

Lancaster City Council  
Regeneration and Policy



# Morecambe's West End: Empty Homes Project Plan





April 2012  
Version 1.0

# Lancaster City Council

## Regeneration and Policy



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Project Outline

The Cluster of Empty Homes, as outlined in red dashed line in Plan 1 is located in West End Masterplan sub-areas 2, 3, 5, 8 and 9. These were prioritised as high intervention areas.

**Plan 1 – West End Masterplan Map showing sub-areas**



The number of empty homes in the Cluster area is shown in Table 1 and also detailed is the number of empty homes to be targeted to be brought back into use.

**Table 1 – Numbers of Empty Homes in the Cluster Area**

Masterplan Area	Total Homes	Total Empty Homes
2 – West End Road	301	15
3 – Clarendon Road East	324	11
5 – Albert / Regent Road	261	138
8 – Yorkshire Street East / West	226	10
9 – Regent Road / Parliament Street	264	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>1376</b>	<b>197</b>
Percentage Empty Homes		14%

The figures listed in Table 1 are the minimum number of units. The number of empty homes is not an exact science due to so many properties being subdivided and clearly containing more units than the council tax records indicate. Where data is held, particularly for Area 5, the level of subdivision is such that the number of empty homes could increase by 30-50 units depending on the definition of a home applied.

The housing typology of Morecambe's West End is typical of Victorian seaside properties, characterised by large terraced houses or guesthouses, over several floors with small gardens. Since the decline in the tourism industry this type of property has lent itself to be used as small flats, and houses in multiple occupation, being too large for retention as a single family home, with very few traditional guest houses or B&Bs remaining. The increase in this type of accommodation at the lower end of the rental market has led to a change in the type and tenure of housing and consequently a change on the demographic profile of the area.

The West End Masterplan has focussed on this type of property, proposing to reconfigure large multi-occupancy housing reducing them in size to provide family accommodation through the removal of the outrigger. This will both decrease internal space and increase external garden space making the properties significantly more attractive to families.

A direct result of the strategy of removing small units of accommodation through the remodelling of large terraced houses to provide single family dwellings is a decrease in housing density. Some larger terraced properties contain as many as 7 flats and the intention is to remodel to provide a single family house. The large size of the properties and scale of alterations means the costs can be quite high.

The properties will be brought back into use by the following ways:

- 49 council owned empty properties will be remodelled and refurbished directly by the council and brought back into use by being sold to owner occupiers. The council intends to explore mortgage assistance options such as the Lloyds Lend and Hand scheme.
- 39 council owned empty properties will be sold to private developers to redevelop under a building license agreement that will control the quality and timescales for renovation and reuse, including landlord accreditation.
- 55 privately owned empty properties within the cluster area will be targeted to be brought back into use through a 'carrot and stick' approach. Officers will contact owners and provide assistance to bring properties back into use and also limited grant assistance. However, a conservative estimate of the success rate means that

only half of these properties have been counted in the bid as being brought back into use.

There is a high degree of certainty of delivery due to large number of properties already under the council's control. The team working on the project have considerable experience of directly remodelling and refurbishing housing in the West End. The same team is also responsible for coercing owners of empty homes to bring them back into use, providing advice, assistance and guidance in the first instance then more intensive support.

The council is exploring the use of providing financial assistance to homebuyers within the cluster through mortgage deposit guarantee schemes such as Lloyds Lend and Hand.

The Clusters of Empty Homes intervention forms part of a wider improvement strategy for the West End's housing, public realm and connectivity that the council is committed to realising.

## **1.2 West End Masterplan**

The West End Masterplan set out a vision to create an exceptionally good place to live, work and play. During the Enquiry by Design event in June 2004, there was strong support for the creation of an attractive residential area with a significant appeal for families. The West End Masterplan completed its extensive consultation over the course of 2004 and was adopted as a supplementary planning document by Council in February 2005.

The Masterplan stressed remodelling of properties, demolition and new-build, redevelopment of key sites and place-making within a clear prioritised hierarchy. Core objectives revolved around changing the local tenure mix and social balance - reducing the private rented sector as a means of improving stability and diversifying the types of housing available. Emphasis was also placed on ensuring the sustainability of local shops through consolidation and establishing a "niche market" identity through selective street scene improvements, increasing public open space and stressing physical connections to Morecambe Centre (such as the promenade) and harnessing links to the sea frontage.

The Masterplan in assessing the West End sub-divided it into zones. Each zone was scored against objectives and also an assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The result was the prioritisation of 8 areas known as the phase 1 project that required high levels of intervention and needed to be delivered first and would be achieved by:

- Remodelling of selective properties
- Demolition and new-build of selected houses
- Redevelopment of key development sites
- Creation of new public open spaces
- Remodelling / resurfacing of selective streets

The West End Masterplan was funded by the Homes and Communities Agency to provide a comprehensive regeneration plan to which they and other partners would use to plan strategic investments. The Masterplan has formed the basis for all intervention in the West End since 2004 when it began.

Considerable resources have been expended on a wide range of physical and social interventions that have had a significant impact. In particular some of the housing

interventions that took out the worst concentrations of HMOs has improved quality of life for neighbourhoods but has also led to an improvement in the areas indices of deprivation score, moving it out of the worst 1% nationally. The HCA, in both of its former guises, was instrumental in the transformation with both investments in new and refurbished social, affordable and private housing.

Local support for the Masterplan is formally obtained through the West End Partnership that comprises of local councillors, residents and businesses. The development, design and implementation of Masterplan projects has benefitted from the West End Partnerships participation and involvement.

In 2009 a review of the Masterplan was undertaken to take stock of achievements and progress and the reevaluate and prioritise outstanding projects. Masterplan achievements include West End Gardens, Clarendon Road East, West End Road, the Silver Café, Yorkshire Street and Regent Park. The review was endorsed by Cabinet thereby updating the council's commitment to the regeneration of the West End. Housing regeneration remains a fundamental priority for the Masterplan.

Cabinet prioritised the following Masterplan projects:

- Co-Op Building
- Chatsworth Gardens
- Bold Street
- Marine Road West/Prom Public Realm
- Retail/Commercial Core

Listed below are photograph showing the Masterplan's achievements in tackling the phase 1 projects.

West End Road 10 properties remodelled



Clarendon Road 26 properties remodelled



Bold Street facelift to 8 properties



Bold Street 4 properties remodelled



West End Gardens and Battery improved



New Café and Toilets at West End Gardens



Rear of third of Frontierland redeveloped



Yorkshire Street improvements





Marlborough Road new build townhouses & flats	Former Bus Depot site redevelopment
	

Housing Regeneration with a focus on the West End continues to be a priority for the council. There are two priority housing regeneration schemes in the West End Masterplan area, both of which have stalled due to funding issues that followed the recession.

Chatsworth Gardens is a fundamental component of the Masterplan. The HCA approved a total of £11.972M regeneration investment, of which £7.893M has been spent. However, this investment has slowed since the preferred developer's interest fell away as the recession took hold. This has led the council to review the original aims and objectives to provide a new way forward in a very different economic context. The clear steer from councillors and local residents was to focus more on refurbishment of existing housing and only consider demolition and new build where necessary and this is what is proposed for Chatsworth Gardens.

The plan for Chatsworth Gardens is to directly and indirectly refurbish the majority of the terraces and implement public realm improvements to make significant improvements to the area to enable a developer for the redevelopment of the largest properties on Regent Road to be secured that presently would not otherwise be possible. The refurbishment of the empty and occupied properties will effectively pump prime the redevelopment of the largest new properties on Regent Road.

### 1.3 Regenerating Morecambe

The council has a firm commitment to the regeneration of Morecambe. A great deal has been achieved in recent years through out Morecambe and this work is continuing. Repeated resource prioritisation to the West End demonstrates the council's commitment to the regeneration of Morecambe and continues regardless of current funding limitations.

The Morecambe Area Action Plan is focusing on the central part of Morecambe around the station, along central drive to the Midland Hotel and out along the promenade. The Action Plan has undertaken extensive and intensive consultation and development and the production of the first draft is underway. There is a an overlap with the West End Masterplan

along West End Promenade, the West End Conservation Area and the large vacant site of the former Frontierland Amusement Park.

The second phase of Morecambe Townscape Heritage Initiative to enhance the historic built environment in Poulton is due to start shortly and is titled A View for Eric and aims to improve the central promenade buildings facing the statue of Eric Morecambe.

Complimenting a number of regeneration projects and key sites is a Coastal Communities Fund bid to improve the promenade's public realm and access. The public realm improvements will significantly upgrade the promenade's presentation and this should boost investor confidence in existing property as well as vacant sites such as the Frontierland site. It also aims to resolve the current disconnect between the town and the promenade.

A priority for housing intervention in the West End is in Masterplan Area 11 centred on Bold Street. It is a three-phase housing project led and funded by LCC. The first phase was completed in 2009 with a grant aided facelift scheme to 8 villa properties. Phase two was completed in November 2010 and involved substantial remodelling of large 4 storey terraces that saw the removal of an entire storey. Phase 2 was completed on budget and schedule. The third phase concerns 17 two and three storey terraced houses of very poor quality and 3 commercial properties to the rear of the 0.27 hectare site. Acquisitions are being made as resources become available and a development brief has been prepared.

Also in Area 11 is Marlborough Road where in partnership with the council Adactus Housing Association has demolished 11 HMOs and car showroom enabling the construction of 12 flats and 11 houses for shared ownership which were completed in February 2012.

Centenary House, the former Co-Op Department store on Regent Road, presents an excellent opportunity for economic regeneration. Only half of the ground floor is in use leaving 2,500 square meters of floorspace vacant. The council has an exclusivity agreement with a development partner to bring forward a proposal to re-use the building.

Morecambe has the highest vacancy rate for shops for medium sized towns at over 30% and the West End's retails area has a rate in excess of 36%. There is an oversupply of retail units in the West End and the Masterplan aimed to refocus the centre into a more compact area centred on Yorkshire Street. The creation of a new shopper's car park is planned to be built in 2012-13 to attempt to better support the local retail businesses as on street parking is limited and time restricted to 1 hour.

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## 2 APPROACH TO EMPTY HOMES

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### 2.1 West End Housing

West End Masterplan sub-areas 2, 3, 5, 8 and 9 define the Cluster of Empty Homes bid area. Area 5 contains at least 261 homes of which 138 are empty. However, the total number of empty homes may be much higher depending on how units are counted. This is due to many properties having evolved into bedsits and HMOs from guesthouses and this has been an incremental process and many have not been formally converted with planning permission. As a result council tax data can mask the true number of empty properties. The level of data required to calculate the total number of homes and empty homes is extensive. Such data is only really held for the council owned properties where details to verify how the house was occupied and used can be collated. Many properties that are listed as a single house on the council tax register contain multiple units of:

- HMOs,
- Bedsits,
- Guesthouse rooms used as bedsits,
- Holiday flats and flatlets that are no longer used by holidaymakers,
- Specialist live in support accommodation for people with mental health problems
- Properties with a change of use planning consent from flats/HMO to a single dwelling but have had no physical alterations and still contain separate meters or sub-meters, room numbers, locks on bedroom doors, sinks in every bedroom, kitchenettes on upper floors

The scale of difference is quite startling due to the high level of subdivision. Many properties with a single council tax bill really contain three flats or six bedsits. Other properties that were guesthouses began to cater less for holidaymakers and business people and for people on low incomes or benefits. A limited exploration of housing benefit claims for the largest guesthouse that had 18 bedrooms revealed that there was a benefit claimant living in the property from 1994-1999. How many of the bedrooms in this guesthouse were occupied on such a permanent basis is impossible to tell but the decline of the seaside tourism industry and the subsequent evolution of many into hostels, HMOs and bedsits is well documented. Even properties with a planning permission in place to change a single house to three flats still only have a single council tax bill.

The housing is uniform in being large stone built terraces of three or more storeys, with small yards. All properties have bay windows on the ground floor and some have bays to the first and even second floors. West End streets are laid out in a Victorian grid-iron with Regent Road perpendicular to Marine Road West that runs along the seafront and the surrounding streets follow this orientation.

All of the properties in the Cluster are large, ranging from 155 square metres for the smallest 3 storey properties to over 300 square metres for the largest four storey properties. The size of the properties is a challenge in terms of their propensity for sub-division. Conversely the large size of the properties does not lend to straight conversion to single family residential

use. The preferred options to reduce size are the removal of the outrigger and/or storey reduction. Even when subject to volume reduction the properties may still provide large three and four bed units.

**Photograph showing typical West End housing with 4 storey outrigger extending right to the rear boundary**



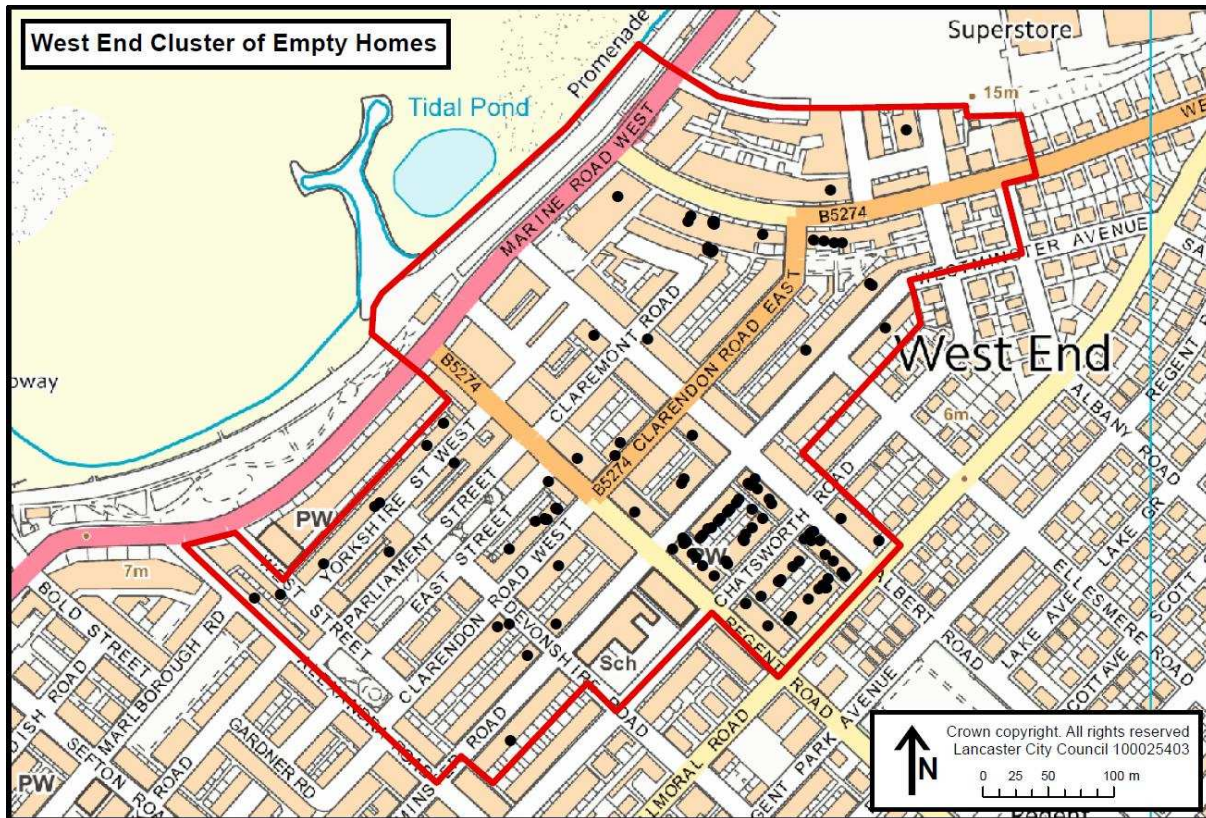
However, the high cost of remodelling properties to reduce internal space are only something that the public sector would undertake to deliver regeneration and is certainly not an investment that the private sector would deliver. There are a number of properties within the cluster that are owned by the council that the council will not directly bring back into use. Instead these properties would be sold to private developers under a building license or development agreement to ensure the specification, quality and timely completion of the properties refurbishment and reuse. This approach has been successfully used by the council. The other major difference with this approach is that the properties would not be reduced in volume through removal of outriggers or storeys, although properties may see a reduction in unit numbers. These properties would be redeveloped to provide 2 and 3 bed self contained flats constructed to modern standards. Any rented flats would only be by accredited landlords.

There are also a number of privately owned empty properties in the cluster area that the council would work to bring back into use. The council has experience of providing support and advice to bring empty homes back into use and even provides building specifications to assist property owners to undertake the necessary works to make the properties habitable. An allowance has been made for grant assistance to encourage general works to bring properties back into use along with funds to undertake improvements to front boundaries.

The majority of the empty homes in the Cluster are long term empties. The majority of properties have been empty for over five years. One property has been empty since 1996, two since 1999 and three since 2000.

Plan 2 shows the location of the empty homes within the West end Cluster bid area. The cluster is focussed upon the centre of the West End. The West End is well served by bus, rail, cycle and road transport links and is only 1 mile away from the largest employment area in the district, White Lund Industrial Estate.

**Plan 2 – West End Cluster of Empty Homes**



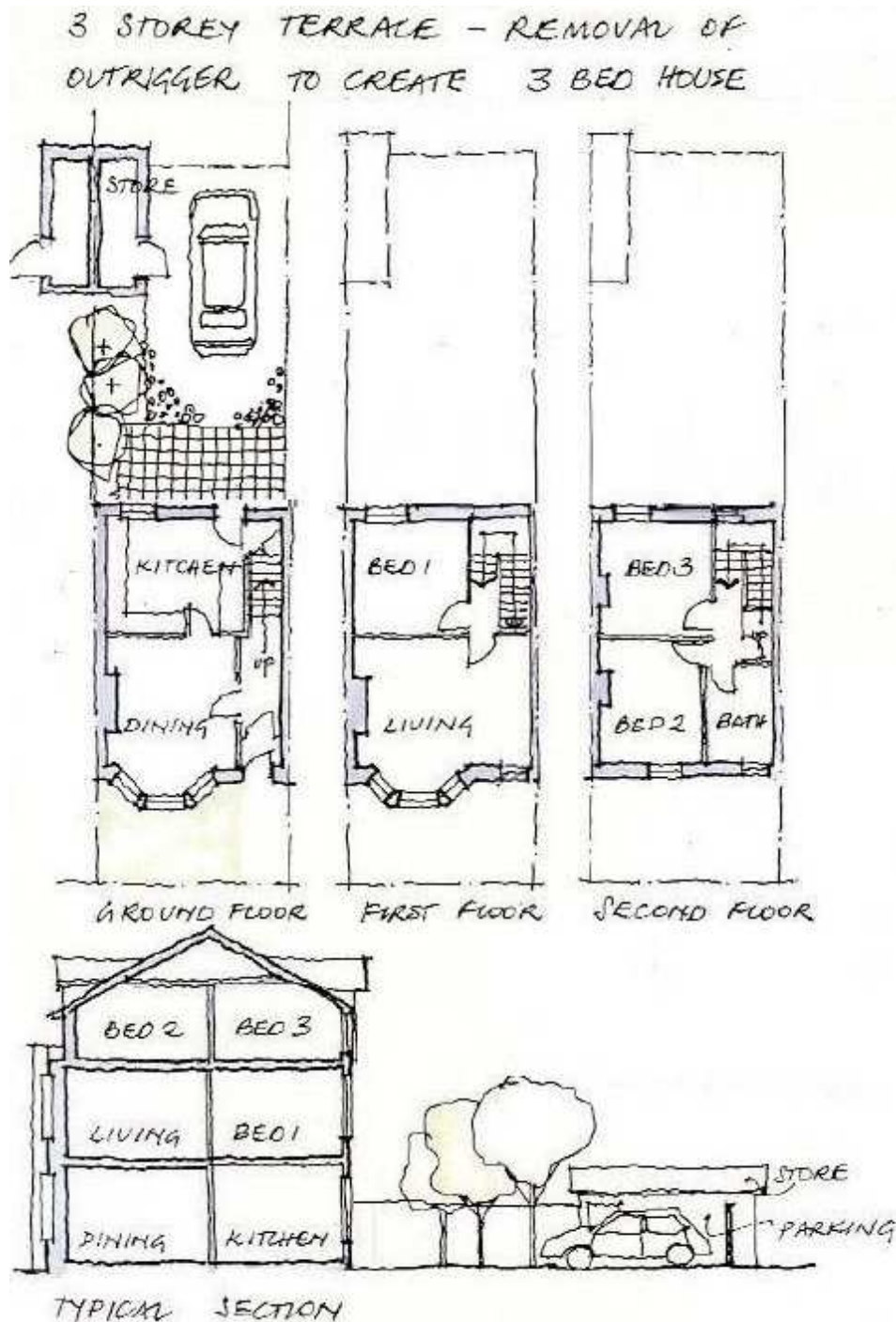
**2.2 Remodelling HMOs to Single Family Homes**

The focus for this intervention is three terraces of properties on Albert Road and Westminster Road in Masterplan Area 5. 24 terraced properties are being targeted, but because many have been subdivided there are a minimum of 49 empty homes. The high level of council ownership in these terraces provides a high degree of certainty for delivery. The entire Westminster Road terrace is empty and owned by the council. Only three terraced houses on Albert Road are occupied and in private ownership, all the other properties are empty and owned by the council.

The three terraces of properties will be directly remodelled and refurbished by the council. Extensive remodelling will see the removal of the rear outrigger to reduce internal living space and will provide 3-4 bedroom houses while providing an increase in external space. The removal of the rear outrigger on these properties will greatly reduce internal space. The smaller Westminster Road properties will reduce from 155m<sup>2</sup> to 99m<sup>2</sup> and the larger Albert Road properties from 179 m<sup>2</sup> to 106 m<sup>2</sup>. In addition to making the internal size of the properties more suitable for families the removal of the rear outrigger will significantly increase rear yard space. Market advice has indicated that the lack of private external space detracts from the West End as a place for families.

The refurbishments will be to a high standard, bringing old homes up to modern performance standards. Use of the Building Research Establishment's new standard BREEAM Domestic Refurbishment aims to bring the properties up to the equivalent of Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 / Eco Homes Very Good. The refurbishments will achieve this standard through improved thermal performance of the building fabric, mechanical ventilation and heat recovery, gas condensing boilers and solar hot water system.

### Plan 3 Initial Masterplan Remodelling Sketch



The layouts will, where practical, be to Building for Life standards. All the remodelled properties will provide generous accommodation with three double bedrooms

Since 2005 the council has remodelled over 50 properties and has amassed a great deal of experience and knowledge. Using the lessons learned in remodelling West End properties the design has evolved to better provide accommodation that modern family's desire. Specifications have also evolved through this process resulting in improved housing and also financial efficiencies. A significant issue previously has been undertaking work to pairs of houses at a time and this is not as efficient as undertaking the works to an entire terrace at once. Major works such as demolition of outriggers, reconstruction of rear wall and re-roofing offer significant efficiencies when undertaken on an entire terrace simultaneously.

The removal of the rear outrigger requires the reconstruction of the rear wall and this allows for a substantial upgrade of the properties thermal performance from a 9 inch solid brick wall to externally insulated cavity wall. Further opportunities arise from undertaking works to an entire terrace of properties at once that provide greater efficiencies in both time cost and performance. Re-roofing the properties to modern insulation standards enables significant improvement to the thermal performance and also structural alterations to support renewable energy technologies such as solar hot water or photovoltaic.

The three terraces to be remodelled and refurbished will be undertaken in three separate phases. The phasing reflects the current levels of ownership and control by the council:

- Phase 1 – Westminster Road terrace is entirely in the council's ownership and this enables early progress to be made.
- Phase 2 – Albert Road terrace located between Balmoral Road and Chatsworth Road has only one property not in the council's ownership. Discussions with the owner occupier indicate that they wish to remain in the area in a remodelled home.
- Phase 3 – Albert Road terrace located between Westminster Road and Chatsworth Road has two terraced properties not in the council's ownership, hence it is the final phase of this intervention.

Undertaking the works on a terrace by terrace basis is the most efficient method of working and provides a comprehensive solution to both the empty homes and the wider regeneration of the West End.

The council intends to let contracts directly for the remodelling and refurbishments and this offers the following advantages:

- Removal of the requirement for developer's profit
- Project management internalised
- Reduction in professional fees through in house technical resources
- Developer's finance costs associated with levered bank finance would reduce

The production of detailed plans and building specification to enable the necessary statutory approvals for Phase 1 could commence immediately. The initial specification will be produced in house. Detailed plans will be drawn up externally and these services would need to be procured over a two month period. A planning application would be submitted 3 months into the first phase and would be determined in three months. During the planning determination tenders will be issued to local and regional building contractors with the aim of being able to award the contract shortly after the planning permission is obtained. A conservative eight month build programme is anticipated to achieve practical completion December 2013.

Concurrent to the development and implementation of Phase 1 the council will work to secure either the ownership or participation of the outstanding properties in Phase 2 and 3 and this will be complete mid 2013 enabling Phase 2 and 3 to commence on site. Phase 2 is programmed to complete March 2014 and Phase 3 in September 2014.

As part of the next budget process the council is considering supporting housing regeneration through targeted use of financial tools to assist homebuyers such as the Lloyds Lend a Hand scheme where the council would provide a proportion of the deposit to enable the buyer to access a better loan to value rate and offset some of the risks that lenders a presently so averse to. Such an initiative would be focussed upon directly supporting regeneration projects.

### 2.3 Private Developer Properties

39 council owned empty properties on Balmoral Road, Chatsworth Road and Clarendon Road West will be sold to small private developers. The sale will be controlled by detailed building license agreements that will be linked to a planning permission for the refurbishment and re-use of the properties. The building license agreements will also control the timescale for refurbishment and reuse.

To ensure that the council still has considerable power in securing the desired positive outcomes for these properties the council will withhold title. The council will retain a £1 interest in the property that will enable transfer of the title upon satisfactory completion.

Defining the refurbishment with an approved planning permission enables the necessary space standards and quality of accommodation to be controlled. This approach has been successfully used by the council in the West End to convert a derelict long term empty seafront hotel into modern self contained flats. The control will restrict the refurbishment of single houses to be kept as single houses and for self contained flats prevent further subdivision.

Initial market testing informally with local developers and quality landlords has revealed good interest in these opportunities. Marketing of these opportunities could start immediately with detailed plans worked up concurrently and submitted for planning permission while the legal details and valuations are agreed.

There is considerable variation in the quality of the empty properties. The worst are fire damaged ex-squats, but there are also those that have been subject to metals thefts and others that are in a very state of disrepair and in need of full modernisation. Unfortunately there are more properties in a poor state than a good state and only a couple would be habitable with minimal works.

To bring about the controlled sale and positive reuse of these empty homes the council will:

- Develop and produce specific design solutions for planning application to be submitted that will provide;
  - Balmoral Road – three self contained flats with 2-3 bedrooms
  - Chatsworth Road – 4 bedroom houses
  - Clarendon Road West – option of two 3 bedroom maisonettes or four 2 bedroom flats



- Obtain planning permissions to which the property's sale will be tied to.
- Produce development brief for properties setting out works, standards, use, legal and financial to be utilised in marketing packs
- Procure a market agent to canvas market to develop interest, prior to obtaining planning permissions to provide a primed pool of potential developers.
- Market development opportunities

It is estimated that this process from inception to bringing properties to market will take six months. Following this the council will be in a position to negotiate valuations and the sale of properties. The first sales should complete eight months into the project.

With the planning permissions in place private developers will be able to undertake the necessary refurbishment works immediately. It is envisaged that the developers will be aiming to be as expedient as possible with the refurbishments in order to get a return on their investment as soon as possible. The variation in property condition and the scale of refurbishment required to bring them back into use means that properties could be brought back into use anywhere between three to eight months from the date of sale.

In addition to the statutory approvals for completions council officers will undertake technical inspections to ensure the compliance of completed properties satisfies the conditions in the building license agreement.

Landlords looking to invest will need to demonstrate their track record in managing properties without problems. While property condition is a factor in complaints and problems the worst issues in the private rented sector arise from poor or no management of tenants and properties. Any potential developers will need to participate in the council's Accredited Property Scheme that aims to encourage, acknowledge and actively promote good standards of privately rented accommodation, and to assist landlords and tenants to undertake their respective responsibilities to each other.

## **2.4 Privately Owned Empty Homes**

There are at least 55 privately owned empty homes in the Cluster that the council will intensively work to bring back into occupation. However, a conservative estimate of a 50% success rate in bringing these private homes back into use has been assumed. The success rate is likely to be greater and the council will work to try and bring all the properties back into use.

The council has a number of experienced officers that will target these empty properties. Initially the approach is gentle and informative and is then followed up by a carrot and stick approach.

The starting point for intervention is to commence friendly dialogue to establish the particularities of the property being vacant and the issues faced by the owned to get the property reoccupied. Officers are experienced in supporting owners of empty homes to address the issues they are facing. Initially this is in the form of discussions and provision of information and signposting. More intensive support can lead to site visits to detail works required. The production of a schedule of works is provided to assist property owners to

obtain the quotes for the necessary work from builders is also offered. In particular circumstances officers have obtained competitive quotes from a number of experienced builders to provide the owners with greater confidence in commissioning the works.

At this point if gentle advice and assistance hasn't worked it is necessary to highlight the range of legal powers and remedies the council has to bring the property back into use including:

- Housing Act 1985, section 17
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990, section 226
- Enforced sales procedures – Law of Property Act 1925
- Dangerous or dilapidated buildings – Building Act 1984, sections 77 & 78
- Statutory nuisance (statutory nuisance or premises which can affect health) Environmental Protection Act, 1990, Section 80 Building Act 1984, Section 76
- Compulsory purchase orders

To bring back into use the most challenging properties, in terms of building condition, the council will offer limited grant assistance. The grant rate will be 60% council and 40% from the property owner. Grants are only paid out upon completion of an approved specification and are conditional on the property being occupied. Repayment of grant is liable upon disposal of the property and is on a sliding scale, reducing after three years.

However grant assistance is not always appropriate or in some circumstances where the property owner does not have the funds to match to a grant it will be necessary to undertake the works in default and place a charge on the property. The council would then pursue an enforced sale.

Supporting technical officers are an experienced administration team that ensure accurate records and documentation is in place to enable legal powers to be utilised effectively. Recent successes in utilising Section 215 powers under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 have demonstrated the importance of solid administration support.

There is a particular problem with empty flats above shops and ex-retail units that will require specialist support and intervention to address the issues preventing their reuse and occupation. Support to convert some retail units back into residential accommodation will be provided and officers have previously worked on a number of similar reinstatements.

At the end of September 2011, there were over 1,000 long term empty properties in the district, many of which are residential properties, and the number empty for over a two year period exceeds 300 dwellings. Outside of the work completed previously through specific housing regeneration areas, much of the work around empty homes has been of a reactive nature, leading from complaints received by the Council from neighbouring residents. However, in the light of bringing empty homes back into use being ratified as a key priority for the Council, in September 2012 when the council is working towards setting its budget for 2013/2014, Cabinet will be asked to commit resources to fund a dedicated staff post to deliver a more strategic approach to tackling empty homes with improved targeting and enforcement procedures where necessary. If possible, the council may also identify some financial resources to facilitate a loan scheme to owners of empty homes as part of its future empty homes strategy.

To compliment the future strategic approach around reducing empty homes, the Council has supported the bid submitted to the Homes and Communities Agency made by Methodist

Action North West, who hope to receive funding to bring 150 empty homes back into use across a sub-region within Lancashire. Lancaster district intends to take full advantage of this opportunity, and will work very closely with Methodist Action to identify suitable empty homes that can be returned to use with the grant funding available. Furthermore, Lancaster City Council will shortly be seeking approval to enter into a partnership with Methodist Action to deliver a social lettings agency across the district, and has already secured funding to support an officer post to manage this scheme at a local level, which will dovetail with the work around empty homes and result in an improved private rented sector housing offer for local residents through the Council's Housing Options Team. Should Methodist Action's bid be successful it will together with Cluster of Empty Homes initiative provide a very robust mechanism towards bringing as many empty homes back into use as possible.

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### 3 APPENDICIES

#### 3.1 Counting Empty Homes

The data presented in Table 2 details the numbers of empty homes and the variable numbers of empty homes depending on the definition. Certainly the council tax data masks the true number of homes that are particular to the West End's housing market failure. The evidence has been collated from planning application records, physical inspections of the properties and information from the previous owners. There is a considerable disparity between the council tax number of units and the real number of units within these very large houses. The data entered onto the Clusters spreadsheet pro-forma utilises the minimum vacant units numbers which is considered to be a very cautious and prudent calculation. If the higher maximum figure were utilised it would have a substantial impact on the unit costs of this intervention. It is the nature of the West End properties and the issues the area faces that there are hidden units, many evolved from guesthouses and many were owner occupiers that took in lodgers in bedsits and flatlets.

**Table 2 - Direct Remodelling and refurbishment of Council owned empty Homes**

No.	Address	Accomodation description and make up	Council Tax Units	Occupied Units	Max Vacant Units	Min Vacant Units	Remodelled Empty Units
78	Westminster Rd	Single house	1	0	1	1	0
76	Westminster Rd	HMO truckers accomodation	1	0	3	3	1
74	Westminster Rd	Single house - 1998 change of use from guest house to a private dwelling	1	0	6	1	1
72	Westminster Rd	Single house	1	0	3	1	1
70	Westminster Rd	1973 application to convert house into 3 self contained flats	1	0	3	3	1
68	Westminster Rd	Single house	1	0	6	1	1
66	Westminster Rd	Single house - 1995 change of use from guest house into single dwelling	1	0	7	1	1
64	Westminster Rd	HMO - 1984 Continuance of the property.s present use as two flatlets - 3 units	1	0	3	3	1
62	Westminster Rd	Locks on bedroom doors - 6 bedsits	1	0	6	1	1
60	Westminster Rd	Has locks on doors indicating bedsits with sinks in every room	1	0	5	1	1
		<b>Total</b>			<b>42</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>

**Morecambe's West End: Empty Homes Project Plan April 2012**

No.	Address	Accommodation description and make up	Council Tax Units	Occupied Units	Max Vacant Units	Min Vacant Units	Remodelled Empty Units
77	Albert Rd / 38 Chatsworth Rd	HMO 6 flats with separate meters and postboxes	6		6	6	1
79	Albert Rd	1981 change of use from dwellinghouse to a guest house - sub-metered electricity in bedsits, fire alarm system, 2 kitchens, 3 bathrooms and what looked like 3 bedsits and 2 large/double room bedsits = 5 bedsits	1	0	5	1	1
81/83	Albert Rd	Former 18 bed guesthouse, was vacant when Masterplan began but was about to be converted to a hostel	1	0	18	2	2
85	Albert Rd	1979 Change of use from holiday flats and private living accommodation for mentally handicapped persons - has fire alarm/ emergency lighting - 7 rooms with locks with shared kitchens and bathrooms.	1	0	7	1	1
87	Albert Rd	HMO 4 flats	1	0	4	4	1
89	Albert Rd	Single house - former guesthouse	1	1	0	0	1
91	Albert Rd	HMO 3 units	1	0	3	3	1
51	Balmoral Rd	1981 Change of use of guest house to 3 self contained flats	1	0	3	3	1
<b>Total</b>					<b>46</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>
No.	Address	Accommodation description and make up	Council Tax Units	Occupied Units	Max Vacant Units	Min Vacant Units	Remodelled Empty Units
58	Westminster Rd	Single house but was guest house HMO prior to grant aided conversion	1	0	1	1	1
61/63	Albert Road	4 flats and 1 office on groundfloor (office was previously 2 flats)	5	0	5	5	2
65/67	Albert Road	4 flats 1 office - now no longer knocked through and 3 flats in each	5	0	6	5	2
69	Albert Rd	Single house - 1996 application refused for certificate of lawfulness of use as a house of multi-occupation		0	1	1	1
71	Albert Rd	HMO - 3 flats - Change of use from private dwellinghouse to guest house	3	3	0	0	1
73	Albert Rd	Guesthouse with 4 bedrooms and owner occupier accommodation	1	0	5	2	1
75	Albert Rd / 41 Chatsworth Rd	HMO - O/O + 4 tenants in flats upstairs		5	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>					<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Direct Remodelling and refurbishment of Council owned empty Homes - TOTALS</b>					<b>106</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>24</b>

Table 3 details the empty properties in the private developer council owned properties for which there is a much lesser disparity between the minimum and maximum units but the disparity remains between these figures and the council tax records.

**Table 3- Private Developer Refurbishment of Council Owned Properties**

	Address	Accommodation description and make up	Council Tax Units	Occupied Units	Max Vacant Units	Min Vacant Units	Refurbished Empty Units
54	Chatsworth Rd	Yale locks on doors indicates bedsit use	1		1	1	0
50	Chatsworth Rd	3 flats/ HMO - 1 exempt council tax bill forgf flat 1	1		3	3	1
42	Chatsworth Rd	HMO with 3 flats (3 spereate electric meters) - Application withdrawn to convert 3 self contained flats			3	3	1
53	Balmoral Rd	3 flats (but most recently used as single house?)	1		3	3	3
55	Balmoral Rd	4 flats including basement - 4 council tax bills - 2000 Lawful Development Certificate for use as a self contained flat in basement	4		4	4	3
57	Balmoral Rd	3 flats	3		3	3	3
61	Balmoral Rd	3 flats	1		3	3	3
67	Balmoral Rd	7 flats	1		7	7	3
69	Balmoral Rd	6 flats - 6 electric meters	1		6	6	0
		<b>Total</b>			<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>17</b>
67	Clarendon Road	4 flats & 4 council tax bills	4	0	4	4	4
73	Clarendon Road	4 flats but only one council tax bill	1	0	4	4	4
83	Clarendon Road	7 bedsits - firedamaged	1	0	7	4	4
		<b>Total</b>			<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Private Developer Refurbishment of Council Owned Properties - TOTALS</b>					<b>41</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>29</b>

### 3.2 Council Tax Empty Homes List

Table 4 lists the council tax data for the cluster and is split into the five masterplan areas. Manual additions to the list have been made for a couple of fire damaged properties that were not listed but are empty.

**Table 4 Council Tax Data on Empty Homes**

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Area 2						
Prop Ref	Empty From	Band	Property Address			
101607190195	05/09/2011	A	FLAT 4	19 WEST END ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4DJ
101607190198	16/08/2011	A	FLAT 5	19 WEST END ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4DJ
101607190251	29/02/2008	A	FLAT 1(A)	25 WEST END ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4DJ
101607190252	29/02/2008	A	FLAT 2(B)	25 WEST END ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4DJ
101607190254	29/02/2008	A	FLAT 4(D)	25 WEST END ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4DJ
101607190255	29/02/2008	A	FLAT 5(E)	25 WEST END ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4DJ
101607190393	03/07/2006	A	BASEMENT FLAT	39 WEST END ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4DJ
101607190462	02/12/2008	A	FLAT 2 FIRST FLOOR	46 WEST END ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4DJ
101607190496	12/10/2007	A	FLAT 5	47/49 WEST END ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4DJ
101607190456	30/08/2011	A	FLAT 5	45 WEST END ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4DR
101607190513	28/07/2008	A	FLAT 2 KEER COURT	51 WEST END ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4DR
101607190530	01/06/2007	B		53 WEST END ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4DR
101101070102	01/04/2011	A		10 CEDAR STREET	MORECAMBE	LA4 4DS
101000030020	01/04/2010	C		2 ALBANY ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4DT
101304390850	28/03/1999	A		85 MARINE ROAD WEST	MORECAMBE	LA4 4ER
Area 3						
Prop Ref	Empty From	Band	Property Address			
101000300490	15/09/2010	A	FLAT 1	49 BALMORAL ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JR
101607270200	09/08/2011	B		20 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JB
101607270471	26/10/2010	B		47 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JA
101607270190	27/07/2009	A	GROUND FLOOR FLAT	19 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JA
101607270192	03/01/2011	A	SECOND FLOOR FLAT	19 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JA
101101160260	13/11/2008	A	FLAT 1	26 CLAREMONT CRESCENT	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HH
101101160262	17/05/2010	A	FLAT 3	26 CLAREMONT CRESCENT	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HH
101101160263	09/02/2009	A	FLAT 4	26 CLAREMONT CRESCENT	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HH
101101160265	03/05/2010	A	FLAT 6	26 CLAREMONT CRESCENT	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HH
101000040172	31/10/2000	A		17A ALBERT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4UD
101000040803	07/09/2011	A	SECOND FLOOR FLAT	80 ALBERT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HZ



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AREA 5						
Prop Ref	Empty From	Band	Property Address			
101405590841	09/05/2008	A	FLAT 2	84 REGENT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QG
101405590521	20/06/2011	A	APARTMENT 1	52 REGENT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1TE
101405590640	13/07/2006	A		64 REGENT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1TF
101405590660	16/08/2005	C		66 REGENT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1TF
101405590681	17/03/2006	C		68 REGENT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1TF
101405590720	23/03/2006	C		72 REGENT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1TF
101000040632	01/07/2005	A	FLAT 2	61/63 ALBERT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HD
101000040634	01/07/2005	A	FLAT 4	61/63 ALBERT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HD
101000040635	01/07/2005	A	FLAT 5	61/63 ALBERT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HD
101000040636	01/07/2005	A	FLAT 6	61/63 ALBERT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HD
101000040323	28/06/2006	A		32A ALBERT ROAD (THE FLAT)	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HF
101101200550	27/06/2011	A	BEYOND THE FRINGE	55 CLARENDON ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HT
101101200573	11/09/2010	A	FIRST & SECOND FLOOR MAISONETTE	57 CLARENDON ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HT
101000040650	24/02/2005	B		65 ALBERT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HY
101000040690	11/10/2007	B		69 ALBERT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HY
101000040730	17/03/2006	A		73 ALBERT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HY
101000040790	02/05/2006	B		79 ALBERT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HZ
101000040810	04/05/2004	C		81-83 ALBERT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HZ
101000040850	19/03/2007	B		85 ALBERT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HZ
101000040870	30/07/2004	B		87 ALBERT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HZ
101000040910	28/11/2007	B		91 ALBERT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HZ
101607270702	12/07/2007	B		70 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JB
101607270843	17/03/2006	A	THIRD FLOOR FLAT	84 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JB
101607270600	02/03/2006	B		60 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JE
101607270620	23/03/2006	B		62 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JE
101607270640	22/03/2005	B		64 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JE
101607270660	13/03/2006	B		66 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JE
101607270680	17/03/2006	B		68 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JE
101607270720	02/03/2006	A		72 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JE

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101607270740	31/03/2006	B		74 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JE
101607270760	01/04/2008	B		76 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JE
101607270780	19/04/2007	B		78 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JE
101607270841	20/02/2006	A	FIRST FLOOR FLAT	84 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JE
101607270842	11/01/2006	A	SECOND FLOOR FLAT	84 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JE
101101100382	09/10/2006	A	FLAT 2	38 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JF
101101100383	19/06/2006	A	FLAT 3	38 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JF
101101100384	24/10/2006	A	FLAT 4	38 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JF
101101100385	12/06/2006	A	FLAT 5	38 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JF
101101100386	21/11/2005	A	FLAT 6	38 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JF
101101100431	02/06/2003	B		43 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JF
101101100501	14/08/2006	A	FIRST FLOOR FLAT	50 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JF
101101100502	06/03/2006	A	SECOND FLOOR FLAT	50 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JF
101101100381	03/07/2006	A	FLAT 1	38 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JH
				42 Chatsworth Road	fire damaged not on list	
101101100440	07/07/2010	B		44 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JH
101101100470	11/04/2006	B		47 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JH
101101100491	03/06/2006	B		49 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JH
101101100500	17/02/2006	A	GROUND FLOOR FLAT	50 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JH
101101100510	13/01/2011	A	GROUND FLOOR FLAT 1	51 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JH
101101100511	27/02/2009	A	1ST FLOOR FLAT(FLAT 2)	51 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JH
101101100540	24/08/2006	C		54 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JH
				56 Chatsworth Road	fire damaged not on list	
101101100590	16/05/2007	A	GROUND AND FIRST FLOORS	59 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JH
101101100592	16/05/2007	A	SECOND FLOOR FLAT	59 CHATSWORTH ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JH
101000300510	11/09/2006	C		51 BALMORAL ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JS
101000300530	27/03/2006	C		53 BALMORAL ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JS
101000300550	28/04/2006	A	BASEMENT FLAT	55 BALMORAL ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JS
101000300551	28/04/2006	A	FLAT 1 GROUND FLOOR	55 BALMORAL ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JS
101000300552	28/04/2006	A	FLAT 2 FIRST FLOOR	55 BALMORAL ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JS
101000300553	23/06/2006	A	FLAT 3 SECOND FLOOR	55 BALMORAL ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JS
101000300571	19/03/2007	C		57 BALMORAL ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JS
101000300611	03/03/2006	C		61 BALMORAL ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JS

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101000300670	21/01/2005	C		67 BALMORAL ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JS
101000300690	07/03/2005	C		69 BALMORAL ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4JS
101000040450	20/04/2011	B		45 ALBERT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA4 4HX
101405590381	01/11/1996	A	FLAT ABOVE SHOP	38 REGENT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QN
	20/02/2006	Business		60 Regent and 80-84 Westminster		LA4 4JE
	21/05/2007	Business		76 Regent Road		LA3 1TF
	31/10/2009	Business		61-63 Albert Road		LA4 4HD
	28/03/2008	Business		43a Chatsworth Road Vets		LA4 4JF
<b>AREA 8</b>						
Prop Ref	Empty From	Band	Property Address			
101607650170	10/02/2009	A		17 YORKSHIRE STREET	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QE
101607650215	22/09/2000	A	SECOND FLOOR FLAT	21 YORKSHIRE STREET	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QE
101607650322	15/07/1999	A	FLAT ABOVE	32 YORKSHIRE STREET	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QE
101607650412	20/12/2010	A	FIRST FLOOR FLAT	41 YORKSHIRE STREET	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QF
101607650431	26/11/2007	A	MAISONETTE FF & SF	43A YORKSHIRE STREET	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QF
101607650691	06/09/2011	A	FLAT REAR OF	69A YORKSHIRE STREET	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QF
101607180211	28/08/2006	A	THE FLAT	21 WEST STREET	MORECAMBE	LA3 1RB
101405290331	01/06/2010	A	MAISONETTE 1ST & 2ND FLOORS	33 PARLIAMENT STREET	MORECAMBE	LA3 1RH
101000060160	30/12/2000	B		16 ALEXANDRA ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1TG
101000060014	15/11/2005	A	FLAT 2	1A ALEXANDRA ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1TH
<b>AREA 9</b>						
Prop Ref	Empty From	Band	Property Address			
101101200940	16/11/2009	A		94 CLARENDON ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1SD
101607271210	09/09/2011	B		121 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1SG
101607271420	18/06/2009	B		142 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1SH
101607271250	25/05/2007	B		125 WESTMINSTER ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1SJ
101101630352	01/04/2009	A	FLAT 3	35 DEVONSHIRE ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QT
101101200671	12/11/2009	A	BASEMENT FLAT	67 CLARENDON ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QY

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101101200672	23/05/2005	A	GROUND FLOOR FLAT	67 CLARENDON ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QY
101101200673	18/04/2005	A	FIRST FLOOR FLAT	67 CLARENDON ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QY
101101200674	23/01/2006	A	SECOND FLOOR FLAT	67 CLARENDON ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QY
101101200712	02/11/2003	A	FLAT 1	71 CLARENDON ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QY
101101200713	26/07/2004	A	FLAT 2	71 CLARENDON ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QY
101101200714	30/11/2003	A	FLAT 3	71 CLARENDON ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QY
101101200715	29/09/2003	A	FLAT 4	71 CLARENDON ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QY
101101200730	30/07/2004	B		73 CLARENDON ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QY
101101200741	05/10/2007	B		74 CLARENDON ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QZ
101405590350	30/05/2011	A		35 REGENT ROAD	MORECAMBE	LA3 1QQ
			83 Clarendon Road	fire damaged not on list		LA3 1QY

### 3.3 West End Masterplan

In 2004 Lancaster City Council, English Partnerships and the North West Development Agency endorsed an Action Plan for the Regeneration of the coastal town of Morecambe. The plan identified that the housing and social problems, and the associated environment and image issues, particularly in the West End, have a serious effect on the economy and therefore the economic future of the town. This led to the development of a specific Masterplan for the West End.

The Masterplan brief recognised that significant change was required to the built environment of the area to maximise its potential and that the development of a spatial strategy would need to consider the strategic objectives identified for the West End in the Morecambe Action Plan:

- To increase the attractiveness of the West End as an area to live for existing residents and to attract new people to move into the area as long term residents, having a knock-on impact to improve the overall image of the resort
- To increase the proportion of owner occupiers and reduce the private rented sector as a means of improving stability
- To diversify the types of housing available
- To increase the amount of useable quality open space
- To improve the quality of the built environment
- To assure the sustainability of local shops through consolidation and establishing a niche market identity

The outline for the development brief for the West End Masterplan plan was to:

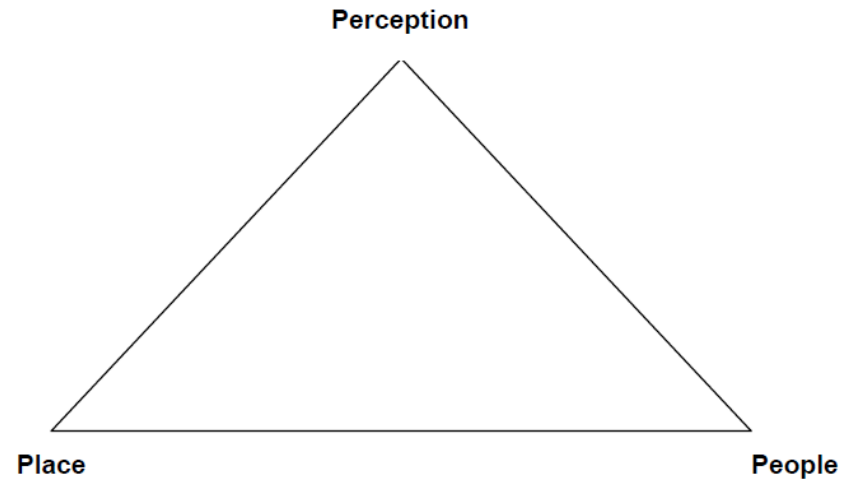
**Identify the role that the West End can play in the local housing market set in the context of the districts economic future and with reference to local housing needs. Develop, consult and finalise proposals for a spatial strategy for the West End.**

During the development of the West End Masterplan the Collaboration Agreement was signed on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2004 between Lancaster City Council (LCC) and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) (under its previous incarnation as English Partnerships). In advance of the formal completion of Masterplan priorities the £2.2M funding was targeted on properties where the following apply:

- Houses in multiple occupation on the market for sale
- Large terraced ex-guest houses on the market for sale
- Identified vacant large premises
- Identified unoccupied redundant commercial premises
- Seafront guest houses on the market for sale
- Other terraced property with remodelling / improvement potential

The partners embarked upon delivery of an ambitious and far reaching housing project in the West End of Morecambe. The main aim was to tackle the problems of the oversupply of houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) and the social consequences for the neighbourhood.

The West End Masterplan completed its extensive consultation over the course of 2004 and was adopted as a supplementary planning document by Council in February 2005. The Masterplan set out a vision for the West End that was based upon a three cornered set of principles:



The '3 P's', are designed to convey guiding principles and the approach that should be taken to delivery of a new Morecambe West End.

The key principles behind the perception strategy encompass:

- a. The redefined vision for the West End encompassing high quality living, working and incidental leisure / tourism offers
- b. A broad range of housing aimed at a number of areas of need as identified in the Couttie report
- c. A high quality retail offer, based upon a blend of local and specialist shopping activity
- d. A home for higher education, based upon the possible establishment of a campus for St Martins College
- e. A high quality food / drink offer based upon a number of new outlets in the West End
- f. A redefined accommodation strategy based upon some higher quality self-catering and specialist 'boutique' hotel accommodation, thus continuing the envisaged success that the Midland Hotel project will instigate.

The place making strategy for the West End will draw out the following qualities:

- a. A place where people want to live as homeowners for the long term

- b. A place where unfit homes are replaced by high quality housing choices across a range of affordability levels
- c. A place where people want to educate their children in high quality pre-school and primary schools
- d. A place where people want to shop for local services and goods as well as for their discretionary and specialist requirements
- e. A place where people want to eat, socialise and mix in a friendly and beautiful environment
- f. A place where people want to enjoy views, vistas and open spaces populated by sculpture, public art and high quality street furniture
- g. A place that mixes soft and hard landscape in a clever and complementary manner drawing out the best aspects of the sustainable urban neighbourhood
- h. A place that is truly sustainable in all aspects of a living community

To deliver on the vision for place there will be a requirement to re-structure the West End in a physical sense. The Masterplan for the West End presented in this report identifies levels of intervention and the overall prospects for change in place making. They range from high level high intervention strategies that would see significant change in the physical structure and tenure in the neighbourhood through to more minimalist intervention approaches and would seek to stabilise market conditions and improve public realm and the living environment.

These projects will transform the West End from its current state to a sustainable urban neighbourhood exhibiting the very best attributes of urban living along the seafront. A key driver in changing the current definition of 'place' is to re-structure the tenure mix in the West End, with a move away from HMOs towards more sustainable living principles manifested in homeownership and effective landlord accreditation schemes.

The plan for people is therefore an extremely challenging one, yet it encompasses the following core objectives:

- a. Improvement in local school provision, building on the County Council's education strategy and taking forward proposals for enhanced local school opportunities, which may also include pre-school provision
- b. Weaving into the strategy a 'healthy living ideal' which takes the best features of Morecambe's reputation for healthy living forward in a multifaceted approach to this issue
- c. Plans to change the housing market, by changing tenure mix and taking out of the supply chain HMO's and absentee landlord accommodation

- d. The delivery of affordable homes identified as a core requirement in the district housing strategy - this should principally be delivered through new home ownership options. This will have beneficial impact on the district as whole as it will take pressure off other overheated parts of the borough
- e. By creation of new employment opportunities, based around a number of economic initiatives particularly in the fields of arts, digital technologies, retail and leisure
- f. Higher education, the delivery of a higher education campus if possible and all that it brings with it will have a terrific positive impact on the West End
- g. Sustainable Living Principles that will be woven into the plan

Following the adoption of the Masterplan Chatsworth Gardens was formalised as the flagship project in the West End and was supported by the HCA. Chatsworth Gardens forms a cornerstone of the comprehensive masterplan for the regeneration of the whole of the West End of Morecambe, a core council priority. The rationale behind the particular Chatsworth Gardens scheme is to address failure of the housing market in the West End of Morecambe, to stimulate the provision of housing for families, singles and couples, in order to create a more balanced and long-term sustainable community, with a greater choice of housing and tenure.

It was always intended to create an exemplary housing scheme to act as a catalyst for private sector investment and contribute to the regeneration of Morecambe's West End by tackling the lack of family housing and helping to create a more balanced community with more families and the greater choice of housing and tenure. In essence, the project aims to reinforce the changes and regeneration already happening in the local area by addressing the lack of appropriate family housing, working toward creating a more balanced community with a greater choice of housing stock.

### **3.4 Project Area Background**

Morecambe developed with the popularity of coastal resort tourism and was a thriving seaside resort from 1890 to the mid-twentieth century. Morecambe, like almost every other traditional seaside resort within the UK, has suffered from serious social deprivation over the last 40 years or so, following the decline of the traditional seaside holiday. Visitor numbers have also suffered as a result of declining amenities including the loss of the West End and Central Piers, Morecambe's swimming pool and Frontierland.

The British seaside tourism decline in Morecambe was to a certain degree delayed by the construction of the two nuclear power stations which effectively meant that over a 5-10 year period much of the traditional holiday accommodation was taken up by a transient workforce involved in the construction of the two plants. Following their completion, many properties in the area were subdivided into bedsits or one/ two bedroom flats occupied by tenants largely supported by state benefits.



At one stage two of the wards had the highest unemployment rates in Lancashire. Most recent figures from the Office of National Statistics do not show the current unemployment rate. The neighbourhood in which Chatsworth gardens is located in August 2007 has 6% and 19% Jobseeker's allowance and Incapacity Benefit claimants, which compares to the Lancaster average of 2% and 7% respectively.

Today Morecambe has a population of circa 45,000 and there is a preponderance of over 65's. Morecambe and the West End offer contrasting pictures when analysed by population type. The West End exhibits below average (compared to regional and national) levels of retired people (15.2%) but above average proportions of the population in the 0-15 (21.3%) and 15-24 (12.5%) age cohorts. Morecambe as a whole has a much older population (20.8%), with fewer children (19.0%) and a smaller proportion of the population are of working age.

As a result of the increasing focus on the provision of employment in and around the White Lund area, located between the two main centres of Lancaster and Morecambe, the Morecambe housing stock has continued to be popular with the younger working population.

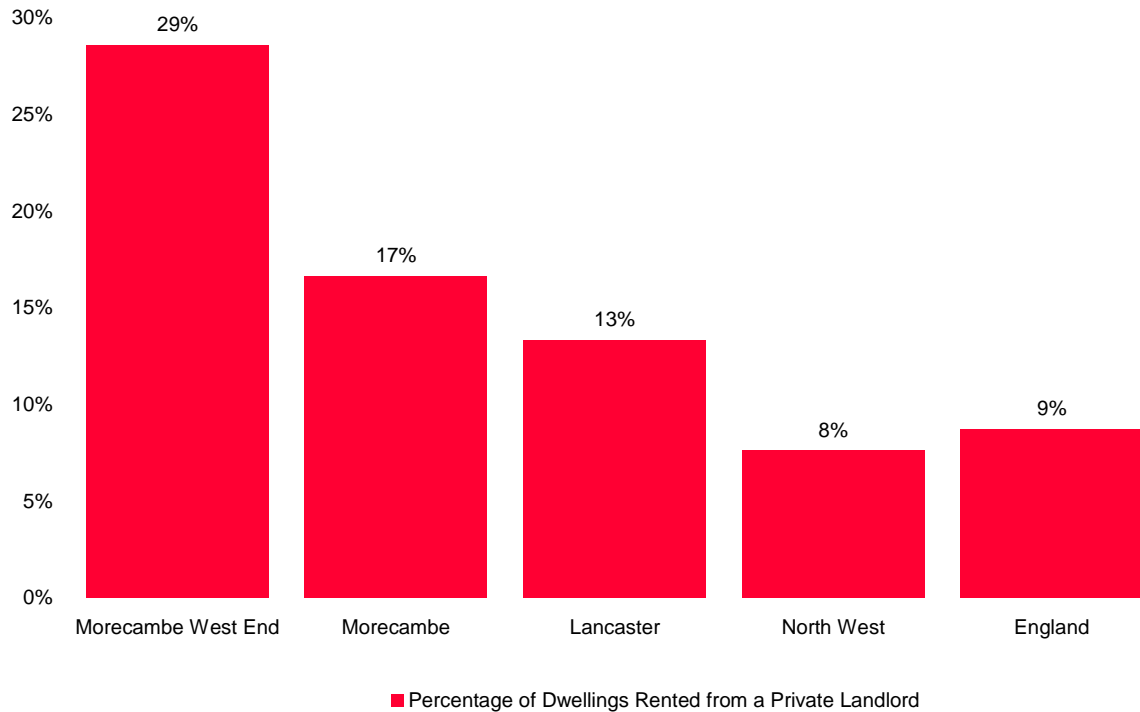
Over the last 7 years this trend has accelerated as a direct consequence of the rapidly escalating value of properties within the Lancaster district. Many first time buyers have been forced out of the market in Lancaster, and as a result have looked towards Morecambe to the direct benefit of the more traditional format of housing stock of semi-detached and 2 or 3 bed terraced houses.

Evidence shows that employment and income deprivation are extreme in Morecambe's West End. According to both of these measures, the Chatsworth Gardens site area is within the top 0.5% of the most deprived Super Output Areas in England. There is also a severity of education deprivation and subsequently the occupational structure of the working age population is largely skewed towards lower value added occupations and a high degree of benefit dependency.

Crime levels in the West End are amongst the highest within the Lancaster District for a variety of offences. For each offence the rate of occurrence is significantly higher in the West End than in the Lancaster District as a whole, and recent figures show that crime levels are rising.

In terms of housing in the West End, statistics suggest that there are very few family sized households (3 to 5 persons) (28.3%) and a very high proportion of one-person households (39.4%). Table 1 details the percentages of dwellings rented from a private landlord for the West End of Morecambe which is 20% higher in comparison to that of the national average and a further 1% to the average for the North West. The high volume is due to the HMOs within the location of the West End.

**Table 1 Percentage of Private Rented Dwellings in West End**



Morecambe's West End has 38% of semi detached dwellings, 4% of detached dwellings, and 15% of apartments in a converted or shared house (HMOs), 14% of flats in purpose built blocks and 3% of dwellings being in shared dwellings. By comparison to the North West in particular only have 2% of dwellings in converted flats (HMOs).

Figures for the North West Region and England only show percentages of 18% and 13 % respectively of combined flatted type dwellings, which by comparison to the West End of Morecambe level of 32% is considerably higher. This oversupply of flatted dwellings currently supplies the lower income households and transient population that typify areas of deprivation.

The Housing Condition Survey, 2004 shows that 30% of the houses in Morecambe's West End are either unfit for habitation or defective. This is 16% higher than the level for Lancaster District as a whole, thus illustrating a strong need for improving the quality of the housing stock.

The statistics support the need for a restructuring of the housing stock in the West End in order to attract new people to the area, especially families, thus diversifying the population base and contributing to the sustainability of the area.

Furthermore, many of the policy and strategy documents reviewed here recognise the importance of housing within regeneration strategies and the need for sustainable communities. The policy context shows that there is a government commitment to raising the standard of housing and the civic environment.

The Morecambe Resort Action Plan states that the local economy can be strengthened by enhancing the housing, tourism and retail markets and attracting new investment. Improving the residential market and fabric of Morecambe, especially in the West End area, is paramount in achieving the regeneration ambitions for the town. The Resort Action Plan recognises that more stable communities are required in Morecambe, with people living in attractive environments with a choice of good quality housing supported by a range of facilities and services.

The West End area was previously designated as a Housing Renewal Area. Significant investment has been made in the area to improve housing in the neighbourhood. However, despite some improvements in the quality of the stock delivered through the Renewal Area, the West End still suffers from a complex set of social issues. These include a transient population, high crime rates, anti-social behaviour and benefit dependency. It is considered that these problems are in-part caused and exacerbated by the structure of the housing stock in the neighbourhood, specifically:

- A high proportion of large houses (three to five storey properties built as guest houses but converted to houses in multiple occupation)
- High levels of poor quality private rented stock
- High density
- Lack of open space
- Lack of sites for the development of new housing that meet modern requirements

The need to regenerate the residential areas of Morecambe (especially in the West End) is central to meeting the aim of making the town an attractive place to live, work and visit. The attractiveness and functionality of the West End needs to be enhanced to ensure that it meets the needs of local residents and encourages people to move into and invest in Morecambe in the long-term.

In 2004 the HCA provided initial funding to fund property acquisitions to trigger change and to prepare a detailed Master Plan for the West End area, providing a template for future development and funding bids.

The key principle behind the Masterplan is for the West End to remain a predominantly residential area, but one that accommodates a more balanced community, with more families, a greater choice of housing and tenure. The Masterplan was completed at the end of 2004 and has

received support from Lancaster City Council, the West End Partnership (WEP), English Partnerships, the North West Development Agency and Adactus Housing Association.

Winning Back Morecambe's West End Masterplan and Delivery Strategy was prepared in 2005, and is based on the aim of respecting and capitalising on the position of the West End's proximity to the seafront with its panoramic views over Morecambe Bay. Again, the strategy identifies a three-cornered set of principals to focus the regeneration of Morecambe: Place, People and Perception. The strategy aims to drive change in the town by addressing the negative perceptions of the West End, facilitating place making; and re-addressing the profile of the people that live within the West End.

The Masterplan was adopted by the City Council as Special Planning Guidance to the Lancaster District Plan in February 2005. The Masterplan outlines the vision for the West End of Morecambe as an exceptional place to live, work and play.

At the local level, the Morecambe Resort Action Plan, and the West End Masterplan both highlight the negative effects caused by the low perception of the area amongst residents, developers, and the wider community. More specifically there is recognition of problems associated with former guest houses being converted into HMOs, and notes the implications in terms of a transient population which creates unstable communities and reduces the attractiveness for others.

### **3.5 Community Consultation**

The Winning Back Morecambe's West End Masterplan was developed by a multi agency steering group which included community representation through the West End Partnership, along with representation from the City Council, County Council, English Partnerships, the Housing Corporation, Adactus Housing Group, NWDA and the MP for Morecambe and Lunesdale. The initial scope of the Masterplan was set following a day long consultations event where the local community was asked what issues they wanted to see addressed. The options for addressing those issues were then developed through a two day Enquiry by Design event which included expert professional advisors working through potential interventions with representatives of the local community. The final options for intervention were then agreed by the Steering Group before going out to a three day consultation event held at Heysham High in September 2004. A further public meeting was held in December 2004 at the Platform which was attended by approximately 300 people. Following this event the final Masterplan was agreed by the Steering Group in December 2004. The Masterplan was subsequently adopted by Cabinet as a supplementary planning document to the Lancaster District Plan at its meeting in February 2005.

Chatsworth Gardens has specifically been subject to further detailed consultation process. The initial development brief was discussed which formed the basis of the developer selection process was developed and agreed in consultation with the West End Partnership. The current proposals for Chatsworth Gardens and the West End have been developed with support from local councillors. It is envisaged that as part of

the further development of new proposals that further community consultation would take place prior as the scheme progresses. This would be in addition to the formal statutory consultation required for obtaining planning permission.

### **3.6 Chatsworth Gardens**

Located in Masterplan area 5 Chatsworth Gardens aims to address the particular housing market failure issues of the West End of over supply of 1 bed units and HMOs, poor property condition, empty homes and poor quality environment. The location of Chatsworth Gardens was greatly influenced by the large size of the properties, the poor quality of the stock, the number of HMOs and empty properties and therefore offered the best location to introduce new stock to change the mix and address the housing market failure. The objectives of the proposal are to:

- Attract families and long-term residents to live and work in and near the town
- Create a more balanced community
- Reverse the negative perception of Morecambe's West End as a place to live
- Reduce the number of HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation)
- Kick-starting public/private investment in the area;
- Creating confidence in the market – to show that family housing is possible and
- hence have a catalytic effect (along with the other interventions)
- Deliver quality housing stock to Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3
- Address crime and social conditions in the area
- Act as a demonstration to the market in terms of the standard and quality of housing that should be delivered in the Masterplan area

Complimenting the refurbishment of empty homes in this area is the redevelopment of the very largest properties on Regent Road. This provides a comprehensive solution to the site through a mixture of public and private investment that overcomes the current economic challenges.

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