting’.

National Levels of Derelict Land and Buildings and Long Term Empty Properties

- 5.4 With due regard to the identified limitations of the data provided, it came as no surprise to the Committee that empty land and property was a significant issue across the whole country. Supporting data showing that in 2022 there had been a 676,304 (3.6%) increase in the recorded level of empty homes in England.
- 5.5 The Committee recognised the increased complexity of dealing with long-term vacant land and buildings, (i.e. those that have been vacant for more than six months), the number of which had increased in England from 248,149 in 2022 to 261,189 in November 2023. This represented an increase of 5%, was 16% more than before the 2019 pandemic and was at its highest level since 2011.

Regional Levels of Derelict Land and Buildings

- 5.6 Looking more closely at the regional position, data from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for 2023, showed that levels of derelict land and buildings had also increased across the all Tees Valley between 2022 and 2023 (as detailed in **Table 1**).

Table 1 – Levels of Derelict land across the Tees Valley⁵

⁴ The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) - Data on homes classed as empty for Council Tax purposes (October 2023)

⁵ DLUHC, (March 2023)

Local Authority	2022	2023
Hartlepool	1763	1801
Darlington	1763	1765
Middlesbrough	2679	2819
Redcar and Cleveland	2003	2099
Stockton	2625	2813

- 5.7 With regards the level of long-term vacant properties across the north east region, the majority of local authority areas had seen an increase in numbers. Members were, however, pleased to see that Hartlepool had been one of only three local authority areas in the north east region where numbers of empty homes had been reduced (as detailed in **Table 2**).



Table 2 – Levels of long-term empty homes across the Tees Valley

Local Authority	LTEH 2022	LTEH 2023	LTEH Change	LTEH % change	Rise or Fall?
Darlington	623	677	54	9	UP
Durham	4,112	4,279	167	4	UP
Gateshead	1,332	1,341	9	1	UP
Hartlepool	847	633	-214	-25	Down
Middlesbrough	1,254	1,294	40	3	UP
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,729	1,769	40	2	UP
North Tyneside	970	946	-24	-2	Down
Northumberland	2,123	2,343	220	10	UP
Redcar and Cleveland	800	887	87	11	UP
South Tyneside	948	869	-79	-8	Down
Stockton-on-Tees	1,056	1,051	-5	0	NoChange
Sunderland	2,010	2,067	57	3	UP
North East Region	17,804	18,156	352	2	UP

Levels of Derelict Land and Buildings in Hartlepool

- 5.8 The Committee found that the overall level of derelict land and buildings in Hartlepool had reduced between 2020 and 2022, as detailed in **Table 3**. However, numbers had begun to increase again from 2022 onwards with 1,801 empty properties in Hartlepool in 2023.

Table 3 – Levels of empty properties in Hartlepool

Year	Number of empty properties in Hartlepool	Trend
2020	2,078 ⁶	
2022	1,763 ⁷	
2023 (March)	1,801 ⁸	
2023 (September)	1,960 ⁹	

- 5.9 Members were keen to gain an understanding of the levels of empty properties on a ward by ward basis, as detailed in **Appendix 2**, and found that:

- 1,960 empty properties in Hartlepool equated to 4.4% of overall number of dwellings in the borough.

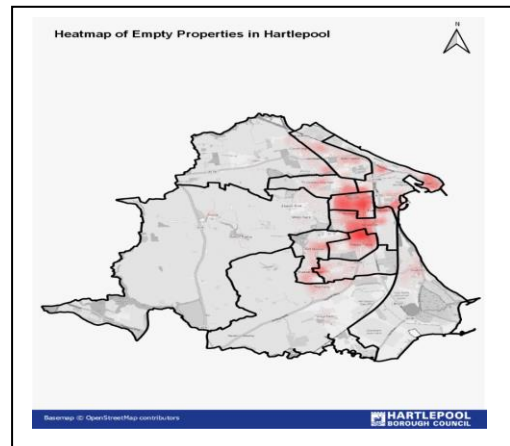
⁶ Coulters Property (using data from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) 2020

⁷ DLUHC, (March 2023)

⁸ DLUHC, (March 2023)

⁹ Council tax empty property data

- Empty properties are concentrated predominantly located the town centre areas of the town, as shown in the heat map.
- The majority of empty properties in Hartlepool had been empty for less than 12 months (1,389), whilst a much smaller number (264) had been empty for in excess of two years.



- Foggy Furze, Victoria, Headland and Harbour and Burn Valley had the highest number of long term empty properties (in descending order).
 - The majority of empty properties in Hartlepool were privately owned (85%)
- 5.10 Members welcomed the reduction in the overall level of empty properties in Hartlepool in between 2020 and 2022¹⁰, and although numbers had increased slightly between 2020 and 2023, 2023 numbers were still below those for 2019. In addition to this, Members were pleased to find that the number of long-term empty properties in Hartlepool had reduced by 25% to 633 during 2022/23¹¹.
- 5.11 In terms of fluctuations in the level of empty homes in Hartlepool, questions were raised by the Committee in relation to the successes that had helped reduce numbers, the challenges that may have contributed to subsequent increases and potential improvements to operating practices and strategies that may be possible within available local authority resources.

6. POWERS AVAILABLE TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY AND CHALLENGES

- 6.1 With an appreciation of the factors that contribute to homes and land becoming vacant, the Committee explored the mechanisms available to the local authority to bring them back in to use. Evidence provided demonstrated the range of short, medium and long term powers and incentives at the disposal of the local authority to bring land and buildings back into use. These are outlined below with further details provided in **Appendix 3**.

Short term solution

Works to Secure Buildings
Abatement Notices
Community Protection Notices
Defective Buildings Notice

Medium term solution

Section 215 Notice
Ruinous and Dilapidated Buildings Notice

¹⁰ *Coulters Property (using data from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) 2020*

¹¹ [Action on Empty Homes 2022/2023](#)

Long term solution

Enforced Sale

Compulsory Purchase Order/Purchase by Agreement

Demolition Orders

Clearance Areas

Selective Licensing

6.2 In terms of the various pieces of legislation identified in **Appendix 3**, that could be used to help bring empty properties back into use, emphasis was placed on upon the lengthy and costly nature of the process. Attention was also drawn to complexity of the factors that influence the creation of derelict land and buildings and it was recognised by the Committee that there was no 'one size fits all' solution to the issue.

6.3 In exploring the practical implementation of powers available to the local authority, consideration was given to the how they could be implemented as levers, sticks and carrots to encourage owners to bring land and buildings back into use.

'Levers' / 'Carrots' to encourage compliance

6.4 The Committee identified a number of options that could be used to encourage compliance. These included:

- Advice and Guidance to the business owners including suggestions about the use of the building, where to get help, and advice regarding standards including energy efficiency, amenities and space standards for homes and the best way to secure a building or site
- Support for applications in respect of planning/building control requirements including the use of the One Stop Shop, licence applications, listed building & conservation area consent.
- Access to funding streams for owners of land/buildings where available.
- Occasionally the Local Authority are able to act as Intermediary, connecting owners with prospective purchasers.

6.5 Members were interested to explore other incentives that could potentially be implemented to encourage owners to bring empty properties back into use. As part of this the committee acknowledged the requirements of the capital programme and emphasised the need for capital funding going forward to have regard to targeting empty properties in the town. As part of this, it was suggested that the potential to have a policy in place that the local authority doesn't work with developers who have derelict land and properties in the town. The intention of this being to encourage developers to bring these areas of land and buildings back into use as a priority.

6.6 A number of potential incentives, which had been used successfully by other local authorities were brought to the attention of Members. These included:

- Grants/loans to empty property owners to bring property up to standard (Match funded by the owner and conditional on properties being reoccupied); and

- Lease and Repair Schemes where property is brought up to standard by local authorities who then manage it until the costs are recovered.

Sticks' to encourage compliance

6.7 The Committee's attention was drawn to a number of potential 'sticks' that are available to encourage the owners of derelict land and buildings to bring their properties back in to use. These included:

- The General enforcement policy. This provides guidance to enforcement officers, businesses, consumers and the general public on the range of options that are available to achieve compliance with the legislation that the Local Authority enforce. It is an 'umbrella' policy which applies to the enforcement activities of the Council. Documents that detail enforcement options and requirements specific to policies, procedures, codes and guidance will also comply with this policy where appropriate.
- Sanctions. In some circumstances it will be appropriate to take no action. This may be the case if the cost of compliance to the owner (or LA) outweighs the detrimental impact of the contravention. May be inappropriate where trader has ceased trading or where action would seriously impact their wellbeing. Where the law provides the complainant with other options to resolve issues which affect them, such as civil remedies, owners are directed to relevant information. Other sanctions are listed below;
 - Verbal and written warnings
 - Statutory Notices
 - Work in default
 - Enforced Sale
 - Penalty Notices
 - Orders and Injunctions
 - Simple caution
 - Prosecution
 - Detention and/or Seizure of Goods / Equipment
 - Proceeds of Crime
 - Refusal/Suspension / Revocation of a License / Registration / Consent / Permit or similar
 - Retrospective Application
 - Compulsory Purchase Orders

6.8 The Committee explored the level of council tax applied to empty properties and welcomed confirmation that a policy had been put in place to do this the potential to increase the level up to 200%. Member were, however, interested in whether there was a way of doing the same in terms of increasing charges on empty business premises / land.

6.9 Emphasis was also placed on the importance of ensuring that information about vacant properties is shared to ensure that necessary action can be taken.

Challenges and Risks

- 6.10 Whilst considering the powers available to the local authority in dealing with derelict land and buildings, Members gained an appreciation of the associated challenges and risks.

Challenges	Risks
<p>In some circumstances it is appropriate to take no action. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cost of compliance to the offender (or Council) outweighs the detrimental impact of the contravention. - May be inappropriate where trader has ceased trading or where action would seriously impact their wellbeing - Where the law provides the complainant with other options to resolve issues which affect them, such as civil remedies, we will direct them to relevant information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incorrect use of legislation or not following legal process - Being unable to recover cost for work carried out in default - Costs can be challenged
<p>Enforcement action must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In accordance with general enforcement policy, - Need to follow legal process, building ownership, timescales for work, carrying out works in default, a recurring problem, insecure building/fly tipping, managing expectations, resource issues 	

7. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- 7.1 The Committee, at its meeting on the 18th July 2023, agreed to seek the views of residents and groups in the town on the location of derelict land and buildings and the impact this has on their wellbeing and safety.

- 7.2 An extensive consultation and engagement exercise was undertaken via the Council's 'Your Say' engagement platform between the 3rd August 2023 and the 2nd January 2024 (extended from the 8th September 2023).

- 7.3 Concern was expressed by Members that despite extensive promotion of the consultation (as detailed in **Appendix 4**) the number of responses had been relatively low, with only 74 participants. Some had, however, completed the survey more than once and this raised the response rate to 87.

- 7.4 In light of this, it had been recognised that the statistical relevance of the data needed to be taken into consideration. It had also become apparent to the Committee that additional mechanisms were needed to

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

DERELICT LAND AND BUILDINGS IN HARTLEPOOL

We are interested in hearing your views and experiences

- What impact does this have on your wellbeing and safety?
- What can be done to better deal with these sites?

Perhaps you are a member of a community group and would like us to come along and speak to you?

Scan here for survey

Gemma Jones
(01429) 284171
Gemma.Jones@hartlepool.gov.uk
yoursay.hartlepool.gov.uk/derelict-land-and-buildings-investigation

Please share your views or arrange a visit to your group.

increase the reach of the consultation. On this basis, a drop in session was held to provide residents with an opportunity to speak in person to the Chair of the Committee.

7.5 Working group sessions were also held to provide a friendly and informal opportunity for Members to speak confidentially to stakeholders and other individuals or bodies about how the issue of derelict land and buildings affect. Those involved in working groups included landlords, social housing providers, stakeholders (Police, Fire, Wharton Trust, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and representatives from a Middlesbrough Borough Council Selective Landlord Licensing scheme perspective..

7.6 The Committee welcomed evidence from Middlesbrough Borough Council in relation to the operation, and success, of its Landlord Licensing Scheme. Particular attention was drawn to the benefits of the scheme in improving housing quality and reducing the number of empty properties. However, no evidence in relation to the prevention of anti-social behaviour was available at the time on the working group meeting. With reference to the effectiveness of the previous Hartlepool Landlord Licensing Scheme, and the evidence provided by Middlesbrough Borough Council, the Landlords present at the working group meetings were not supportive of a landlord registration scheme, as it was felt such schemes penalise good landlords and acted to displace tenants rather than deal with the issues that they and landlords face. There had, however, been support for:

- A tenant registration scheme to allow:
 - Details of problem tenants shared with landlords;
 - Rent arrears to follow tenants.
- A tenant support scheme to help:
 - Tenants maintain tenancies; and
 - Landlords and letting agencies support their tenants.
- The re-establishment of an all agency / cross sector group (Housing providers, social workers) to focus on individuals and support them to keep on the straight and narrow.
- The Lobbying of government to:
 - Make the provision of housing support funding a priority.
 - Support regeneration as a focus, alongside re-development.

7.7 Members noted landlord concerns regard landlord licensing schemes but felt that further work needed to be undertaken to properly assess the viability of the introduction of a scheme, similar to that operated in Middlesbrough, in Hartlepool. Given the complexity of landlord licensing as a process, it was suggested that this work be undertaken via the Neighbourhood Services Committee, alongside suggestions in relation to tenant registration and tenant support.

7.8 Building even further on this, a short survey was also launched to allow any landlords who had been unable to attend the working group sessions to contribute in terms of the impact derelict land and buildings could be having on their ability to let their properties in Hartlepool, overall impact on their

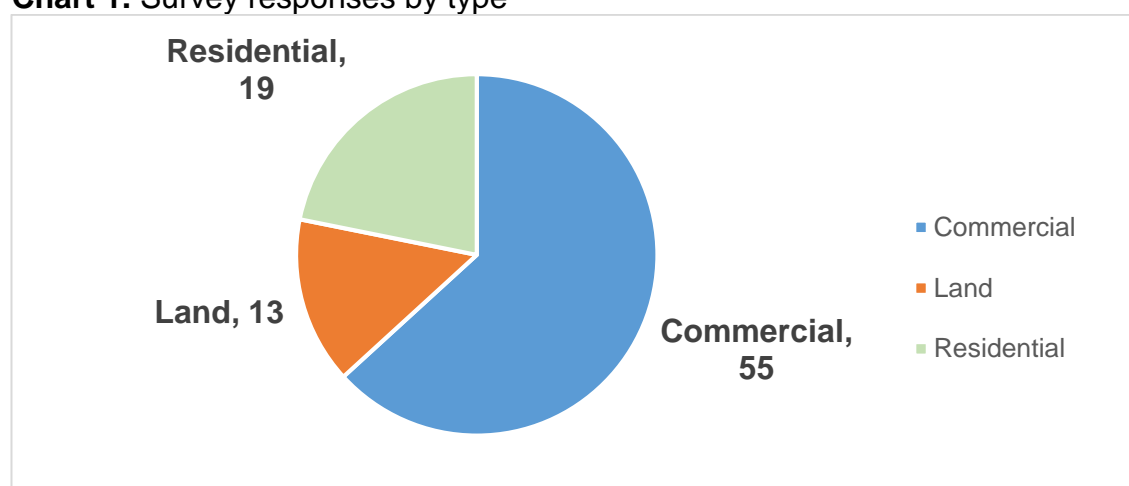
businesses. They were also provided with an opportunity to suggest ideas for action to bring empty homes back into use.

Evaluation of consultation findings

7.9 After careful analysis of the survey results, Members found that more commercial properties had been highlighted than residential or land and surmised that this could be due to the central location of some of these buildings and therefore they may see higher footfall or traffic. These properties also tended to be larger in size and perhaps more noticeable.

7.10 A breakdown of property type is shown in Chart 1, categorised as commercial buildings, residential buildings or land. The location of the residential buildings kept confidential to prevent identification of individual properties.

Chart 1. Survey responses by type



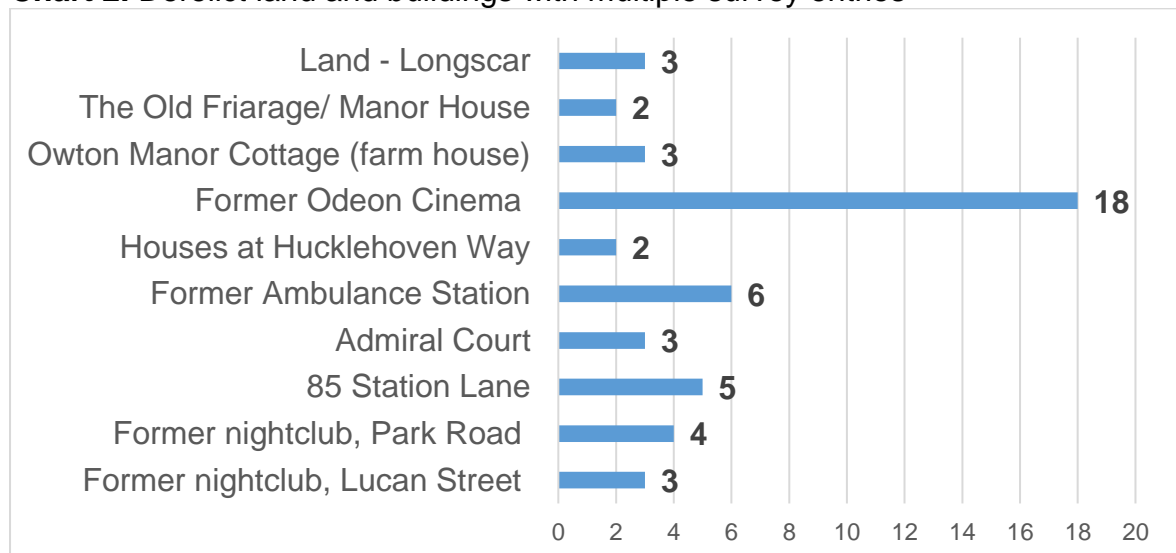
7.11 Consultation results, detailed in **Table 2**, highlighted that derelict land and buildings had been identified by residents across all electoral Wards within the town, with the exception of one. The Committee was surprised to find that there had been no submissions for the Throston Ward and felt that this could be an inaccurate reflection of the position in the Ward.

Table 2 - Land and buildings by Ward

Ward	Commercial	Land	Residential	Total
Burn Valley	2	1	6	9
De Bruce	2	1	1	4
Fens and Greatham	1			1
Foggy Furze	1		3	4
Headland and Harbour	8	3	3	14
Manor House			3	3
Rossmere	1	1		2
Rural West	6	1	1	8
Seaton	6	5	1	12
Throston				0
Victoria	28	1	1	30
Total	55	13	19	87

- 7.12 It was also interesting to the Committee that the most deprived wards in the town were not necessarily the areas with the highest number of entries (data source) and areas identified did not necessarily correlate to the prevalence of deprivation.
- 7.13 Looking in more detail at the survey results, Members were surprised to find that, whilst 27 properties were on the Council's Derelict Buildings Register, 48 different/individual buildings and areas of land had been identified by the survey participants. Some buildings and land had receiving multiple entries and **Chart 2** highlighted these Committees

Chart 2. Derelict land and buildings with multiple survey entries



- 7.14 Members were concerned to find that two of the buildings identified were owned by Hartlepool Borough Council, highlighting the need for the local authority to lead by example. These being the former Ambulance Station and part of the Owton Manor Cottage on Owton Manor Lane. It also came as no surprise to the Committee that the most highlighted property had been the former Odeon Cinema located in the Victoria Ward.
- 7.15 In terms of the outcomes of the working groups, the Committee noted with interest suggestions for a way forward in relation to:
- The need for better support for tenants and partnering with voluntary sector;
 - The establishment of a tenancy support scheme in partnership with the voluntary sector to intervene where required and coordination services so all work towards the same goal.
 - The introduction of a landlord licensing scheme on a wider scale.
 - Large scale investment for some streets, targeting one small area of empty domestic properties.
 - Maximise of first charges including police and fire brigade costs.
 - Evaluate the success of the pilot programme 'Taking back the streets' in Stockton with the potential to look at its introduction in Hartlepool
 - Use of the Capital programme to target empty properties.
 - HDC deal with some of the identified properties as a priority.
 - Lead by example with the properties we own.
 - Exploring financial incentives and grants to bring properties back into use.

- 7.16 With particular reference to the first charge process, the Committee received confirmation that it would not be possible to add costs in relation to police and fire brigade activity to the first charge on empty properties and land. It was suggested that the potential of incorporating all possible debt as part of the first charge should be looked into. The aim being to, where appropriate, explore the potential of speeding up the process for enforced sale.
- 7.17 Members welcomed the breadth and balance of comments received and found the examples of lived experience gathered via the workshops particularly informative. A summary of the evidence provided as a result of the survey and workshops is provided below with more detailed information provided in **Appendices 5, 6 and 7**:
- i) Overwhelming people highlighted that the issues affect a sense of pride in the town and it came as no surprise to Members that the most popular answer to the question 'What impacts you the most about this issue?' was a sense of pride in the town.
 - ii) People wanted to see them demolished and redeveloped. Although it was recognised that this was not always straight forward, due to the complexity of some buildings having listed status or English heritage status.
 - iii) Participants felt that the derelict buildings and land made the area look unsightly and there were numerous concerns regarding the impression this gave to other residents and visitors to the town. Other concerns included the Anti-social behaviour (ASB) and the presence of vermin.
 - iv) Commercial properties were the highest reported properties and prominently placed buildings were reported multiple times. In addition to this, since April 2021 there had been 12 reports of anti-social behaviour and 3 crimes recorded.
 - v) The former Odeon received significantly more entries than any other building/land and was reported to have been an issue for residents for more than 10 years.
 - vi) Of the unsafe comments received 2 comments related to concerns about personal safety and 18 related to the building having aspects that seemed structurally unsafe or were a fire hazard. It was confirmed that all of the buildings identified had been reported to the Local Authorities environmental health team to ensure any necessary action could be taken to ensure the safety of the building.
 - vii) Participants highlighted that some of these issues had been a problem for more than 10 years, with particular reference to the former Odeon Cinema.
 - viii) Enforcement and demolishing properties were not always the primary solution. Other solutions included the development and repurposing of areas into something else and refurbishment to restore to former glory.

8. EVIDENCE FROM OTHER INDIVIDUALS OR BODIES

- 8.1 The Committee extended an invitation for input from a number of individuals including the Police, Fire Brigade, MP, Hartlepool Development Corporation and Chairs of relevant Council Committees. Responses were welcomed by the Committee, with emphasis placed upon the need for Hartlepool Borough Council to lead by example in terms of its own empty properties by the Chair of the Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee.
- 8.2 In relation to input from the Hartlepool Development Corporation (HDC), Members noted that at the time of the investigation the HDC had not undertaken any work on derelict buildings within the HDC area. The Committee was disappointed that the HDC had been unable to participate and emphasised the importance strong working relationships, and engagement, going forward. On this basis, the Committee was keen to see the development of a clear HDC strategy for the delivery of a reduction in the level of derelict land and buildings within the HDC area.

9. HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL ACTIONS AND SUCCESSES IN RESPONDING TO THE DERELICT LAND AND BUILDINGS ISSUE

- 9.1 With an understanding of the powers available to the local authority to bring empty land and buildings back in to use, Members were interested in finding out what the Councils strategies were in relation to the issue, what actions were being taken within the powers as outlined in Section 6 and what successes the Council has had in responding to the issue.
- 9.2 The Committee gained an appreciation of the wide range of activities that have been, and continue to be, undertake in relation to derelict land and buildings in the town.
- 9.3 As part of the work of the Derelict Buildings Multi Agency Group, new problem sites were considered at each meeting. The Committee was pleased to find that Historic England had been impressed with the multi-agency approach in Hartlepool as an example of good practice. Discussions at meetings of the group informed by three key pieces of documentation, as detailed in **Table 4**.

Table 4 – Evidence considered by the Derelict Buildings Multi Agency Group

Document	What is
Derelict Buildings Site Assessment	The form allows the scoring and prioritising of buildings to enable buildings and resources to be prioritised.
The Scoring Matrix (done every two years or on an ad-hoc basis on request)	Assigns scores for time vacant, visual impact, condition of building, location and enforcement activity. The score based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time Vacant• Visual impact• Condition of building/site• Location• Enforcement Activity
A Derelict Buildings Register	A comprehensive list of derelict land and buildings.

- 9.4 Members appreciated the value of a scoring matrix in order to make the best use of the Council's limited resources, however, the Committee had been made aware of the removal of the regeneration area from the matrix as following creation of the Hartlepool Development Corporation. Whilst the matrix was reviewed every two years as a matter of course, the Committee felt that a review of the matrix was needed as a result of the removal of the regeneration area.
- 9.5 In relation to scoring of enforcement activity as part of the matrix, it was noted that debt relating to local authority enforcement activity is included in the matrix score, with the exclusion of 'written off' debt which was disregarded. Members were of the view that this process needed to be reviewed and 'written off' debt included going forward, in order to truly reflect the impact of derelict property.
- 9.6 With reference to the scoring matrix, The Committee gained an appreciation of the complex nature of the issues surrounding derelict land and buildings and recognised the resource challenges facing the local authority. With this in mind, whilst action in relation to all derelict land and buildings would be the preferred course of actions the appreciated the need to priorities the top three buildings, of the 27 currently on the register, for the allocation of resources. The top three buildings currently being Admiral Court, the Former Ambulance Station and 42nd Street.
- 9.7 Particular attention was also drawn to Council activities in terms of:
- i) **Interventions in the housing market** to address both supply and condition including:
- Grants and loans using Government funding such as SHIP and New Deal for Communities
 - Empty Homes Acquisitions using Homes England funding
 - Regeneration activities have resulted in some commercial premises being repurposed and brought back into use
 - Housing Regeneration Strategy supported by the Local Plan
 - Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Programme
 - area based regeneration including improving/remodelling of existing homes, clearance and redevelopment of some area
 - Affordable Homes Programme
 - New Deal for Communities
 - North Central Hartlepool
- Successes as part of this being:
- 1,200 properties demolished over 10 years (including Longscar, The Hourglass, the Market Hotel)
 - 3 successful large scale Planning CPO's
 - New Build Programme
 - Securing and site clearance of Admiral Court
 - Northern Textiles building renovated and re-opened
 - 60-64 Lister Street renovated and brought back into use
 - Works on site at The Wesley, Grand Hotel, Park View Care Home, The Dome and Shades

ii) **The Housing Revenue Accounts** successes include:

- Expanded stock through acquisition of a mixture of new-build and existing properties (Property acquisition is on a modest scale both new build and purchase of existing properties)
- 349 homes now owned and managed by HBC
- 12 properties managed on behalf of private landlords in return for a management fee “Quality Homes Letting Agency”

Members recognised that careful property acquisition is needed to ensure the right mix of homes in the right locations to ensure the books are balanced but concern was expressed at the emphasis of HRA's on the building of new properties. The opportunity to bring empty and derelict land and buildings back in to use being a lost opportunity.

iii) **Capital Programme** – Members noted that any capital projects to tackle derelict land and buildings would need to be based on data and intelligence, be evidence and need, have a fully costed options appraisals and have a green book compliant business cases. Indications were, however, welcomed that some existing capital projects had already contributed significantly to tackling derelict / vacant land and buildings e.g. Wesley Chapel and Binns Building (Town Deal), a range of properties under Levelling Up Round 2.

iv) **Hartlepool Regeneration Vision** had created:

- Economic benefits and binding communities together
- A step change in growth and sustaining of economic activity in the Town Centre
- Health and well-being benefits for residents through leisure services, sports facilities, cultural and heritage assets and inspiring public realm
- A sense of pride and value through quality place
- A more accessible, vibrant and functional town
- Perceptions of Hartlepool will be changed for the better, our community will be proud and positive about our future

v) **The Empty Homes Programme** has resulted in:

- 100 Empty homes acquired and refurbished through the cluster of empty homes funding
- 79 empty homes purchased and refurbished across the town through Homes England funding
- Homes let on Local Authority Flexible Tenancies and managed by Council's Housing Management Team
- Grants to purchase empty homes being available through Homes England Affordable Homes Programme

9.8 The importance of effective engagement with third sector organisations was fully supported by the Committee and Members welcomed the Council's success in relation to partnership working around the delivery of the following regeneration projects:

- Housing Hartlepool (Thirteen)
- New Deal for Communities (now NDC Trust)
- Placefirst (The Green)
- Property Developers/Owners

- 9.9 Going forward, emphasis was placed on the importance of engaging more fully with the third sector in terms of the Big Conversation and the new Long Term Plan for Towns. The Committee also look forward to seeing the outcomes of 'place narrative' work as a means of encouraging external investment.

10. FUTURE PLANS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 10.1 Members recognised that a significant amount of work had been undertaken in relation to derelict land and buildings in Hartlepool, within the powers and resources available to the Council, emphasis was, however, placed upon the need to make even greater strides.
- 10.2 The Committee had been made aware of the development of a new Housing Strategy and was surprised to find that there is no requirement to have in place an Empty Homes Strategy. Members requested that the findings of the investigation be fed into the development of the Housing Strategy. Over and above that, the Committee requested that, whilst not required, the development of a specific Empty Homes Strategy be explored.
- 10.3 Members were keen to see the local authority take advantage of all possible funding opportunities and interventions. These included:
- Future National Funding Opportunities in the shape of:
 - With Levelling Up Rounds 1, 2 and 3 announced, no indication whether further funding rounds will follow
 - Town Deal ceases March 2026 and is fully allocated
 - 'Long Term Plan for Towns' has been announced by DLUHC with no further guidance at present, with £20m endowment style fund made available to HBC from 2024 on a year by year allocation basis
 - Must not be a focus on only sourcing grant funding, but seeking to attract private sector, external investment, and growing sector confidence in bringing projects forward
 - Options for Interventions as a result of increased partnership and external confidence due to positive progress in delivering existing projects and programmes e.g. Grand Hotel, Scarborough Street and Church Street. It was noted that there is a focus on developing strong, mutually beneficial relationships with private and community sector, however, it was appreciated by the Committee that policy change must be consistent with existing adopted plans such as Town Centre Masterplan, Town Investment Plan.

11. CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 The Audit and Governance Committee concluded that:-
- (a) The local authority's strategy for dealing with derelict land and property has had significant successes and officers are commended their activities. Factors that influence the creation of derelict land and buildings are, however, complex and with no 'one size fits all' solution, the local authority utilises a wide range of actions and intervention. It is

timely to explore development of a new, more aggressive, strategy with a clear package of actions and responses to help address the issue.

- (b) Any proposals for the provision of additional activities, or service changes, must be considered alongside the financial challenges facing the local authority and be within available resources.
- (c) In considering the process for dealing with derelict lands and buildings, the Committee concluded that:
 - i) The provision of incentives, alongside other measures, is an important element of the Council's measures to encourage owners of land and buildings to bring them back in to use. With the aim of expanding the range of incentives available to the local authority, additional incentives that have been successfully implemented by other local authorities need to be explored. These including those referenced in Section 6.6 of this report.
 - ii) Members appreciated the value of the scoring matrix in ensuring the best use of limited Council resources. However, following transfer of the regeneration area to the Hartlepool Development Corporation, a review of the matrix was now required to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the scoring matrix.
 - iii) Consideration needs to be given to whether additional types of debt, and or costs, resulting from activities required to deal with derelict land and buildings can be considered as part of the first charge process. The potential being that the ability to trigger earlier enforcement action.
 - iv) Positive decisions have been made in terms of increasing the council tax liability for empty residential properties, the potential of doing the same for commercial properties and land requires further exploration.
- (d) Following creation of the Hartlepool Development Corporation (HDC), it is essential that strong working partnership are created, and maintained, in relation to the HDC's plans for delivery of a reduction in the level of derelict land and buildings within the HDC area.
- (e) With no requirement to have an Empty Homes Strategy, in the short term it is important that the findings of the investigation be fed into the development of the Housing Strategy. In the longer term, consideration needs to be given to the development of a specific Empty Homes Strategy.
- (f) With due regard to the impact of empty private rented accommodation on communities, and the potential benefits of a landlord licensing scheme on housing quality and number of empty homes, the Committee supported in principle of the introduction of a Hartlepool landlord licensing scheme. However, it was recognised that further work needed to be undertaken to assess the viability of any potential Hartlepool scheme.

- (g) Demolition of town centre properties acts to displace problem tenants and emphasis needs to be placed on how tenants are dealt with and supported. To this end, consideration needs to be given to how support services could be provide to tenants, including how landlords and letting agencies could also be helped to support tenants.
- (h) The complexity of legislation and the powers available to the local authority around derelict land and buildings significantly influence / impact the local authority's ability to respond to the issue. In order to allow local authorities to more effectively respond to derelict land and building issues, central government needs to be lobbied to:
 - i) Undertake a review of national legislation and policy.
 - ii) Make the provision of housing support finding a priority.
 - iii) Support regeneration of areas as a key focus, alongside re-development, as part of Capital Programmes.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 The Audit and Governance Committee has taken evidence from a wide range of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations. The Committee's key recommendations are as outlined below:-

- (a) That options for the expansion of the range of incentives available to the local authority be explored with consideration of incentives that have been successfully implemented by other local authorities, including those referenced in Section 6.6 of the report.
- (b) That following the transfer of the regeneration area to the Hartlepool Development Corporation, a review of the scoring matrix be undertaken to ensure its ongoing accuracy and effectiveness. The review to also consider incorporation of 'written off' debt as part of the scoring matrix.
- (c) That an exercise be undertaken to identify additional:-
 - i) Types of debt and or costs, resulting from activities required to deal with derelict land and buildings that could be included as part of the first charge process; and
 - ii) Options that can be implemented to increase costs for owners of empty commercial property that could contribute to a 'first charge', similar to those included for residential property.
- (d) That in the short term the findings of the derelict land and buildings investigation be fed into the development of the Housing Strategy and in the longer term consideration be given to the development of a specific Empty Homes Strategy.

- (e) That central government be lobbied to:-
 - i) Undertake a review of national legislation and policy;
 - ii) Make the provision of housing support funding a priority; and
 - iii) Support regeneration of areas as a key focus, alongside re-development, as part of Capital Programmes.
- (f) That the Neighbourhood Services Committee explore the viability of:
 - i) Re-introducing a Hartlepool landlord licensing scheme and / or tenant registration scheme;
 - ii) Establishing a tenant support scheme in partnership with partners, including the voluntary and community sector, to assist landlords and letting agencies in supporting tenants to maintain tenancies and re-establishment of an all agency / cross sector group (Housing providers, social workers) with a focus on individuals.
 - iii) Providing support and encouragement to business owners to bring empty property back in to use, including:
 - Guidance on the use of the buildings, where to get help, and advice regarding standards including energy efficiency, amenities and space standards for homes and the best way to secure a building or site;
 - In respect of planning/building control requirements including the use of the One Stop Shop, licence applications, listed building and conservation area consent; and
 - Relevant funding streams.
- (g) That the Hartlepool Development Corporation (HDC) provide details of their strategy for the delivery of a reduction in the level of derelict land and buildings within the HDC area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from all those involved in the investigation.

COUNCILLOR JONATHAN BRASH
CHAIR OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE (2023/24)

Contact Officer:

Joan Stevens, Statutory Scrutiny Manager
Legal Services, Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel:- 01429 284142
Email:- joan.stevens@hartlepool.gov.uk

Terms of Reference

- (a) To gain an understanding of the level, location, ownership of derelict land and buildings in Hartlepool and barriers to bringing them back in to use;
- (b) To examine the Council's:-
 - i) Approach to dealing with derelict land and buildings;
 - ii) Own derelict land and buildings, where they are, what is being done, what successes have there been and what plans there are for the future;
 - iii) Successes and challenges in bringing derelict land and buildings back in to use;
 - iv) Scoring matrix;
 - v) Number of notices and success rates; and
 - vi) Recovery rates, costs and the resources available to respond to the issue.
- (c) To seek the views of residents, groups and other bodies on the location of derelict land and buildings and impact on their wellbeing and safety.
- (d) To consider levers that can be used by the below to bring derelict land and buildings back in to use:-
 - i) The local authority; and
 - ii) Our partners in the public, social and voluntary sector.
- (e) To explore how derelict land and buildings can be brought back in to use:-
 - i) What 'sticks' are available and how are they being used in terms of:
 - Statutory processes for taking action and legislation;
 - First Charge concept;
 - General Enforcement Policy;
 - Finance (*e.g. fines, tax, rates and recovery rates*);
 - New schemes (*e.g. landlord licensing*);
 - Wider policy changes (*e.g. Engagement with private developers - Future potential investment schemes? Public money or engagement without more action on their side? The Right to Regenerate?*)
 - How can we draw in other partners to create a unified position and attitude?
 - ii) What 'carrots' can be used?
 - How do we shape the capital programme to target this issue?
 - What national opportunities for further grant funding exist?
 - What local options exist for more innovative and aggressive interventions in the market?
 - What greater role can the Housing Revenue Account play?
 - How do we bring our partners in the public, social and third sector into the agenda to increase their investment in tackling this issue more effectively?
 - How do we support the third sector (see the community housing work in the Annexe) in expanding their work in a coordinated way?
 - What is the potential role of the HDC in realising this agenda?
- (f) To consider examples of best practice in other local authority areas (Inc. other derelict land strategies); and

- (g) To explore how derelict land and buildings can be better brought back to use in the future, giving due regard to:-
 - i) Improving effectiveness and efficiency; and
 - ii) If / how the service could be provided at either a reduced financial cost or within the resources available in the current economic climate.

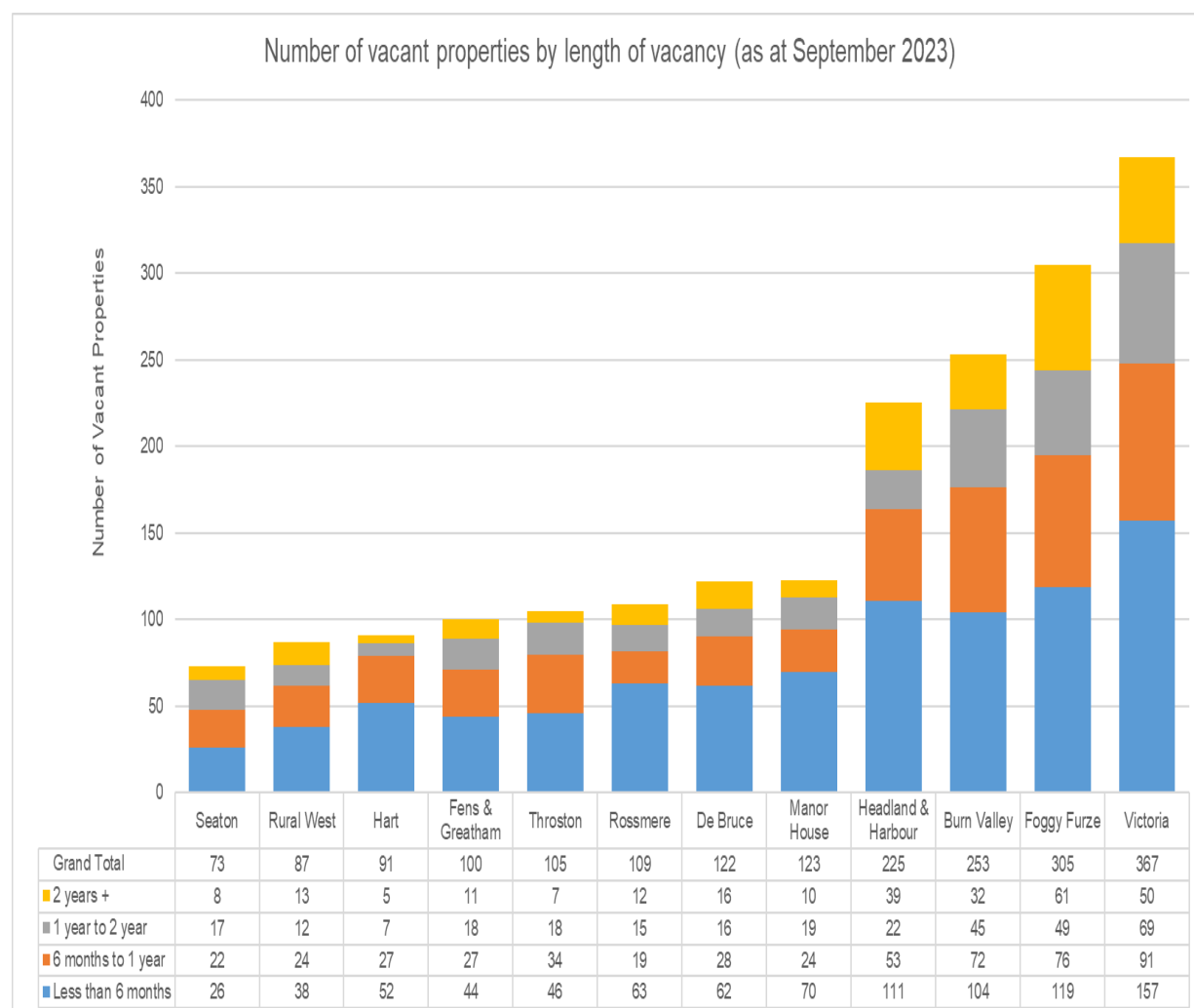
Areas of Enquiry / Sources of Evidence

- (a) Member of Parliament for Hartlepool;
- (b) Leader of the Council;
- (c) Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board and Safer Hartlepool Partnership;
- (d) Chair of the Neighbourhood Services Committee and Chair of the Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee;
- (e) Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services, Director of Public Health;
- (f) Partner Organisations (Police, Fire Brigade, Housing Associations, Hartlepool Development Corporation, etc.);
- (g) Owners of derelict land and buildings;
- (h) Historic England;
- (i) Local residents (via survey, attendance at Committee meetings, Working Groups and Community Group meetings with members of the A&G Committee);
- (j) A series of consultation workshops held with external stakeholders, agencies/bodies, landlords and social housing providers;
- (k) Representatives of minority communities of interest or heritage (via survey / member attendance at meetings of groups – invitations sent to the below);

VCS and Community Groups (Inc. Nasir Mosque)
Hartlepower
Healthwatch
Armed Forces (AF) Liaison Group, AF Associations, Veterans Hub - Hartlepool United Football Club)
Thirteen
Hartlepool College of FE / Hartlepool 6th Form College
Hartlepool Regeneration and Tourist Forum
Historic Groups (Inc. Hartlepool Headland Historic Group)
Incontrollable / CLIP

- (l) Parish Councils;
- (m) Ward Councillors; and
- (n) Examples of good practice / ways of working that exists within a neighbouring Local Authority in relation to the process for dealing with derelict land and properties and selective landlord licensing.

Number of empty properties in Hartlepool on a Ward by Ward Basis



LEGISLATION AND MEASURES AVAILABLE TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

Power	Legislation	What can be done
Short Term		
Works to Secure Buildings	Section 29 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982	To secure property for example, boarding up.
Abatement Notices	Section 80 Environmental Protection Act 1990 -	Where there is a statutory nuisance for example, waste deposits
Community Protection Notices	Section 43 Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014	Where issues have a detrimental effect on the area and causing distress to residents (where not considered a statutory nuisance).
Defective Buildings Notice	Section 76 Building Act 1984	Where defective buildings where the premises are deemed prejudicial to health and/or a nuisance.
Medium Term		
	Housing Act 2004 (as amended)	
Section 215 Notice	Town and Country Planning Act 1990	Where there is a detrimental effect on the area. Can include tidying up the land, planting, clearance, enclosure, demolition and rebuilding.
Ruinous and Dilapidated Buildings Notice	Section 79 – Building Act 1984	Where works or demolition are required – It is the choice of the owner which option they choose to proceed with.
Longer Term		
Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO)		If a property has been empty for at least 2 years and the owner does not intend to take steps to secure re-occupation and there is a reasonable prospect that the dwelling will become occupied if an interim EDMO is made, an application may be made to the Residential Property Tribunal. The use of this power is limited to properties that have become magnets for vandalism, squatters and other forms of anti-social behaviour that blight the local neighbourhood.
Enforced Sale	Building Act 1984, section 79, Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 80 and Town & Country Planning Act 1990, section 215	It allows a charge to be made against the title of the property or land to which it relates until the debt is recovered. In relation to notices under the Building Act 1984, section 79 and Environmental Protection Act 1990, section 80 charges arising from works in default take first priority over any other charges on the land.
Compulsory Purchase Order/Purchase by Agreement	Town & Country Planning Act 1990 –	Changes ownership of the site. A comprehensive case is made in the public interest for compulsory acquisition and

	Housing Act 1985, Section 17	there must be at least some attempt made at voluntary acquisition first. There are potential statutory powers that could be used to enforce a CPO most likely under planning, although housing powers may also be an option under Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 if it was likely the site was to be used for new housing. There would however need to be a 'vision' in place for what the site would be used for, and any relevant planning permissions would either need to be in place or be acceptable in principle by the Council as Local Planning Authority and the Council would need to be able to fund the acquisition and possibly have in place a back to back type arrangement for a developer willing to take on the site and develop it.
Demolition Orders		used to deal with category 1 and 2 hazards, but when reaching a decision Consideration to be given to: •The availability of accommodation for re-housing occupants; •The demand for, and sustainability of, the accommodation if the hazard was remedied; •The prospective use of the cleared site; and •The impact of a cleared site on the appearance and character of the local environment. The use of Demolition Orders in respect of dwellings containing category 2 hazards will be subject to an order made by the Secretary of State.
Clearance Areas		A Clearance Area may be declared: If it can be shown that each residential building in an area contains one or more category 1 hazard and that the other buildings (if any) in the area are dangerous or harmful to the health and safety of the inhabitants of the area; or The residential buildings are dangerous or harmful to the inhabitants of the area as a result of their bad arrangement or the narrowness or bad arrangement of the streets, and that the other buildings (if any) are dangerous or harmful to the health and safety of the inhabitants of an area.
Selective Licensing		Discretionary power to introduce selective licensing in areas experiencing one or more of the following: – low housing demand; – a significant or persistent problem caused by anti-social behaviour; – poor property conditions;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – an influx of migration; or – a high level of deprivation or high levels of crime. <p>Two schemes operated in Hartlepool between 2009 – 2020, the schemes related to the management of properties in a designated area.</p>
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How was the Survey promoted?

- The Your Say Our Future consultation platform, including in the monthly newsletters sent to all registered participants
- Extensive promotion on social media including a social media boost and monthly posts throughout the period of the consultation.
- Posters in all public Council buildings including the Community Hubs and libraries.
- Hartlepool Borough Council website.

Written invitations to take part were sent to:

- All elected Members
- All Policy Committee Chairs
- Chair of Health and Wellbeing Board
- Chair of Safer Hartlepool Partnership
- Armed Forces Liaison Group
- Hartlepower
- Victoria Ward Partnership
- Cobden Street Area Residents Association
- Burn Valley North Residence Association
- Chester Rd Residents Association
- Wharton Trust

Who was invited to participate in the investigation?

Written invitations to take part and request to share with contacts sent to:

- VCS
- Hartlepower
- Cleveland Police
- Cleveland Fire Brigade
- Jill Mortimer, MP
- Mike Young, Leader of the Council
- Chair of the Economic Growth and Regeneration Committee
- Chair of the Neighbourhood Services Committee
- Hartlepool Development Corporation
- Armed Forces Liaison Group
- Hartlepool JCP
- Thirteen Housing Group
- North Star Housing Group
- Hartlepool Further Education College
- Hartlepool 6th Form College
- Hartlepool Regeneration and Tourism Forum
- Healthwatch
- History Groups in Hartlepool
- Incontrollable / CLIP
- All Parish Councillors
- Victoria Ward Partnership
- Cobden Street Area Residents Association
- Burn Valley North Residence Association
- Chester Rd Residents Association
- Wharton Trust
- Middlesbrough Council Selective landlord licensing scheme.

CONSULTATION – INFORMAL WORKING GROUP DETAILS

Date	Invitees	Issues discussed	
31 October 2023	Individuals/organisations/companies (Inc. landlords) who own derelict land/buildings or have successfully brought them back in to use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussions with individuals/organisations/companies who own derelict land / buildings regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The challenges they face (contributory issues / factors) • Successes in working with the LA • What could be done to help bring buildings / land back in to use - Examples of properties that have been brought back in to use - Value of Landlord Registration Schemes in dealing with the issue? 	<p>Landlord comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of tenants with drugs as a single issue is not as significant as might be expected, a complex range of issues contribute to the behaviour of poor tenants. - Tenant arrears is a significant challenge for landlords. There is a need for rent arrears to follow tenants and for the names and addresses of problem tenants to be passed on to other landlords, to help inform decisions when they are approached to let their properties. - Landlords and the local authority need to work together to clamp down on bad tenants. - In terms of tenant referencing as part of landlord licensing (LL) schemes, it was noted that tenants who have had issues with previous landlords often indicate that they have been living with family members, rather than being honest about failed tenancies and rent arrears. In these instances, landlords currently have to accept information provided by tenants. In this respect the tenant referencing element of a landlord licensing scheme would be useful, however, there was no support for the wider operation of a landlord licensing scheme in Hartlepool. - There is no landlord support for landlord registration scheme (it is felt that it penalises good landlords). It was felt that the scheme had not worked in Hartlepool and reference was made to the success of the North Ormesby scheme with a whole area focus, rather than specific streets, as had been the case in Hartlepool. - Buys to let properties are not bought to be left empty. However, some landlords can find themselves with properties that it makes better financial sense to board properties up, and pay the required council tax, than doing the necessary renovations / maintenance to bring the property back in to use. This can be a particular problem for out of town landlords who buy properties without knowing the area in which they are located. - There is a downward spiral for some areas where difficulties in letting properties means that houses are let to whoever is willing to live there.
21 November 2023	Representatives from partner organisations: Police Fire Housing Providers Dyke House Annex (Wharton Trust) TVCA (HDC)	<p>Discussions with Stakeholders regarding what 'carrots' can be used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What national opportunities for further grant funding exist? - What local options exist for more innovative and aggressive interventions? Local policy changes? Partnership working? - What greater role can the Housing Revenue Account play in solving the issue (inc. To what extent do we build new rather than improving / re-using older properties? Is the focus 	

	Joseph Rowntree Foundation	<p>of policy on new development or renewal?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do we bring our partners in the public, social and third sector into the agenda to increase their investment in tackling this issue more effectively? - How do we support the third sector (see the community housing work in the Annexe) in expanding their work in a coordinated way? - What is the potential role of the HDC in realising this agenda? - First Charge process 	<p>This tends to mean that properties have to be let to poorer quality tenants if they are not to be left vacant. An example of this being Oxford Road.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The demolition of town centre properties displaces problem tenants and emphasis needs to be placed upon how tenants are dealt with / supported. <p>Other issues raised by those present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of demand in areas where there are problem tenants and the resulting cycle of empty property - leading to a degeneration of an area – leading to lower demand and more empty properties. - What options are available to bring properties back in to use where landlords have no intention of taking the necessary action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential use of management orders and the ability of local authorities to take possession, restore and re-let derelict properties. • Pride in neighbourhoods helps create areas where good tenants want to live, establishing a positive upward cycle. • Removal of Section 24 and the increase of council tax bills for the owners of empty properties. - The findings of the A&G Cttee investigation be fed in to the development of the Housing Strategy. The 6 November being the start date of the process. - Concern was expressed about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The central government focus on re-development, rather than regeneration and the impact of demolition on the displacement of issues into surrounding area, rather than the identification of a solution. Emphasis was placed upon the need to lobby central government to support regeneration as a focus, alongside re-development. • Concern was expressed that private sector housing was not always the right place for someone with severe drug, alcohol or other complex needs and that there was an absence of support for tenants with specialist needs. Attention was drawn to instances in the past where tenants had been eligible for support and whilst the work of housing officers was fully supported, it was noted that they were now facing increasing demands on their time.
9 January 2024	Middlesbrough Borough Council	Exploration of Selective Licensing provider	

		<p>Emphasis was placed upon the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look at how these support services could be provide, including how landlords and letting agencies could be helped to support tenants. - Re-establish and all agency / cross sector group (Housing providers, social workers, benefits to focus on individual and support them to keep on the straight and narrow. - Lobby government to make the provision of housing support finding a priority. <p>Middlesbrough Borough Council – Landlord Licensing Scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Details of the Scheme were discussed with support expressed by members for its exploration. It was recognised that further work would be needed to effectively access the viability of the introduction of a similar scheme in Hartlepool and that this should be undertaken via the Neighbourhood Services Committee.
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SUMMARY OF SURVEY DATA

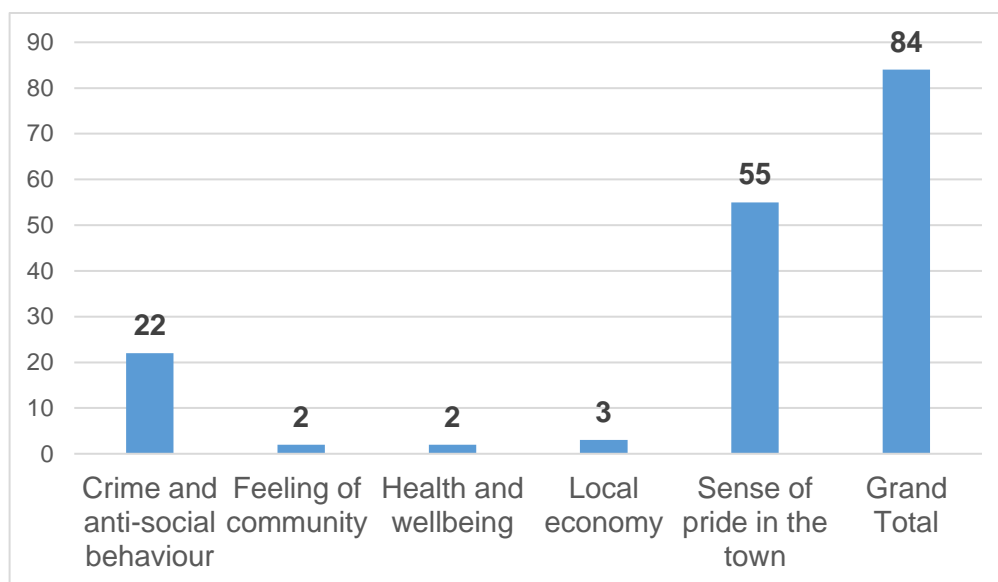
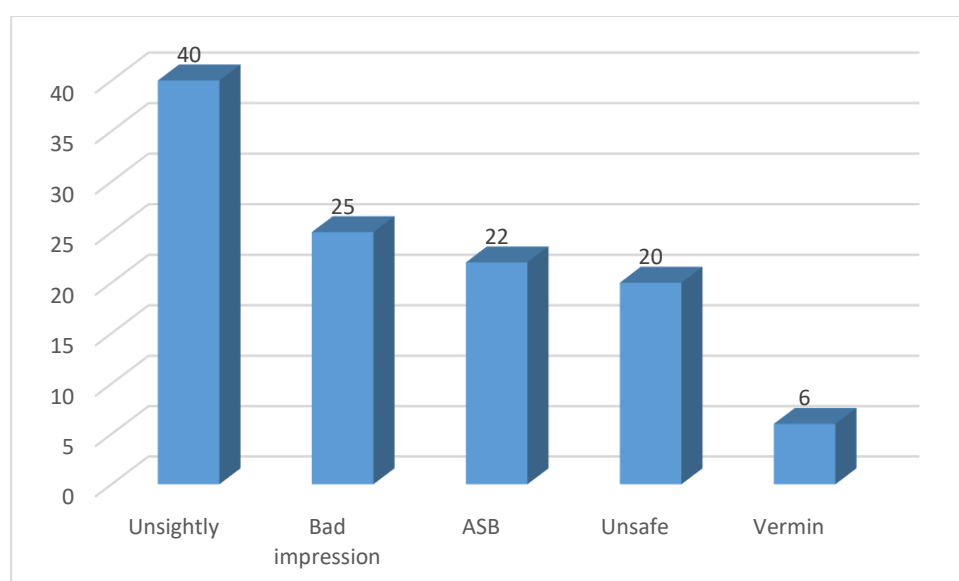
Chart 3. What impacts you the most about this issue?**Chart 4.** How does this impact where you live?

Chart 5. How long has this been an issue for you?

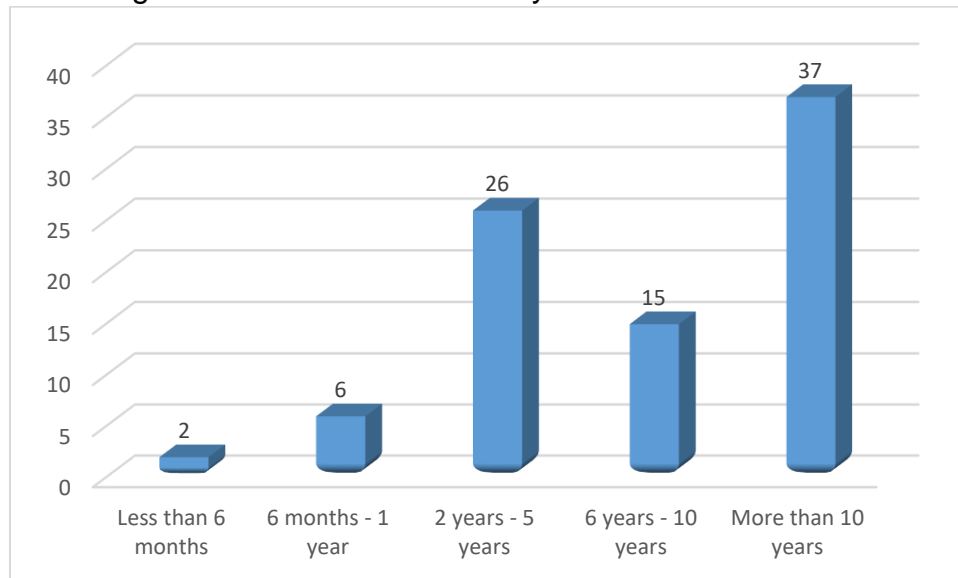
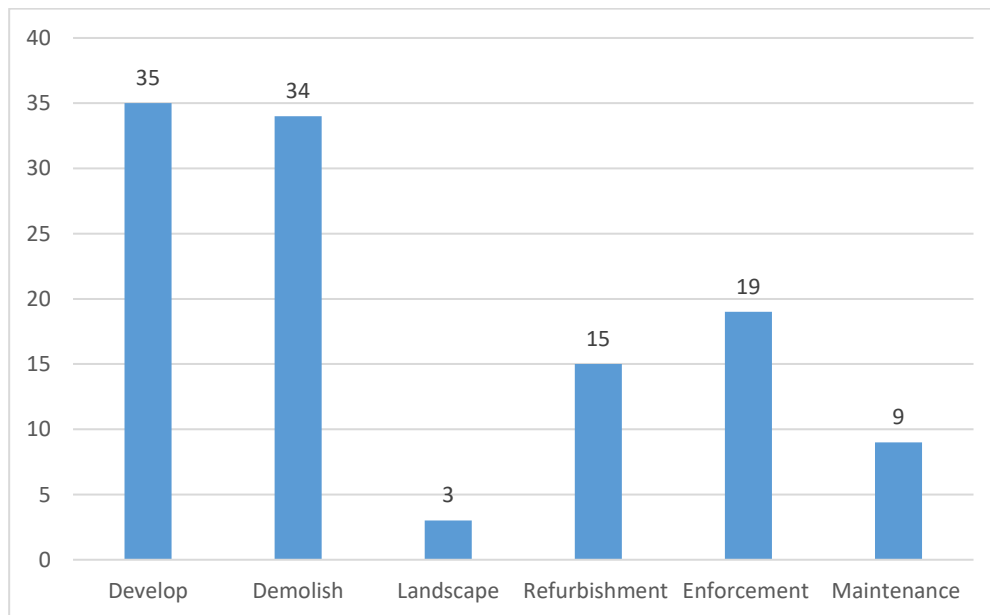


Chart 6. What should be done to tackle the problem?



SURVEY FREE TEXT COMMENTS

What could be done to tackle the problem?

17. Generate positivity and employment. Free-to-rent work spaces or community space, or a speciality building for the towns Community Hubs.
18. Develop areas with housing or landscaped for community use.
19. Tougher enforcement on the land and building owners to make buildings safe and tidy.
20. Demolish it, reclaim the historic facade and put it in a museum, and make use of the land.
21. Compulsory purchase for the true value ie the value of the building minus the costs to restore it to the condition it should be in.
22. Involve appropriate heritage bodies in the drawing up of required works to bring the building back into use for the benefit of the community.
23. Work should be carried out with a condition that a certain number of apprentices from Hartlepool schools and colleges have to be taken on for the project by the successful main contractor.

How this impacts where you live? / How does this building or land affect you?

24. The derelict building affect the impression visitors have of the town.
25. Target areas for arson, anti-social vehicle use and flytipping