



Leicester
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED - CROWN HILLS & CHARNWOOD
also BELGRAVE, CHARNWOOD & WEST HUMBERSTONE**

CABINET

11 MARCH 2002

**PROPOSED DECLARATION OF ST SAVIOURS
NON-STATUTORY RENEWAL AREA**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING.

1. SUMMARY

1. The Council improves private sector housing conditions for areas of greatest need by declaring non statutory Renewal Areas. This improves living conditions and improves the appearance and durability of older properties.
- 1.2 The Housing Capital Programme provides funding to enable the declaration of a new non-statutory renewal area during 2002-03. This report discusses the merits of four areas to be considered and recommends that the St. Saviour's area be declared, subject to public consultation.

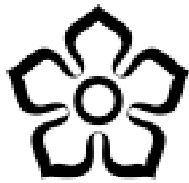
2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 St Saviours Improvement Zone be declared a non-statutory renewal area and phased as set out in Section 3.
- 2.2 Authority be delegated to the Director of Housing to implement action in the area, subject to a positive response to public consultation.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 It is estimated that £2m will be needed for this renewal area over a five-year period. Funding for year 1 of the project is available in the Housing Capital Programme, which provides £1.8m for renovation grants. The New Humberstone non-statutory Renewal Area was declared last year but elsewhere demand is declining. The older areas of, North Belgrave phase 2 and Evington Valley phases one and two will complete during this five-year period allowing the new areas to have a priority call on money agreed for private sector housing renewal. Unless future Capital funding fell considerably below present levels, sufficient funding would be available to complete all renewal areas declared so far.



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SUPPORTING INFORMATION & APPENDICES

1. BACKGROUND

Leicester's Renewal Strategy was adopted in 1976 and has followed a mainly area based approach which was endorsed most recently in January 2001 when the New Humberstone non-statutory renewal area was agreed.

The report considered the merits of five improvement zones and Cabinet asked that a further report be presented once the financial position was known.

The objectives of declaring a renewal area are linked to several key corporate and departmental strategies and plans. These are:

- The Performance Plan 2000/2001 (pages 28 and 33)
- The Community Plan – Diversity Action plan
- Leicester's Housing Strategy 2000 – 2003
- Housing Department Aims and Objectives
- Annual Review of Leicester's Renewal Strategy Policies – reported to Housing Scrutiny Committee in August 2001
- Home Energy Strategy
- Empty Homes Strategy
- Crime & Disorder Strategy
- Better Care – Higher Standards Charter
- Housing Aspects of Community Care – District Audit report

The Renewal and Grants Service has a target within the Diversity Action Plan to target advice and support within declared Renewal Areas to those on low incomes, people with disabilities and older people citywide in order to improve the private sector stock condition.

1.1 City Wide House Condition

By applying the findings of the Governments 1996 English House Condition Survey to known data from Leicester, it is estimated that the backlog of repairs in the private sector in the **City** is **£419.8m**. This is made up of £362.3m in the owner-occupied sector and £57.5m in the privately rented sector. Not all households will be eligible for, or will take up, renovation grants. In addition, grants are means tested. Those on income support receive 100% grants, with a fairly sharply decreasing percentage for those on low income. By applying past experience of take-up and information on income levels in the City it is calculated that the demand for grant aid to owner-occupiers across the City could be **£205m** to deal with conditions over a ten-year period. It is not current policy to pay grants to landlords.

1.2 Survey of Five Zones

A **private sector stock** survey was commissioned in 2000 to establish the incidence of unfit housing and disrepair, estimate repair costs, assess renovation grant eligibility and determine an energy efficiency rating of the private sector stock in **five improvement zones of the city**. The five areas were chosen from a shortlist of 15no improvement zones of known poor housing because of their high deprivation scores. The results of the survey formed a central element in assessing housing conditions in the zones which has enabled us to prioritise them according to house condition and poverty deprivation.

Despite a disappointing response rate from homeowners the advice from the consultants was that three improvement zones emerged as having a higher incidence of poor housing conditions. These were New Humberstone, St Saviours and Swainson Road.

1.3 Action taken as a result of the Survey

A detailed report entitled "Future Programme of Area Renewal Declaration of (Non Statutory) Renewal Areas" was presented to Cabinet on 15th January 2001. That report discussed the results of the survey and suggested that the unsatisfactory living conditions identified in the report could be addressed by declaring a non-statutory renewal area for either of the New Humberstone or St Saviours Improvement Zones. Given the financial uncertainty at the time it was prudent to declare one area with a commitment to declaring a further area along with the smaller areas of Abbey Lane, Swainson Road and Windsor Avenue from 2002 onwards if the financial position at that stage was favourable.

It was noted that based upon the Renewal Strategy, the priority areas for investment were New Humberstone and St. Saviours. However it was noted that New Humberstone was in the SRB6 area and therefore any funding could be maximised. New Humberstone was recommended to be declared a non-statutory renewal area, which was agreed. A further report was requested at the end of the year for St. Saviours, Abbey Lane, Swainson Road and Windsor Avenue, when the financial position was known.

The financial position is now known and was agreed on 14th January 2002. There is scope for a further area declaration. It is recommended that the St Saviours Improvement Zone is now declared as a non-statutory renewal area for the same reasons as set out in the previous report.

2. HOUSE CONDITIONS IN THE IMPROVEMENT ZONES SURVEYED

The levels of unfitness / defective properties projected from the survey findings are likely to be an under estimate of the total demand. All of the improvement zones have concentrations of poor housing conditions. The consultants advised that New Humberstone emerged as the zone with the greatest potential demand for assistance with St Saviours in second place.

New Humberstone had the largest number of owner-occupiers living in unfit or defective dwellings but it is the St Saviours zone that has the largest number of such owners who are in receipt of a means tested benefit.

The relevant figures are set out in Table 1 below: (Source – Sample Survey carried out in 2000)

	Unfit or defective owner-occupied housing			
	On a means tested benefit		Not on benefit	
	Dwellings	% of all unfit and defective	Dwellings	% of all unfit and defective
New Humberstone (already declared)	21	12	153	88
St Saviours	48	31	109	69
Abbey Lane North	7	34	14	68
Swainson Road	14	36	25	64
Windsor Avenue	27	66	14	33
Total	117	27	314	73

A summary produced by the consultants detailing the overall repair costs by area is shown in appendix 1.

3. THE PROPOSAL FOR THE DECLARATION OF A NON STATUTORY RENEWAL AREA.

In January 2001 Cabinet decided to go ahead with declaring New Humberstone as a non-statutory renewal area. This arrangement has been successful so far and it is recommended that the St Saviours improvement zone is declared in the same way.

Statutory Renewal Areas last ten years, although the bulk of the housing improvements have generally been achieved in the first three to five years. The intention with a non-statutory area is still to create a partnership between the local authority, residents, and private sector interests, thereby improving the social, environmental, economic and housing conditions in the area. This approach should secure maximum impact by increasing community and market confidence in the area's future, and help reverse the process of decline.

A non-statutory renewal area will still benefit from:

- Being part of the Council's regeneration strategy
- Public consultation on the approach to be adopted
- Being part of the community plan
- A structural survey of area
- A programme of environmental works
- House conditions being tackled in a systematic way.
- Grant aid to qualifying applicants.
- The Most Satisfactory Course of Action (MSCA) approach to decision making for any pockets of unfit housing.

In order to make the most effective use of resources, implementation in the area will be phased. Full renewal services first be offered in the part of the area that lies to the south of St Saviours Road and north of the Evington brook. This will make waiting lists more manageable and will enable both capital and revenue resources to be deployed in a more satisfactory manner.

4. ST SAVIOURS IMPROVEMENT ZONE

The boundaries of the St Saviours Improvement Zone were set out in the original renewal strategy some 25 years ago. A small part of this zone (to the north of Green Lane Road) was incorporated in the St Barnabas Grant Priority Area some 10 years ago. This status was short lived and it is proposed to retain this portion of the area to give owners who missed out previously the opportunity to improve their homes.

The original boundaries tended to be drawn along the middle of through roads. This meant that three very small areas of older housing at the eastern end of the zone along St Saviours Road were placed in another improvement zone. It is now more appropriate to put these into the main St Saviours area. This increases the number of properties with residential accommodation in the area by 37no up to 1004no.

The improvement zone is characterised by mixed residential and commercial development. The oldest houses were built about 1886. The majority of the housing is in traditional terraces developed in the main by the then prominent Leicester builder Orson Wright and the area also has a strong association with the local architect Arthur Wakerley. Parts of the area were developed piecemeal and so there are some inter-war town houses and semi-detached properties.

A structural survey of the area has been commissioned, although there does not appear to be any general structural problem affecting properties in the area.

Several large factories have now mainly been converted to smaller business units. In addition there are other smaller industrial and commercial properties. In Margaret Road stands the very large and imposing headquarters of the Royal Leicestershire, Rutland and Wycliffe Society for the Blind.

The Spinney Hill Primary School and Community Centre is in Ventnor Street.

The boundaries of the proposed renewal area are shown on the map attached at appendix 3 and contains the property addresses set out in Table 2 below.

ST SAVIOURS IMPROVEMENT ZONE		
STREET	NUMBERS	
	Odds	Evens
Blanklyn Avenue	1 – 29	2 – 30
Copdale Road	1 – 9	6 – 8
Constance Road	1 – 93	2 – 98
Dorothy Road	3 – 111	2 – 104
East Park Road	–	18 – 292
Gedding Road	1 – 75	–
Green Lane Road	181 – 189	190 – 240
Gwendolen Road	9 – 83	2 – 146
Lancaster Street	7 – 187	2 – 178
Leicester Street	–	70 – 80
Linden Street	1 – 41	30 – 42
Margaret Road	1 – 13 & 115 – 119	2 – 16
Moat Road	1 – 89	2 – 70
Nottingham Road	45 – 65	52 – 70
Osborne Road	1 – 71	2 – 100
Orson Street	1 – 95	4 – 76
Roseberry Street	1 – 143	2 – 90
Spalding Street	23 – 35	2 – 70
St Saviours Road	261 – 437	252 – 338
Stanhope Street	1 – 55	2 – 38
Suffolk Street	1 – 11	–
Ventnor Street	1 – 25	2 – 76

5. SERVICES TO BE OFFERED IN THE PROPOSED RENEWAL AREA

If declared as a non-statutory renewal area the area will benefit from the following services:

Local Advice

Advice and assistance will be provided by officers working in the general locality at the Evington Valley Renewal Office on Evington Road, which is less than ½ mile from the southern boundary of this area. In addition a weekly advice session will be offered at premises within the renewal area itself.

Discretionary Renovation grants

Discretionary Renovation grants are the main tool for assisting homeowners to bring their homes up to a reasonable standard. Renovation grant will be made available to qualifying owner-occupier applicants where the house is unfit in accordance with general current policy. Grant aided works will be designed to make houses fit, provide basic security measures and provide some help with energy efficiency measures outlined above. All grant applicants will be provided with assistance through the Home Improvement Agency Service. This means they will be given help with:

- A formal schedule of work backed by a written specification
- Obtaining tenders for the work from suitable builders
- getting plans drawn if necessary
- completing the prescribed application form
- arranging a formal contract with the builder
- Having the work supervised
- Having the benefit of a retention period after practical completion of the work

Home Repair Assistance

Home Repair Assistance will be offered to qualifying owner-occupiers as an extension of the current citywide scheme. These will be where owners either do not otherwise qualify for a discretionary renovation grant or do not wish to undertake major work at this time. In contrast to the citywide home maintenance scheme these grants will be funded directly out of money directed at renewal area work but the same basic qualifications apply.

The home maintenance service offered will include:

- Advice on home maintenance, energy efficiency and home security
- A home maintenance inspection outlining the works required with a builder's list
- The area maintenance officer service to qualifying residents where appropriate
- A comprehensive advice service to many householders who have never had any help with their housing.

Home Energy Strategy

The proposed Home Energy Strategy for the area will include the full range of services developed under the Energy Sense campaign. These will be promoted to residents, retailers and businesses and include energy audits, advice and information As well as discounts on energy efficient goods and services through Leicester's Smart Home energy card. Local partners will be identified to join the scheme.

The following services will be offered to residents of the areas:

- National Home Energy Rating assessment.
- Assessment of the most cost effective and energy efficient solution for the individual household
- Advice on DIY solutions where appropriate
- Identification of grant aid from external sources such as 'HEES'
- Discretionary renovation grants will include heat recovery fans, loft insulation, cylinder jackets, and draughtproofing to approved standards. Two heat recovery fans will be provided to the kitchen and bathroom, which reduce condensation and improve internal air quality. The fans will assist in bringing the houses up to a reasonable standard as well as increasing energy efficiency.
- Energy Efficiency grants (see below).

The following works will be offered in priority order:

1. Improved heating controls, to include TRV's thermostats and energy management systems.
2. High efficiency central Heating System
3. The additional cost of double-glazing with E glass where windows are to be replaced.

Energy Efficiency Grants

The capital programme includes funding for discretionary 'Energy Efficiency' Renovation Grants. These grants are generally offered in active renewal areas. An applicant is guided as to the most effective items to be installed and grant aided. A contribution of at least 20% is expected although this must be increased to the level of the assessed contribution ('means test') if higher. It is proposed to allow all owner-occupiers living in the declared area to be considered for an energy efficiency grant. Owners will not need to live in an unfit house to qualify. With a maximum eligible expense of £3,500 and an expected contribution of 20% the maximum grant will be £2,800.

Disabled facilities Grants

There are two forms of disabled facilities grant; mandatory and discretionary. The current general policy restricts availability to the mandatory version of this grant. No change in this policy is proposed, particularly given the continuing backlog of cases qualifying for mandatory grants.

Cases recommended for grant aid are placed on a priority points based waiting list. Cases are taken off the waiting list as resources permit, according to their priority points score. However, any disabled facilities grant cases in the declared area where owners have proposals for renovation and where the works are linked should be dealt with so as to make the most effective use of resources.

6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

The Renewal Strategy seeks to direct resources to the most vulnerable households in the City by giving access to a range of services which seek to improve the living conditions, health and wellbeing of the participating households. Discretionary renovation grants are targeted where houses are unfit.

The area strategy that has been followed has meant that services have been directed to areas where residents are generally disadvantaged with above average populations of older people and people on low incomes. They often also have above average populations of people of ethnic minority origins.

Disabled facilities grants are only available to help disabled people.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

All house renovation grants are discretionary, except mandatory disabled facilities grants. Whilst the policies adopted guide the use of these discretionary grants in general, all valid applications are considered on their individual circumstance and merit. In exceptional cases the Director of Housing has delegated authority to approve applications outside of the general policy.

The Council has the power to declare Renewal Areas and carry out certain works in them, and to provide the range of housing renewal grants by virtue of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. Declaring a non-statutory renewal area though does not utilise this power and is purely a local distinction to mark an area where the full renewal services are made available to qualifying property owners.

The Council also has certain duties, in dealing with unfit housing and an annual consideration of house conditions. Guidance is given in Circular 17/96 "Private Sector Renewal: a Strategic Approach". Declaring a non-statutory renewal area is part of the performance of those duties.

Environmental Health Officers in Environment and Development take enforcement action when necessary.

8. SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The Renewal Strategy seeks to improve, protect and maintain the physical environment by enabling homeowners to improve the fabric of their homes. The specifications and scheduling used in house renovation grants and on advice schedules seek to use environmentally friendly materials and processes. Energy Efficiency is a key element in specifications. The proposals in this report will increase the number of disabled people who are able to remain in their own homes.

In broad terms the work of the Renewal Strategy offers many "quality of life" improvements and provides for wider participation by residents in decision making and action.

9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

In a renewal area it is possible for various schemes to be carried out that are intended to reduce crime and the fear of crime. In particular schemes have been carried to improve security through improvements to back alleyways.

Renovation grant aided home improvements generally include home security items such as door and window locks. Residents who do not qualify for such grants will still be able to arrange for security devices to be installed by making use of the citywide 'handyperson' service. Users of this service are required to pay for materials and labour, albeit at advantageous rates.

10. DETAILS OF CONSULTATIONS

Officers of Town Clerks have been consulted in the preparation of this report.
Environment and Development – Urban Regeneration Group
Chief Executives – Corporate Strategic Regeneration Unit

11. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Local Government & Housing Act 1989
- Department of the Environment Circular 12/90
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.
- Department of the Environment Circular 17/96
- Review of Renewal Strategy Policies - Report of the Director of Housing to Housing Committee, March 1997.
- 'Annual Review of Leicester's Renewal Strategy Policies'. Report of the Director of Housing to Housing Committee, 6 January 1999.
- 'Annual Review of Leicester's Renewal Strategy Policies'. Report of the Director of Housing to Housing Committee, March 2000.

- 'Future Programme of Area Renewal - Declaration of (Non Statutory) Renewal Areas'. Report of the Director of Housing to Cabinet, 15 January 2001.
- 'Renewal Strategy – Progress Report'. Report of the Director of Housing to Housing Scrutiny Committee, 23 August 2001.
- Background Files held by the Director of Housing.

12. HOUSING DEPARTMENT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Aim of the Housing Department is 'A decent home within the reach of every citizen of Leicester'. In particular the Renewal Strategy meets the key objectives of:

- Improve the condition of Leicester's housing stock and resolve unfitness in all sectors
- encourage and enable owners to continue to maintain the private sector housing stock
- reduce the number of empty and under-occupied homes in Leicester
- enable all citizens of Leicester to find a home which suits their needs
- offer citizens housing choices and full mobility between tenures, locations and types of home
- enable citizens of Leicester to stay in their homes as long as they continue to meet their needs
- enable all citizens to have access to affordable warmth and healthy living environment
- Maximize home security in the private sector through advice and direct provision of locks and alarms, etc.

Officers to contact about this report -

Ann Branson Assistant Director, Renewal & Rehousing, x6802 or 0116 252 6802
 Martin Bromley, Renewal & Grants Service Manager, x5161 or 0116 299 5161
 Janice Pearson, Renewal & Grants Service Manager, x5386 or 0116 299 5386

Appendix 1

Table 3. OVERALL REPAIR COSTS BY AREA. Source – Sample Survey carried out in 2000.

Area	Dwellings	Just Fit Costs		Urgent Costs		Non Urgent Costs		10 year replacement costs		10 – 30 years replacement costs	
New Humberstone	571	96,632	164	557,470	976	1,113,343	1,949	1,021,867	1,789	3,849,930	6,740
St Saviours	779	160,138	206	562,397	722	1,998,463	2,566	897,061	1,152	3,335,436	4,283
Abbey Lane North	339	0	0	46,926	139	463,741	1,370	808,152	2,387	2,581,671	7,626
Swainson Road	198	88,024	445	374,700	1,894	404,139	2,043	401,086	2,058	740,720	3,745
Windsor Ave	304	10,158	35	41,260	136	421,225	1,387	667,109	2,196	1,609,213	5,297
Total	2190	352,312	161	1,582,753	723	4,400,908	2,010	3,795,274	1,733	12,116,969	5,533

Notes:

Definitions within table:

1. Just Fit Costs – this is spending which is required immediately to bring unfit elements up to a standard
2. Urgent Costs – this is spending on repairs which will be required in the next twelve months
3. Non-urgent costs – this is spending on repairs which will be required over the next five years

The table shows average figures and cumulative figures for the area.

Appendix 2.

Map showing the extent of Leicester's private sector renewal strategy programme, including past areas, current areas and proposed areas.

Please note that improvement zone 39, shown as a proposed area, was declared as the New Humberstone non-statutory Renewal Area in March 2001.

Scanned map to be added hard copy only for now due to e-mail problems

Appendix 3. Map of the proposed St Saviours non-statutory Renewal Area.

To be scanned. Hard copy only for now