

## **Appendix 2a Private Sector Housing**

### **LEEDS NEIGHBOURHOOD APPROACH – ARMLEY**

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Leeds Neighbourhood Approach (LNA) is a model adopted by the Council to work with small neighbourhoods to try to make them more sustainable. The approach works with the owners of properties on a street by street basis looking at 150/200 properties at any one time.

The aim is to improve the area via a multi-agency approach with partners, led by Private Sector Housing. Once the chosen area has been identified all owners, residents, managing agents etc are engaged with offers of help and assistance.

For landlords and managing agents, it is about ensuring that they meet their legal duties, and that their properties meet or exceed the necessary standards required, whilst also offering them help with renting their home in a professional manner. Empty property owners are offered help and advice about bringing their home back into occupation. Initially this offer of help is on an informal basis. Owners are given 6 weeks to come forward to work with the Council and partners. If they are not forthcoming then the Council reverts to formal enforcement action.

Empty properties are targeted beyond the area for intensive management within the wider community to help make improvements to the area more sustainable. Residents, be it owner occupiers or tenants are also offered help and assistance. Working with partners such as the Police, Fire Service, Jobs and Skills, Leeds City Credit Union, residents are offered security and fire safety checks, help with finding employment and training, financial advice and benefit checks. There may also be opportunity to consider energy efficiency works and investment subject to the qualifying criteria. This is currently under review by Government.

The initial area chosen for this approach was the Nowell's in east Leeds. Here 150 properties in 4 streets were targeted . This commenced in May 2013 and has been well received by residents, owners, Ward Members and partners. Some of the outcomes so far from this approach in the Nowell's are listed at the end of this report.

#### **THE NEXT AREA - ARMLEY**

A review of potential areas was undertaken and it was agreed that the Edinburghs in Armley be the next location for the LNA. The attached maps show the proposed area for the LNA and the outer area where all empty properties will be targeted by the team.

The area has received little proactive intervention in relation to private sector housing compared to areas in the east and south of the city and therefore would benefit from this approach. The private rented sector is the main form of tenure within the area. Initial investigations have revealed that approximately 20% of the stock is multi occupancy housing that falls outside of mandatory HMO licensing requirements (mainly converted flats and bedsits). Despite the poor quality of the accommodation

very few complaints are received from residents and there is a low level of landlords who are accredited.

Initial intelligence showed the following:

**ARMLEY**, Edinburgh Road, Edinburgh Road, Edinburgh Grove, Edinburgh Terrace, Edinburgh Place, Edinburgh Avenue (odds only) and St Ives Mount (odds only).

**Number of Properties in the area:** 131

**Tenure mix** – 41% privately rented 40% owner/occupiers, and 8% public.

**Number of Empties:** 14 empty properties – 11%

**Condition of Stock:** Area comprises of a mixture of redbrick Victorian 'through' and 'back to back' terraced properties. A large proportion of properties in the targeted streets are in a neglected condition indicating poor investment in the area and housing stock.

**Level of Crime/ASB:** 35 incidents of crime reported over last 12 month period in the target area.

**Private Rented Sector** – there is very little engagement with either the Council or the Landlords' Association. There is a low take up of accreditation in the area.

Initial investigations have revealed that 40% of the privately rented stock is in multiple occupation, either bedsits or large pre 1919 stock converted into flats, very little of which is subject to mandatory licensing. Traditionally this type of occupation is in poor condition and occupied by vulnerable individuals. Despite the make up of the area, very few complaints regarding housing conditions have been received by the Council.

**Arson levels/Fire risk of property type:** There were 4 incidents of fires within the proposed area over the previous 12 months, all of which were deliberate acts of arson. There is a high number of back to back properties within the targeted area, this property type has an inherent fire risk associated with them due to the only exit from the property being via a fire risk room (living room/kitchen).

**Environmental Conditions:** A survey of the area identified a number of over grown gardens, neglected bin yards with fly tipped refuse, boarded up properties and general signs of neglect.

### **Empty Properties – Outer Area**

Initially 51 potential empty properties have been identified within the streets surrounding the target area. All identified empty properties will be proactively targeted with owners offered help and assistance to bring properties back into use. Should they not engage with the Council then proactive enforcement will be undertaken to ensure properties are not a blight on the area. In certain circumstances the option of enforced sale or compulsory purchase will be pursued by the Council.

It is proposed that the initial engagement with the area will occur in early January 2014. All owners, residents, managing agents etc. will be contacted to outline the approach and to be offered the opportunity to engage with the Council and its partners. Any landlord or empty property owner who does not engage with the approach will then be subject to full enforcement action by the Council and partners from around the middle of February.

## **Attachments.**

Copy of the Armley LNA area

Copy of the outer Armley area – target area for empty properties

## **OUTCOMES FROM THE NOWELL'S**

- Approx. 36% (16 out of 44) of empty properties brought back into use to date. Plans are in place for most of the remaining empty property to be brought back into use over an agreed timescale with owner. Where Property owners have not engaged with us, or where owners do not keep to agreed timescales Compulsory Purchase Orders will be pursued.
- Initial informal engagement with 70% of empty property owners and landlords in area.
- Over 89% (113 out of 127) properties inspected so far. Re-inspections of the properties have now started to take place and 24 category 1 hazards and 14 category 2 hazards have been removed to date.
- 58 households have benefited from fire prevention advice from WYFRS
- 16 residents have been referred to employment & skills with a view to gaining employment or training to help overcome barriers to employment. Positive outcomes so far have included one resident managing to increase their working hours enabling them to stay living in the area and two residents getting places on training courses with a view to employment.
- 11 referrals to Leeds Credit Union with a view to helping residents manage their income/benefits, reduce door stop lending and help ease introduction of Universal Credit (in respect of monthly direct payments)
- A vulnerable resident with high care needs was found living in filthy and verminous conditions during a property inspection. The team have managed to put support in place via social services and positive pathways. The resident is now engaging with officers and is looking to enrol onto a course for reading and writing.
- A Community Action Day was held in June involving landlords, residents, police, WYFRS and localities where a clean-up of the area took place along with targeted inspections of properties.
- A “Darker Nights” initiative was held on 3 consecutive Wednesday evenings in October with the Police and LASBT with the aim of reducing crime and ASB. 71 households were given crime prevention advice around a theme of “light up and lock up”, 66 timer switches were handed out, door chimes/alarms were fitted to 58 properties and over 36 bean can money tins were handed out. The initiative was well received by residents and helped to rebuild confidence in the community.
- A Free energy efficiency work programme has been agreed for all properties in the area via ECO funding, working in partnership with Keepmoat, Wrap Up Leeds and Groundwork, via the Green Deal Framework agreement. Free wall and roof insulation is being made available to all occupiers. The total level of investment is estimated at £1.2m. Depending upon their finances occupiers may also be entitled to new heating systems and draught proofing works. To ensure the scheme is viable 80% of all properties need to be signed up to the works. Promotion of the proposed scheme commenced in mid-October and is subject to Planning Approval. To date 109 properties in the area have agreed to sign

**up. The scheme is currently awaiting confirmation in the Autumn Statement that funding for ECO is not being removed and that scheme will still be viable. Once confirmed property surveys will start to take place in the area asap.**