

**Select Committee on the Environment – 31st October 2005**

**Report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services**

**Duplex Properties**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To update Select Committee on the position with regard to Duplex properties in the Borough.

**Background**

2. The definition of a duplex property in Dudley is a converted semi-detached house creating 2 properties (in most instances, a one bed flat and a bedsit type property). It was an initiative to create more single person accommodation. The main criticisms of the properties were and still are the poor layout, poor sound insulation, and large gardens (in some areas).
3. Attached as Appendix A to this report is the breakdown of Duplex properties in the Dudley Borough.
  - a) Although it is correct to say that in general Duplex properties would not be applicant's first preference, the Right to Buy sales in areas such as Kingswinford and Norton demonstrates the importance of location in determining the decisions people take.
  - b) Duplex properties have proved unpopular and there have been associated management problems. To address these issues and create much needed family accommodation a 'conversion' programme was introduced. The conversion, in effect, recreates the three bedroomed semi-detached home. Appendix A shows the number of completed conversions to date and the number of properties held for future conversion works. Conversions are popular both with prospective tenants and existing residents who view it as an estate improvement. The number of conversions are restricted both by budgetary constraints and the increasing demand for single person accommodation.
  - c) Youth Offending Team – Supported Housing Scheme

The Directorate is working in partnership with the Dudley Youth Offending Team, Heantun Housing Association and the Communities Against Drugs Working Group to provide supported, furnished housing for young people aged under 18 who have become homeless.

Each young person who is housed on the scheme is interviewed prior to acceptance on to the scheme and made aware of their responsibilities in taking on a tenancy. Each young person agrees a support plan with Heantun Housing and the Youth Offending Team.

The plan typically focuses upon:

Lifeskills, budgeting, income maximisation, training and education, healthy living, being a good neighbour, complying with Youth Offending Team supervision orders and reparation activities and reducing the likelihood of re-offending.

- d) Supported accommodation for children leaving the care of the Authority

To fulfil the legal duty placed on the local Authority under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and acting under its remit of 'Corporate Parent', Properties are let to Social Services. Social Services being responsible for the allocation of the properties, assessing the needs of the individuals and providing the necessary support. This, in effect, was a transition move to independent living. The children sign a Licence Agreement establishing their rights and responsibilities.

- e) Current voids – Stourbridge in particular had some long standing voids. Voids works are being programmed according to demand and lettability. 10 properties were improved and let some 16 months ago and these have proved successful and sustainable.

4. There have been problems associated with duplex properties, the up to date position from a management prospective is as follows:-

- a) The Council needs to be aware of and address the increased demand for housing from single people and single homeless in particular. There is an overall lack of accommodation suitable for young single people and duplex properties go some way in addressing this demand.
- b) Stourbridge – there are isolated problems of anti-social behaviour usually relating to 'noise'. The conversions and the letting of duplex properties have had a positive impact on estates that previously felt they were blighted by empty properties and associated problems.

Dudley – Dunns Bank is seen as a problematic area that does need some level of intensive management. We are working with the police and residents in an effort to resolve problems that arise.

Brierley Hill – Little problem in sustaining tenancies or letting voids. Isolated incidents of anti-social behaviour but not considered, related to property type. Main concern of officers and complaints received are that gardens are not maintained.

## **Finance**

5. Conversions and voids works are funded from the Housing Capital Programme and Voids Budget.

## **Law**

6. Part 6 of the 1996 Act as amended relates to the process by which people are allocated social housing. Part V of the Housing Act 1985 as amended, sets out the provisions for the Right to Buy.

## **Equality Impact**

7. There is an increasing demand for housing from young single people, some of whom are vulnerable. There is a limited availability of accommodation for this group of people and in some cases duplex properties are the only option open to them.

## **Recommendation**

8. Members are asked to note the contents of the report.



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Duplex Properties within Dudley MBC

Appendix A

	Brierley Hill Central	Pensnett	Wordsley	Quarry Bank	Kingswinford	Grange/ New Farm	Norton	Wollaston	Stambermill	Total
Single Duplex Owned by DMBC	28	21	16	44	52	52	74	6	36	329
Sold RTB	0	3	3	2	26	4	16	0	2	56
Conversions Completed	3	4	3	3	2	12	16	0	6	49
Conversions Sold RTB	0	1	0	1 RTB application outstanding	1	5	0	0	1	9
Pairs Agreed to Complete	0	2	0	0	0	6	8	0	5	21
Current Voids	0	1	1	1	1	9	8	0	7	28
Let to YOTS	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	6
Let to Social Services	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3

2 pairs in Chapel Street, Pensnett are being held pending discussions with the Community Association on future options.