



**RENOVATION POLICY
DOCUMENT
(GRANTS & ASSISTANCE)**

Full Document

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CONTENTS

1.	Acknowledgements Cabinet Member ~ Housing & Community Safety Stakeholder Consultees	3
2.	Purpose of Policy Document	4
3.	Strategic Context	4
4.	Delivery Mechanisms Background Current Provision Proposed Provision	10
5.	Forms of Renovation Assistance Forms of Assistance ~ Headings Brief Details of Assistance	12
6.	Eligibility Criteria	21
	6.1 Form of application	6.2 Qualifying conditions
	6.3 Preliminary conditions	6.4 Grant restrictions
	6.5 Qualifying interest	6.6 Relevant works
	6.7 Exceptions	6.8 Test of resources - Owners
	6.9 Test of resources - Landlords	6.10 Maximum award
	6.11 Disposable income & Grant Award	6.12 Notification & Authorisation
	6.13 The Contract	6.14 Payment conditions
	6.15 Cessation of grant conditions	6.16 Vulnerability Criteria
7.	Customer Satisfaction Monitoring Complaints Procedure	38
8.	Equal Opportunities Statement	40
9.	Publicity and Availability	41
10.	Review Details	41
11.	Bibliography	42
<u>Appendices:</u>		
I	Process Diagram (Owner Occupiers & Private Tenants)	43
II	Process Diagram (Landlords)	44
III	Sample Initial Enquiry Form	45
IV	Sample Customer Satisfaction Form	52
V	Sample Complaints Procedure Form	56
VI	Landlord's Assessment Matrix	57

1. Acknowledgement

With the introduction of the Regulatory Reform Order 2002, and the level of deregulation the Order offered local authorities, officers consulted with a wide range of stakeholders from both within and external to the Council to produce the original policy document, which was published in July 2003.

One of the commitments from the original policy document was to ensure that regular reviews of the policies contained within it are undertaken in order to ensure that the document remains fresh and current to those who have cause to use it or refer to it. With this commitment in mind, this is the first revision of the Renovation and Assistance policy document.

This revised policy still contains all the freedoms in service delivery as set out within the Regulatory Reform Order 2002, but now has revised policies that address the challenges faced from the first year of publication. Notwithstanding the need for reflection on how original policies have been received, a follow up stock condition survey has been undertaken in April 2004 that will result in further proactive area based proposals for the future of private sector housing. This private sector housing strategy and its allied policies will need to be developed in harmony with wider strategic regeneration proposals inclusive of the North Solihull Regeneration proposals and Housing Market Area initiatives to name a few.

In conclusion, I am pleased to endorse this first revision of the Renovation and Assistance policy document, and will ensure that the future editions of this policy document keep pace and reflect the ever-changing nature, needs and resident make up of Solihull.

Councillor Don Blake ~ Cabinet Member for Regeneration

Stakeholder Consultees

The development of this document would not have been possible without the welcome contributions by representatives from the following internal and external bodies:

- (a) The Government Office for the West Midlands
- (b) Age Concern ~ Solihull
- (c) West Midlands Police
- (d) Housing Services ~ Contract Planning Team
- (e) Public Health Directorate ~ Environmental Protection Division
- (f) Strategic Services Directorate ~ Physical & Economic Regeneration Division
- (g) Aston Reinvestment Trust (ART) Homes
- (h) Solihull Residents Representative

2. Purpose of the Policy Document

- 2.1 During 2001, the Government departmental body with responsibility for Local Government matters, Department for Transport, Local Government & the Regions (DTLR) consulted with all national local authorities regarding the proposals to relax certain statutory powers. The outcome was the Regulatory Reform Order 2002, which brought about the policy relaxation, alluded to during the consultation process. The relaxation aimed to create greater freedoms for local authorities in the delivery of renovation grants in their area.
- 2.2 The proposals made perfect sense, as the inner city problems of larger urban Councils are not the same for suburban Councils, or even Solihull. However, if not monitored, similar inner city private sector housing problems could occur. Therefore, the premise behind the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 is simple, develop local policies for the benefit of local people and your area.
- 2.3 With this premise firmly in mind, this policy document has been developed for immediate Borough-wide use after July 2003. The document will be subject to annual review, at which point required revisions would be undertaken.

3. Strategic Context

- 3.1 On a national strategic level, the Government has placed obligations on all local authorities to meet the wider duty to house homeless persons, address empty homes, implement the Supporting People initiative, and to improve housing conditions in the private sector.
- 3.2 There are approximately 83,500 dwellings in the Solihull Borough. Home ownership is the majority tenure, with 79% of homes being owned in this way. 15% of dwellings are rented from the Council with the remainder owned by private landlords and housing associations. Co-ordinating housing assistance across such a diverse market requires a robust and coherent strategy.
- 3.3 The Solihull Housing Strategy for 2004 – 2007 examines the housing needs of residents within the Borough. The Strategy is based upon information from three key surveys, which were:
 1. Private Sector Housing Stock Condition Survey
 2. Housing Needs Survey
 3. Public Sector Housing Stock Condition Survey

- 3.4 A second private sector stock condition survey has been carried out in 2004. This has taken the form of a follow-up sample survey of 1,600 private sector properties (over 10 years old) across 14 sub-areas of the Borough. The survey considered the incidence of unfitness and disrepair and the energy efficiency of the private stock. It matched this to socio-economic details of occupants to provide information on the Health and Safety Fitness Rating and the Decent Homes Standard as it applies to homes occupied by vulnerable people.
- 3.5 The main findings of this survey were:
- The condition of most private homes is satisfactory, but 2.9% of homes are unfit and 25% are in substantial disrepair
 - 82% of homes have no hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, but 13% had hazards and 5% serious hazards
 - 15,600 (33%) private sector dwellings were classed as non-decent. This is broadly in line with government's 70% decency target for private sector vulnerable groups
 - The survey has produced information which, when combined with other intelligence, shows a need to address two areas where conditions are lower than the Borough average. These areas are in the Regeneration HMA and in Shirley South in Southern and Rural Fringe HMA
 - Overall, levels of energy efficiency were above the average for England as a whole
- 3.6 Within the Housing strategy the following 5 strategic objectives for Private Sector Housing for 2004 – 2007 have been set:
1. Continue to provide a reactive service to deal with unfitness and hazards at any location in the Borough
 2. Complete the investment in the LEO area and devise an exit/succession strategy to ensure that the improvement in the condition of homes in the area is sustained
 3. Commission a Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment to devise an intervention strategy for Shirley South and bring this into operation, subject to consultation, resource availability and Council approval
 4. Devise an intervention strategy for the Regeneration HMA as part of the development of a housing sub-strategy and the regeneration masterplan, to be developed jointly with the InPartnership consortium
 5. Continue to invest in the thermal efficiency of private housing in order to increase Solihull's overall SAP and in pursuance of the Borough's HECA targets
- 3.6 Nationally, there are concerns about properties that are standing empty whilst people are homeless. Locally, the concerns are about growing pressure to develop green-field sites for housing, and for in-fill developments.

- 3.7 Therefore, as part of the Housing Strategy an Empty Homes Strategy has been produced, which sets out the measures that are taking place to reduce the number of empty properties within the Borough, whilst helping to address the strategic objectives mentioned above.
- 3.8 The Empty Homes Strategy offers a balance of reactive responses to individual properties where they are causing problems to neighbours, with proactive measures where there are cost effective links to other housing programmes.
- 3.9 Partnership working is an integral part of the Housing Strategy, and is evident in the work undertaken in both public and private sector housing programmes. Our partners include in-house local authority service providers, such as Environmental Protection, Social Care and Performance and Education. Our external partners comprise a range of Registered Social Landlords (RSL), the Primary Care Trust, Age Concern and West Midlands Police.
- 3.10 The partnership with West Midlands Police helped to develop Solihull's first Crime & Disorder Strategy in 1999, which ran for three years. Furthermore, This strategy had a significant impact in the reduction of crime within the Borough, and has led to the development of a new strategy, which builds upon the strengths of the original document. Inclusive in the new strategy is the development of a national initiative to address the increase in distraction burglaries named *Operation Vanquish*
- 3.11 This initiative has been piloted within the wards of Lyndon, Elmdon and Olton (LEO) which forms the basis of the LEO Focus Area. The Focus Area addresses the private sector housing elements of the overall Housing Strategy, and builds upon the intelligence gathered on the private sector housing stock via the Stock Condition Survey undertaken in 2001.
- 3.12 The LEO Focus Area has been on site over the past 12 months and was a *proving ground* for other initiatives besides Operation Vanquish, namely:
1. The Neighbourhood Care Project ~ which is an initiative developed by Age Concern and aims to address the vulnerability issues faced by the elderly living within the LEO wards.
 2. Safe & Sound Project ~ which is an addition to the Warden Scheme for public sector tenants, extended to owner-occupier residents.
 3. Energy Efficiency Project ~ which aims to provide homes with enhanced energy efficiency measures as part of our Energy Efficiency and Affordable Warmth Strategies.

- 3.12 All of the strategic elements of the Housing Strategy, mentioned previously, can be attributed to the *Strategy Model* illustrated on page 9. This sets out the strategic framework, as referred to in Central Government guidance, which has Solihull specific issues and objectives overlaying the framework to supplement the 3-year strategy.
- 3.13 A significant strategic development that has a strong influence on the process behind the production of this document is the transformational change programme within Solihull MBC, termed *One Council One Vision*.
- 3.14 The advent of *One Council One Vision*, or 1C1V, harnessed a need for change within Solihull MBC that has resulted in managerial, structural and conceptual changes. These changes have been initiated with a primary objective of improving the services and service delivery to the residents of Solihull, and the need to ensure the Vision and Values of the Council are upheld, namely:

Our Vision Statement

Solihull – Where well being, pride and quality of life is to be enjoyed by all.

Our Values

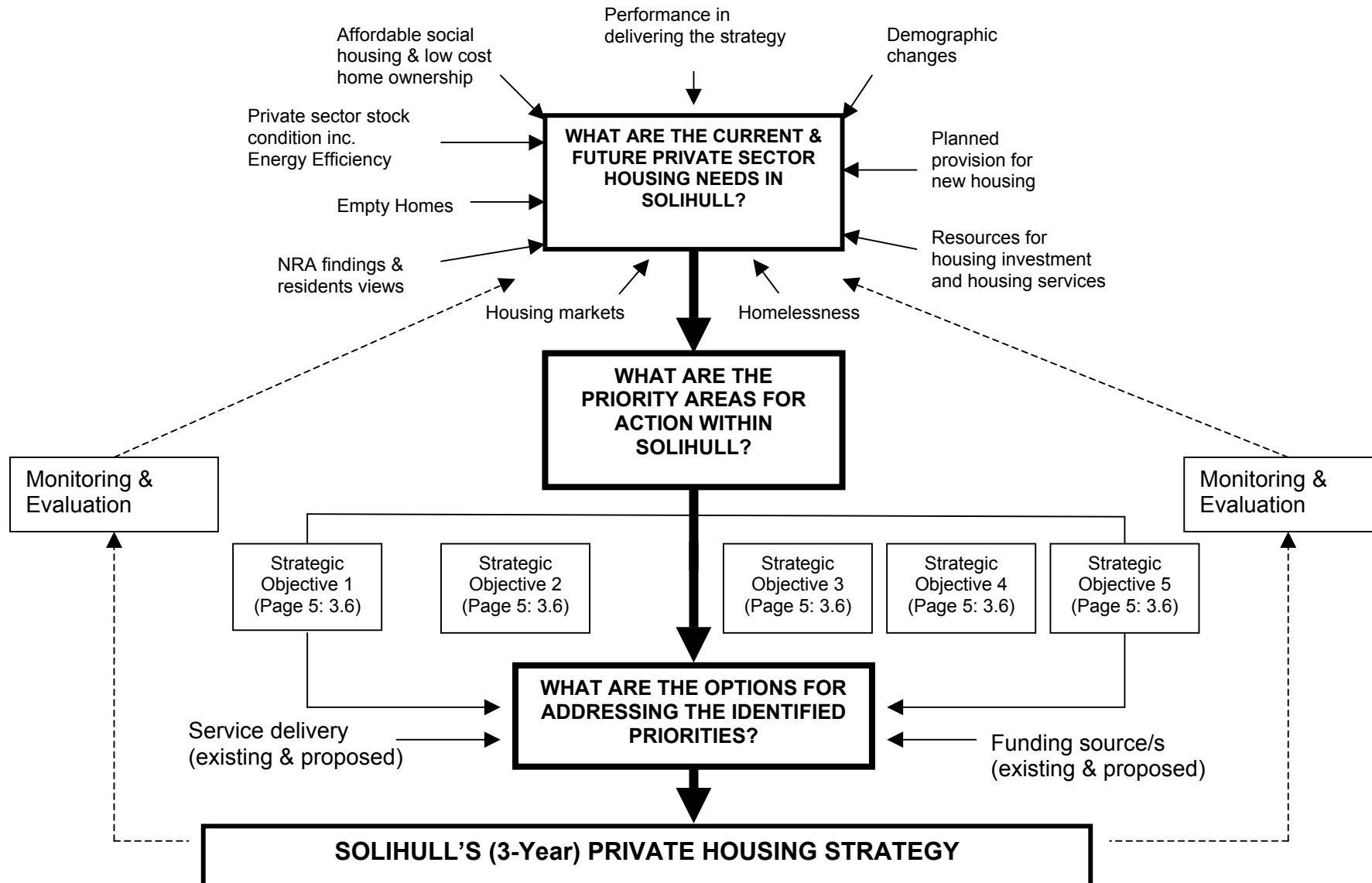
<i>Respect</i>	<i>Learning</i>
<i>Equality</i>	<i>Integrity</i>
<i>Caring</i>	

- 3.15 Specific Directorates and Divisions within each Directorate govern all of the Council’s services. Performance measurement of each Directorate and subsequent Division are recorded within individual Divisional and Directorate Performance Plans.
- 3.16 The Physical & Economic Regeneration Division oversees the delivery of Private Sector Housing Services, which administers the majority of services contained within this policy document that adhere to specified performance management frameworks:
- Comprehensive Performance Assessment [CPA] via Housing Strategy
 - Government Office for the West Midlands
 - ODPM Guidance
 - DEFRA
 - Best Value Performance Indicators (Unfitness, Empty Homes, Energy)

3.17 The Private Sector Services Team aims to achieve specific performance outcomes via the following measures:

Activity	Measure
DFG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Strategy Action Plan • Housing Acts • Circular 17/96
Renovation Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Strategy Action Plan • Reduction of unfit dwellings (BVPI) • Reduction of serious disrepair • Achieve decent homes standard (private sector) • Housing Acts • Circular 17/96
LEO Focus Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Strategy Action Plan • Reduction of unfit dwellings (BVPI) • Reduction of serious disrepair • Achieve decent homes standard (private sector) • Housing Acts • Circular 17/96
Handyperson & Gardening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Strategy Action Plan • Age/disability eligibility • Geographical delivery • Ethnic origin • Income
HECA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Strategy Action Plan • Energy Strategy • Affordable Warmth Strategy • Best Value Performance Indicator
Private Sector Housing Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Strategy Action Plan • Regulatory Reform • HECA • LEO Focus Area • Renovation Grants • DFG

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY MODEL



4. **Delivery Mechanism**

4.1 Background

Nationally, the Renovation Grants regime was based upon historic links to the various Housing Acts that have been prescribed. All forms of renovation grant aid was mandatory.

The 1985 Housing Act contained a range of grants that were aimed at addressing the repair and improvement of private sector housing. Three forms of grant aid were in existence, which each carried varying upper limits. These grants were allocated based upon a percentage, as legislatively prescribed by Government, with the lowest award being 50% of the grant sum and the applicant met the remaining 50%. The upper award was 75% and in extreme financial hardship 90% was awarded, and the applicant met the remaining difference.

With the advent of the 1989 Housing Act, an upper limit on the grant no longer applied. This Act also abolished the percentages and introduced a devised Test of Resources, or means test approach to grant allocation. In 1991, an amendment to the 1989 Act saw the setting of a ceiling on grant awards of £50,000 and the split between mandatory and discretionary grant aid.

The Housing, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 introduced wider housing policy in conjunction with circular 17/96. This Act meant that Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) became the only form of mandatory grant, with a £20,000 upper limit with potential top up availability. Discretionary grants again had no ceiling.

In 2000, an amendment to the 1996 Act raised the ceiling on mandatory DFG to £25,000, and additional top up was now optional. In 2001, the Government announced consultation plans on proposed Regulatory Reform of the renovation grants regime.

4.2 Current Provision

Locally, throughout this period Solihull's approach to renovation grants was to provide a reactive "pepper-pot" service across the Borough. This service was without any definitive strategy, the pepper-pot method was not cost effective and when an applicant failed to qualify for grant aid, no further assistance was available.

4.3 Proposed Provision

The Regulatory Reform Order 2002 has introduced a state of freedom from the old renovation grant regime. Provision no longer needs to

follow national guidelines, but rather local choice from local policies, strategies and services.

A locally devised test of resources, as part of sweeping reforms, with a strategic approach that advocates proactive area treatment, in opposition to pepper potting, has been developed. Furthermore, wider assistance is offered to those who do not qualify for direct grant aid in the form of technical advice and assistance and the arranging of no risk loans for improvement and repairs.

A brief breakdown of what forms of renovation (grants and assistance) that are available are listed below:

Description	Focus Area	Remainder of Borough
Renovation Grant	✓	✓ *
Disabled Facilities Grant (inc. Relocation Grant)	✓	✓
Emergency Works	✓	✓
Grant Loan/Mix	✓	✓
Loans	✓	✓
Technical Assistance	✓	✓
Care & Repair (Advisory Service)	✓	✓
Handyperson Service	✓	✓
Gardening Service	✓	✓
Energy Efficiency	✓	✓
Partner Services	✓	x

The level of grant provision within designated Focus Areas will be more comprehensive than that provided throughout the remainder of the Borough. This strategic approach is aimed at encouraging grant take up in proactive area treatment and provides targeted best use of resources in response to stock condition findings.

- * However, restricted grant aid to vulnerable groups through emergency works and assistance in obtaining loans will be available throughout the remainder of the Borough (see Emergency Works details on page 20 – item J).

5. Forms of Renovation (Grants & Assistance)

5.1 Headings:

- a. Grant Assistance
- b. Assistance with financial loan provision
- c. Financial Loan and Grant Assistance mix
- d. Relocation Grant
- e. Technical Assistance
- f. Energy Conservation Works
- g. Environmental Works
- h. Homecheck
- i. Care & Repair Scheme
 - Handyperson
 - Gardening
 - Technical
 - Advisory/Sign posting
- j. Emergency Works

5.2 **Brief Details of Assistance.**

a. **Grant Assistance.**

- **Renovation Grant (inc. HMO & Common Part)**

A grant relating to the improvement or repair of an owner occupied dwelling, or private sector tenant residing in a single/family occupied dwelling is referred to as a “Renovation grant”.

A grant relating to the improvement or repair of an owner occupied house in multiple occupation is also referred to as a “Renovation grant” and each application relating to the common parts will be treated as a separate application.

A grant relating to the improvement, repair or conversion of a proposed / private sector tenanted house in multiple occupation is referred to as a “Landlord’s renovation grant”.

A grant relating to assistance to enable an owner-occupier to move from one property to another property is referred to as a “Relocation grant”. For the purposes of this policy document Relocation grant is, at present, restricted to Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) applicants only.

- **Disabled Facilities Grants**

This is a mandatory grant with prescribed procedures from central government, relating to the provision of aids and adaptations and major works to enable a disabled person to live more comfortably in their home. It is, therefore, not proposed to alter greatly the process for delivery with the exception of possible relocation assistance (see point [d] in this section).

b. **Assistance with financial loan provision.**

Dependant upon the individual financial circumstances of the applicant, and whether or not their property falls within a designated Focus Area, the only probable form of assistance may be to arrange a suitable financial loan to cover the identified works.

All applicants have the ability to choose their own financial institution. However, a service level agreement is in place between ART Homes and the Council to provide a range of loan options to would be customers.

ART Homes aim is to develop a range of products that will help individual homeowners to repair and improve their homes. To date ART Homes have developed the following products:

- A traditional repayment loan.
- An interest only loan.
- A 'faith' loan.
- A 'Property Appreciation Loan'.

The Repayment Loan:

For those in receipt of a low income and can afford a loan this product is ideal. The term can be between 1 and 10 years and the interest rate is either 1.5% or 2.5% above base rate depending on the Loan to Value (LTV) relationship.

The chargeable rate below an 80% LTV is 1.5% above the Bank of England base rate. This means a current loan rate of 5.5% which is very competitive for a second charge loan or loans under 80% LTV.

The Interest Only Loan:

This product is designed for those who cannot afford both capital and interest payments. In some circumstances the homeowner may get the interest only payments made for them by the benefits agency. The interest rate is the same, as for the repayment loan. The Government Office is aware of this proposal and may, at a future date, legislatively block such payments being made by the benefits agency.

The Faith Loan:

This product has been designed for the Muslim community who cannot pay interest because of their religious beliefs. The loan works by any charge for lending being added to the loan and repaid between 1 and 10 years.

The Property Appreciation Loan:

This product was developed following some research carried out by ART Homes and Birmingham Universities Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, for Castle Vale H.A.T. The research found that there were significant numbers of elderly Right To Buy residents on Castle Vale who did not have the income to support a loan but had considerable equity in their homes.

The product works therefore by a loan being made that is secured against the value of the home.

If a homeowner wants to borrow £5,000 against a value of a £50,000 property a 10% stake is taken. When repayment is triggered the loan is repaid as the same % of the new value. If the new value is £60,000 then 10% of this sum is repaid i.e. £6,000.

c. **Financial Loan and Grant Assistance Mix.**

Loans of less than £1,000 will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. For full details see separate leaflet. In the interim see "grant/loan mix" table on page 32.

d. **Relocation Grant. (Restricted to Disabled Facilities Grants only)**

The Regulatory Reform Order 2002 (RRO) allows the Council to assist with the cost towards moving to a more suitable home. This is of benefit where disruption, and cost of repeated works, may not fulfil the purpose of providing decent and sustainable living accommodation or may not meet the needs of a resident with special needs.

Relocation grant is only available to owner-occupiers, and the council cannot foresee any circumstance under which a grant should be awarded to move from one property to another unless a DFG warrants relocation. The housing stock, generally, is in good condition, wholesale unfitness is minimal and the average level of unfitness borough wide is 2.9%. The value of property within the Borough is high in comparison with many other authorities, as is the level of equity. Should a need arise the council will review this aspect of the policy.

Relocation grants in conjunction with disabilities.

The qualifying criteria for a relocation grant are the same for a disabled facilities grant, and the completion of that application form will satisfy those criteria.

Extent of relocation assistance

Relocation grant will be awarded where a property cannot be adapted to meet the needs of the person(s) with a disability. The applicant's Occupational Therapist and the Technical Officer dealing with the application must support such a circumstance. It is expected that where relocation grant is awarded, the alternative property purchased should, as far as possible, meet the needs of the applicant's disabilities, be within the proximity of the original dwelling and minimise the amount of expenditure required in respect of the DFG.

The council would therefore wish to survey the property that the applicant intends to purchase to assess the dwelling in relation to the applicant's need. The amount of relocation grant is inclusive of all attributable costs. The amount of Relocation Grant Assistance is linked to applications for DFG up to a maximum of £15,000. The table below illustrates examples of both grants and maximum assistance available following the test of resources:

Applicant Contribution	Amount of DFG Assistance		Amount of Relocation Grant Assistance	Maximum Assistance (DFG or Relocation)
0	£25,000	and	£15,000	£40,000
£10,000	£15,000	and	£15,000	£30,000
£15,000	£10,000	and	£15,000	£25,000
£20,000	£ 5,000	and	£15,000	£20,000
Over £40,000	0	-	0	0

DFG Top-up criteria

Where an applicant for DFG decides to remain within their existing dwelling and the works required exceed £25,000 the council will consider discretionary top-up of the difference in cost.

However, where relocation grant is being considered in conjunction with a DFG, discretionary top-up will not be applicable.

Property Ownership

Where an applicant for combined DFG and relocation assistance is not the owner of the property, the owner of the property will be required to apply for the relocation element only of the combined grants. The applicant will only be eligible to apply for a DFG (e.g. disabled Mother/Father living with son or daughter). If the applicant is the owner of the property, the applicant will be required to apply for both relocation and DFG.

Out of Borough Residency

Where an applicant for DFG resides out of the borough of Solihull for more than 50% of the time, no grant aid will be awarded to the property within the borough, as this is not deemed their permanent dwelling. Definition of residency would be defined as to which Local Authority the applicant pays their Council Tax.

e. **Technical Assistance.**

The following technical assistance is available to residents of Solihull who own their own properties or privately rent, who have concerns regarding the maintenance of a property are as follows: *(note – the following services are currently free of charge but may be subject to a fee charge at a future date to be determined subject to Council approval).*

1. List of building contractors.

The council will provide a list of building contractors which has either been vetted by the council and/or the Government's *Construction line* approved list.

2. Building materials.

Advice will be given about the proper building materials to use to in a given circumstance. Where differing materials can be used to meet the requirement, costs and life expectancy of the products will be conveyed to the client.

3. Building defects.

An inspection of a building defect(s) can be undertaken to diagnose the problem(s) and provide a solution to remedy the defect(s)

4. Estimates.

Estimated costs of carrying out building/maintenance works can be provided to clients. The estimates will be general (not detailed, e.g. bill of quantities) but will provide a reasonably accurate indication of approximate cost of the works.

5. Schedules of Work.

Schedule(s) will be written with regard to building/remedial works, to enable estimates/tenders to be procured on the same basis by or on behalf of the client.

6. Tender procurement.

Tenders/estimates will be procured on behalf of the client from an approved list of contractors (as part of (e) above) and if costs are uneconomic will re-tender the works.

7. Supervision.

Supervision of the building works will be undertaken, including agreement with the client to make payment to the contractor. Agreement will be reached with client and contractor where increased costs arise from unforeseen works.

f. **Energy Conservation Works.**

The Energy Conservation works available form part of the council's Energy Conservation and Affordable Warmth Strategies. In an attempt to encourage better use of energy, energy measures are widely available, which in turn helps the council meet its obligations under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995.

The comprehensive range of measures is available Borough wide and enhanced within designated Focus Areas, where greater assistance will be available. In addition, free Energy Advice and assistance is available to residents of Solihull via the Central Midlands Energy Efficiency Advice line (Tel: 0800 – 512012).

Examples of the measures available are as follows:

- Cavity Wall insulation
- Loft Insulation- to included top-up to building regulation standards
- Draught proofing- around doors and windows
(*Only available when allied to other energy efficiency works*)
- Compact fluorescent Light Bulbs
(*Only available when allied to other energy efficiency works*)

- Cold Alarms
(Only available to vulnerable clients and when allied to other energy efficiency works)
- Appropriate Energy Efficient Central Heating systems and associated works are also available, works will include:
 1. Energy Efficient boilers
 2. Radiators
 3. Thermostatic radiator valves
 4. Timers & Thermostats.

g. **Environmental Works.**

Environmental works would only be considered within any designated Focus Area. The scope and content of the works available would be dependent on the partnership arrangements with other Council service providers.

h. **Homecheck.**

The Homecheck service is carried out by an Officer of the Council, and provides an inspection of property for reason of safety, security, or thermal insulation. The remit includes checking:

1. Security of doors, windows, and locks.
2. Electrical safety of appliances.
3. Potential hazards in the layout and furnishings of property.
4. Draft proofing and insulation.

Minor repairs and safety measures (e.g. the fitting of locks) are provided free of labour charge. Smoke alarms (supplied by West Midlands Fire Service) are also fitted when required.

Advice is given regarding what other help may be available. (e.g. home insulation grants) The first enquiry is made on behalf of the customer. Major repairs may be referred for renovation grant.

Homecheck is targeted at client groups who are particularly vulnerable to home safety problems which includes:

1. Older citizens,
2. People with disabilities &
3. Children under the age of five.

The service can be obtained by referral via the local crime prevention officer, the fire brigade, social workers, or direct to the Homecheck officer.

i. **Care & Repair Scheme.**

The Care and Repair Scheme offers the following services to residents within the Borough.

- **Handyperson Service.**

The purpose of this in-house service is to provide a cross tenure approach to residents of the Borough by assisting them with property maintenance.

People eligible to use this service will be residents with a disability and/or those over 65 years of age, who have difficulty in dealing with those smaller maintenance tasks around the house.

Bookings for works to be undertaken will be made in accordance with the urgency of the task and the level of demand for the service at that particular time. Every effort will be made to meet the requirements of the client.

The current cost of the service is £15.00* inclusive of VAT for each hour of service, or £7.50 per half hour of service plus the cost of materials. Minimum charge £7.50 (*subject to periodic review). Upon request the Handyperson will assess the work, a provisional estimate will be provided of the cost of the materials required, and the length of time the task should take. If requested by the client, the work is then undertaken.

- **Gardening Service.**

The purpose of this in-house service is to provide a cross tenure approach to residents of the Borough with safe, reliable and quality assistance for garden maintenance.

The service is designed for those people whose personal circumstances make it impossible for them to cope, or get help with essential gardening. The service is being provided from April to November.

If the weather is inclement or other conditions prevent the gardener arriving at the agreed time, efforts will be made to contact the customer by telephone, and to arrange an alternative appointment. Should the garden in question be overgrown, customers will be offered the opportunity to use the clearance service operated by the West Midland Probation Service.

People eligible to use this service will be residents with a disability and/or those over 65 years of age, who have difficulty in doing basic gardening such as mowing the lawn and keeping the garden tidy.

It will be possible to book a regular visit, for example on a fortnightly or three – weekly basis. Green bags will be supplied to the gardener by the Council, and collected with other refuse.

The current cost of the service is £9.50* inclusive of VAT for each hour or part hour of service. The minimum charge is £9.50 (*subject to periodic review).

- **Technical Assistance**
(See section [e.] Pages 16, 17 & 18)
- **Advisory**

We provide a housing advice service for the elderly and younger disabled residents. The scope is inclusive of but not limited to:

1. Discussing client's financial circumstances and advice on benefits where appropriate.
2. Complete confidential financial forms and information.
3. Liase with DHSS and charities to raise finance where appropriate.
4. Advise and sign post client's in conjunction with enquiries made.

Additional advice in relation to Energy Efficiency is available from within the council from the Energy Conservation Officer and via an external agency, contracted to the council, on free-phone 0800-512012.

j. **Emergency Works.**

With the strategic emphasis on proactive area treatment in opposition to pepper potting, renovation grant provision outside of designated Focus Areas is restricted to addressing emergency works only.

Emergency works comprises:

- Provision of heating where no effective heating exists within the dwelling
- Provision of hot water where no hot water exists within the dwelling
- Provision of cold water where no running water exists within the dwelling
- Replacement of lead water pipes where this piping is still in existence
- Repair or replace the electrical supply where assessed as a health hazard
- Re-roof dwelling where there is evidence of water ingress
- Eradicate dampness and/or infestation (i.e. woodworm, beetle, wet/dry rot)

The above emergency works are only available to the following vulnerable groups:

- (a) Residents with a medical/functional disability
- (b) Residents who are above state retirement age
- (c) Residents who are lone parents on income related benefits with children under 16 years of age

6. Eligibility Criteria.

6.1 Form of Application.

1. An application for grant shall be made on the appropriate form in writing, stating the premises to which it relates and contain:
 - a. Particulars of the works in respect of which the grant is sought, which are referred to as “ relevant works”.
 - b. Tenders for the works have been procured, and will be undertaken by the company awarded the contract.
 - c. The applicant has the right to select contractors from the contractors list of Solihull MBC, or contractors of their own choice provided that such contractors comply with rules attributable to the council’s approved contractor status, and is a bona fide registered company. This policy applies to DFG cases only.
 - d. Particulars of any preliminary or ancillary services and charges in respect of the cost of which the grant is being sought. Only in an exceptional circumstance will such costs be considered unless they have been incurred by an officer of Solihull MBC on behalf of the applicant. This policy applies to DFG cases only.
 - e. Schedules of work and associated specifications will be prepared by an officer of Solihull MBC unless contrary permission has been given in writing to that effect.
 - f. No grant shall be paid unless an application for grant is made to Solihull MBC in accordance with this policy.

6.2 Qualifying Conditions.

1. Grants and/or loans are available from the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull Council in accordance with this policy towards the cost of works required for:
 - a. The improvement or repair of dwelling houses in multiple occupation (HMO) purpose built flats, or the common parts of both.
 - b. The provision of dwellings or houses in multiple occupation by the conversion of a house or other building that is unoccupied.
 - c. The provision of improvements or repairs to dwellings in conjunction with an application for a Disabled Facilities Grant.

- d. Assistance to enable an owner-occupier to move from one property to another property, in conjunction with a DFG.
- e. Owner-occupier dwellings, inclusive of those with houseboats and mobile homes.

6.3 Preliminary conditions

1. No grant is payable unless the applicant is 18 years of age or older at the time of the date of application.
2. In the case of joint application, any applicant under the age of 18 years shall be omitted from the account.
3. Applications for grant-aid is only approved to owner-occupiers, private sector tenants, and private sector landlords within the borough of Solihull unless Solihull MBC directs otherwise.
4. An application for grant will not be considered unless the property has been constructed for more than 20 years, unless a specific requirement or works is in relation to a disabled facilities grant.
5. Applications made for grant-aid must be in respect of dwellings that have been constructed in accordance with the planning and building regulation control sections of Solihull MBC, or other former authorities where boundary changes have occurred.
6. The property must be freehold or leasehold with a minimum of 5 years to run.
7. In order to apply for grant the owner, private tenant, or landlord must have owned or resided in the property for a minimum period of not less than 3 years unless:
 - a. The works are in conjunction with a disabled facilities grant.
 - b. The property is within a designated "Focus Area." A Focus Area is where the council are concentrating area improvements at any particular given period of time.
 - c. The dwelling has succeeded to the applicant via an inheritance who has been in residence in the property for more than 3 years.
 - d. The property whether leasehold, or freehold, has a minimum of 5 years to run before the holding expires.

6.4 Grant aid restrictions

1. The council will not consider an application for grant if the works have been commenced, or are completed before the application is approved unless:
 - (a) Emergency works that were required that could affect the health and safety of the occupant(s), or members of the public.
 - (b) A notification from an officer of the council or other accredited body or organisation, in relation to a hazard or danger had been previously informed and acted upon.
 - (c) The works that fall outside of the Focus Area are in consideration of a property that is unfit for human habitation, or adversely affect the health and safety of the occupant(s).
2. The only exception is renovation grant in conjunction with a disabled facilities grant.

6.5 Qualifying interest

1. The council will not entertain an application for a renovation grant or relocation grant (owner occupiers only) unless they are satisfied that:
 - (a) The applicant has an owner's interest in every parcel of land on which the relevant works are to be carried out. To satisfy this interest the applicant must provide a "Certificate of Title" completed by the financial institution that holds the deeds, solicitor, or other body, together with a certificate of future occupation as supplied by the council.
 - (b) The applicant holds the deeds. In that event an officer of the council must witness the deeds.
 - (c) The tenant provides a tenants certificate that certifies that the tenant intends to occupy the dwelling as their only residence throughout the grant condition period
2. The council will not entertain an application for a Landlords renovation grant unless they are satisfied that:
 - (a) The owner has or proposes to acquire an owner's interest in every parcel of land on which the relevant works are to be carried out.

- (b) The owner will provide a “certificate of future occupation, title, and intended letting.
- (c) The owner complies with (a) above.
- (d) Throughout the grant condition period the owner intends the following:
 - that the house/flat/block of accommodation, or parts thereof, will be residentially occupied,
 - or available for residential letting under tenancies or licences by persons who are not connected with the owner for the time being of the house/flat/block of accommodation.
- (e) Relevant works in respect of a landlord’s application for grant is inclusive of repair, improvement, houses in multiple occupation, common parts and conversion.

6.6 Relevant works

1. The purposes for which an application for a renovation grant, or Landlords renovation grant that may be considered are:
 - a. To comply with a notice under section 189 of the Housing Act 1985 (repair notice in respect of unfit premises) or otherwise to render the dwelling fit for human habitation
 - b. To comply with a notice under section 190 of that act (repair notice in respect of premises not unfit but in need of substantial repair) or otherwise to put the dwelling in reasonable repair.
 - c. To provide means of escape in case of fire, or other fire precautions, not being precautions required under or by virtue of any enactment (whenever passed).
 - d. To ensure that the dwelling complies with such requirements with respect to construction, or physical condition.
 - e. To ensure that there is compliance with such requirements with respect to the provision or condition of services and amenities to or within the dwelling as are so specified.
 - f. In respect of security measures, ensure that door and windows incorporate adequate locking mechanisms.

- g. To provide adequate thermal insulation. Inclusive of works that complies with the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995.
 - h. To provide adequate facilities for space heating. Healthy able bodied persons and their siblings will not qualify for assistance if a heating appliance is fixed in a main ground floor room and socket outlets are fixed in other rooms.
 - i. To meet any proposed *Decent Homes* standard in relation to private sector housing, and requirements of any designated Focus Area in relation to inadequate kitchens and bathrooms.
2. If the applicant is elderly (i.e. someone of State retirement pension age), infirm, has a disability or is a single parent (in respect of poor heating) grant will be considered under the following circumstances:

No heating	Consider all types of heating
Existing system	Replace existing system unless there is a more economical alternative.
In respect of income	Can the applicant afford to pay the fuel costs.

Note: If the applicant wishes to upgrade the heating systems to a higher specification than the council believes is appropriate to install, the applicant must bear the cost difference.

6.7 Exceptions

- i. If in the opinion of the council the relevant works are more or less extensive than is necessary to achieve any of the purposes set out in (a) - (i) above, the relevant works may be varied to include such works that are deemed appropriate.
- ii. If in the opinion of the council the relevant works are deemed uneconomic due to special materials, grant would only be applicable for the standard cost of materials (e.g. listed buildings).

6.8 Test of Resources – Owner-occupiers.

- 1. This section applies to an application for a renovation grant that is:
 - a. An owners application accompanied by an certificate of future occupation, and certificate of title, or
 - b. A private sector tenant application accompanied by a tenant's certificate in respect of section 6 (6.3.3) above.

2. The amount of any grant may equate to the cost of the relevant applicable works.
3. Where the applicant receives income support, the applicant's resources are assumed via the Governments (financial) passport/fast-track process. It would, therefore, follow that the applicant will receive the maximum grant (90% - 100%) subject to fulfilling the vulnerability criteria.
4. Where the amount of any grant does not equate to the applicable amount, a loan from a non- profit-making organisation may be arranged via but independent of the council.
5. An applicant can finance their own contribution if they wish to do so.
6. An applicant is the person applying for the grant and their spouse, or a person living with or intending to live with the applicant. Any other person who has or proposes to have an interest in the property.
7. A person living with or proposing to live with the applicant is known as a partner. The applicant's spouse or partner is an applicant following separation, or divorce for a period of 10 years unless their name does not appear on the title deed.
8. The income, assets, needs, and outgoings of the applicant are taken into consideration when applying for a grant.
9. Applicants may be required to provide evidence to determine any matter in relation to their finances under this section, which can be furnished by any such person as prescribed (i.e. applicant direct, spouse, accountant, lending institution etc.).
10. All applicants will be required to complete an " Initial enquiry form " and or a " Full application form".
11. Applicants who are in receipt of income support will be required to complete a " Full application form".
12. The calculation of grant is based upon the following:
 - i. The income and capital of each applicant together with their partner (or in the case of polygamous marriages, partners) are to be taken into account in the assessment of financial resources.
 - ii. The average weekly income (net) of the applicant's, is ascertained over a period of up to 12 months, which allows the council to take into consideration periods of unemployment, fluctuations of income and allows for an equitable account of average income.

iii. Net income is defined as gross income less, tax, N.I. contributions, and 50% of pension contributions for those who are employed. If an applicant is self-employed, the trading profit and loss account or other approved form of accounts is considered during the applicant's previous trading year. In this respect income equates to drawings or net profit, whichever is the highest sum.

13. Other types of net income, illustrated in 13 A - E (which are subject to periodic Government review) are as follows:

A. Pensions e.g.

- ◆ State retirement pension
- ◆ Personal pension
- ◆ Occupational pension
- ◆ Pensions for victims of National Socialist persecution
- ◆ Retirement annuity
- ◆ Serviceman's widow's supplementary pension
- ◆ War disablement pension
- ◆ War widow's pension
- ◆ Widow's armed forces pension
- ◆ Widow's payment under the Dispensing Instruments
- ◆ Widow's pension
- ◆ Any other pension

B. State benefits

(That the council deems as applicable income) are as follows:

- ◆ Bereavement allowance
- ◆ Child benefit
- ◆ Community care payment
- ◆ Contribution – based job seekers allowance
- ◆ Disabled person's tax credit
- ◆ Earnings top-up
- ◆ Income based jobseekers allowance (including joint claims)
- ◆ One parent benefit
- ◆ Rehabilitation allowance
- ◆ Severe disablement allowance
- ◆ Statutory maternity pay
- ◆ Unemployment benefit
- ◆ Widowed mother's allowance
- ◆ Widowed parent's allowance
- ◆ Widowed families tax credit
- ◆ Any other benefits

C. Other income sources

- ◆ Adoption allowance
- ◆ Career development loan
- ◆ Charitable income and voluntary payments
- ◆ Government training allowance
- ◆ Income from tenants/sub-tenants
- ◆ Insurance payments
- ◆ Maintenance from a former partner
- ◆ Any other income

D. Notional income

The first £6,000 in savings and investments from any source is disregarded.

Savings and investments above that amount are converted into a notional income, and added to actual income which will increase an applicant's overall average income.

For each £250.00 or part thereof above £6,000, £1 will be added to the average income per week.

E. Savings and investment sources

(Considered in the calculation are from:)

- ◆ Bank current account
- ◆ Bank deposit account
- ◆ Bank other account (s)
- ◆ Building Society account (s)
- ◆ Cash savings
- ◆ National savings certificates
- ◆ Post Office investment account
- ◆ Post Office ordinary account
- ◆ Premium bonds
- ◆ Stocks, shares, unit trusts, etc
- ◆ Any other investments

Where the renovation works are to compliment a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) the test of resources applicable to the DFG applies to both grants. Only works that make a property fit are applicable for a renovation grant.

When the average weekly income has been ascertained, an applicant's personal allowances and premiums that are shown below are calculated to offset an applicant's average weekly income.

F. Personal allowances

	Existing Rate £
Single person under 25	42.70
Single person over 25	53.95
Lone parent under 18	42.70
Lone parent over 18	53.95
Couple where both are under 18	64.45
Couple where one or both are over 18	84.65
Child under 16	33.50
Young person aged 16 – 19	34.30
Standard housing allowance	52.27
Disabled child housing allowance	67.95
Childcare disregard for one child	94.50
Childcare disregard for more than one child	140.00
Student disregard for books & equipment costs	319.00
Student disregard for travel costs	260.00

G. Pensioner & disabled premiums

(The higher of whichever of the following may be applicable)

Single person aged 60 – 74	44.20
Couple where one or both are aged 60 – 74	65.15
Single person aged 75 – 79	44.20
Couple where one or both are aged 75 – 79	65.15
Single person over 80 / Disabled person over 60	44.20
Couple where one or both are both over 80 / Disabled & over 60	65.15
Single disabled person under 60	23.00
Couple where one or both are disabled & under 60	32.80
Bereavement	21.55

H. Severe disability premium

To qualify a person must be in receipt of Disabled Living Allowance (higher or middle rate of the care component) or Attendance Allowance.

Single disabled person	42.25
Couple with single disabled rate	42.25
Couple with double disabled rate	84.50
Disabled child or young person under 19	35.50
Care (in receipt of Invalid Care Allowance)	24.80

I. Disabled child premium

To qualify, a disabled person must be in receipt of:

- ◆ Disability Living Allowance
- ◆ Disabled Persons Tax Credit
- ◆ Attendance Allowance

- ◆ Mobility supplement
- ◆ Long-term Incapacity Benefit
- ◆ Severe Disablement Allowance
- ◆ Or registered blind or incapable of work

Families with a child or young person under 19	14.75
Lone parents with a child or young person under 19	22.20

J. Enhanced disability premium

Eligible via paragraph 13A of Part III Schedule 1 of the HRG Regulations

Child or young person	11.25
Each person who is not a child or young person or a member of a couple	11.25
The relevant person is a member of a couple	16.25

The above income and allowances (dependant upon an individual's personal circumstances) are then transposed to the following table to assess the relationship between disposable income and potential grant/loan award.

6.9 Test of resources - Landlord

1. This section applies to an application for a Landlord Renovation Grant, (inclusive of Houses in Multiple Occupation and Common Parts) which is accompanied by a *Certificate of Letting*.
2. It is the view of the Council that we should, in the main, use grant to secure strategic objectives. We should commence consideration of grant from the premise that a landlord is operating a business in which he should be able to make sufficient investment to ensure the product offered, i.e. accommodation, meets the fitness requirements.
3. However, there will be circumstances where it could be unreasonable to expect a landlord to secure improvement e.g. properties let on regulated tenancies, empty properties and conversions requiring significant investment to make them habitable.
4. In such cases we may wish to consider an offer of a level of grant which will make it economic for the owner to undertake the necessary works. We will give careful consideration to the level of any grant offered where a property is let at a market rent under an assured shorthold tenancy. In such cases the rental flow should be adequate to ensure the owner invest in the upkeep of his property.

5. A Landlord is primarily responsible for the upkeep of his property, and grant should only be an option where market forces are not operating effectively. Care should be taken to ensure our grant policy does not leave the impression that grant has been used to reward poor management.
6. In establishing a framework for determining the amount of grant awarded in Landlords' applications, the council has considered the following factors to assist in deciding level of grant:
 - a. Whether the cost of relevant works are such that they should be affordable from the current rental income (current rents charged by landlords). It might be appropriate to award higher grant to a landlord who has set his rents at a reasonable level, and lower grant to one whose rents are high compared to other comparable properties in the locality.
 - b. Nature of the works, in this respect work related to safety improvements, such as to provide fire precautions, may well be seen to justify priority or a higher level of grant than other repairs or improvements;
 - c. Type of tenancy held by tenants; with regulated rents less likely to provide surplus resources to meet the costs of improvement of the property;
 - d. Age of property e.g. older properties, are likely to warrant more grant;
 - e. Possible contribution to the strategic objectives of the authority; an authority might consider it important that repairs to a landlord's property goes ahead because it contributes to a wider scheme of improvements to the area;
 - f. Increase in the capital value of the improved property and the ability of the owner to realise the capital value;
 - g. Expectation of works taking place without grant aid ~ It may be inappropriate to award grant where the council believes the works should proceed without grant aid. In determining such matters, the council will need to establish whether the Landlord and tenants have a reserve fund or sinking fund to meet the cost of ongoing maintenance and repair works to the property;
 - h. Additional conditions attached to grant under section 52 of the Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996, where an Authority enters into an agreement with a Landlord under which grant is given on condition that the Authority receives tenant nomination rights;

- i Landlord's letting record either in respect of the property for which grant is sought or more widely within the Authority. This will be an assessment of whether the Landlord has a good record in keeping his property or properties in good repair. Whether the Council have had to take enforcement action or prosecute or whether the Authority have had to carry out repairs in default, may have a bearing in an Authority's decision to award grant. (See appendix VI – Landlord's Assessment Matrix)

6.10 Maximum Grant Award.

1. The maximum amount of grant including fees is £25,000, outside of the Focus Area.
2. The maximum amount of grant does not apply to dwellings within the Focus Area, except for specified works to a maximum of £1,000.00. These works are restricted to home security, loft and cavity wall insulation.
3. All grants awarded within the focus area will be designated by the council at an appropriate juncture during the length of time that the focus area is in operation.

6.11 Disposable Income & Maximum Grant

1. The maximum award for relocation grant assistance is £15,000 in conjunction with a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

Status	Disposable income £	Grant % / Loan %	
Owner-occupier outside of Focus Area	0 – 10	90	10
	0 – 10	50	50
	10.01 – 50	25	75
	Above 50.01	0	100
Private tenant outside of Focus Area	0 – 10	90	10
	0 – 10	75	25
	10.01 – 50	50	50
	Above 50.01	0	100
Owner-occupier within Focus Area	0 – 10	90	10 [*]
	0 – 10	75	25
	10.01 – 50	50	50
	Above 50.01	0	100
Private tenant within Focus Area	0 – 10	90	10 [*]
	0 – 10	75	25
	10.01 – 50	50	50
	Above 50.01	0	100

(Disposable Income/Grant-Loan Mix Table)

Income related benefits are as follows:

Council Tax Benefit	Job Seekers allowance	Housing Benefit
Working Families Tax Credit	Disabled Persons Tax Credit	Income Support

[*] For those applicants who fulfil the vulnerability criteria on page 37.

If an applicant has equity of £50,000 (or more) within the value of their property, the council would only assist in the arrangement of a loan outside the Focus Area, unless the applicant fulfils the vulnerability criteria on page 37. For the purposes of grant, the following formula is used:

Equity = value of property – the mortgage + capital sum paid off the mortgage

Energy Efficiency Grants (Insulation Programme)

Energy Efficiency Grant percentages will be calculated using Net income figures:

Net Income of Nil to £150	=	100% Local Authority Grant funding
Net Income of £150.01 to £200	=	75% Local Authority Grant funding
Net Income of £200.01 to £300	=	50% Local Authority Grant funding
Net Income of £300.01 and above	=	25% Local Authority Grant funding

The principle of the Energy Insulation Grants is to ensure that everyone who applies is able to receive 100% funding with a mix from the Council and British Gas.

Note: If an applicant discloses savings and investments in excess of £25,000 a maximum award of 25% grant from the Local authority is applicable.

Council grant funding will be allocated as follows:

100% Council Grant funding	=	100% invoiced to Local Authority and percentage contribution invoiced to British Gas
75% Council Grant funding	=	75% invoiced to Local Authority and percentage contribution invoiced to British Gas
50% Council Grant funding	=	50% invoiced to Local Authority and percentage contribution invoiced to British Gas
25% Council Grant funding	=	25% invoiced to Local Authority and percentage contribution invoiced to British Gas

Note: Percentage contribution determined by British Gas dependent upon measures installed

This is a matched funding process whereby both parties contribute. Therefore, a reconciliation of expenditure has to be determined periodically to ensure each party's contribution is appropriate.

6.12 Notification & Authorisation.

1. If the applicant has a contribution towards the cost of the relevant works, that contribution must be lodged with the council prior to a grant being awarded.
2. The applicant will also be requested to sign, and return a form that authorises the council to award grant of a specified amount. The form will also authorise the council to expend up to 10% of the grant award should the need arise due to unforeseen works.
3. If unforeseen works do arise the applicant is obliged to pay their proportion of the increase in the cost of the relevant works. If for any reason costs exceed more than 10% of the grant award, the grant recipient's approval will be sought in writing before proceeding.
4. The council will notify applicant's in writing the amount of grant awarded. The grant will be given a unique number, and contain the conditions, and repayment implications applicable to the grant.
5. Within any designated Focus Area, enclosed with the grant will be details of the Contractor who will carry out the relevant works. Outside of any designated Focus Area, it is the responsibility of the grant recipient to make contact with their chosen Contractor and agree a works commencement date. The council may do so under exceptional circumstances.
6. The council will award grant within 6 months, once they are in receipt of all the relevant information pertaining to the application.
7. Relevant information includes, the application form, proof of income, pertinent certificates, specifications, tenders, contribution, and the applicant's authorisation referred to above. The only exception will be in a Focus Area where the delivery of grant will be programmed, and managed in a structured format. The recipient will be informed of the programme, and the council will arrange the commencement of the works.
8. If the applicant is refused grant, the reasons for refusal will be stated in writing.

6.13 The Contract.

1. The contract in respect of the works is between the recipient of the grant and the Contractor (s) who undertake the works; the council acts as an agent on behalf of the recipient only.

2. The Council undertakes to ensure that the relevant works are carried out to a satisfactory standard, make payment to the contractor (s) and have any faults rectified within 12 months from the certified completion date of the relevant works.

6.14 Payment & Repayment Conditions.

1. Where the Council has awarded Grant Aid, the Grant will be paid to the Contractor upon satisfactory completion of the relevant works:
 - (a) In interim instalments as the works progress, and the balance after completion of the works.
 - (b) In whole after completion of the works.
2. The contractor (s) will be paid within 28 days of satisfactory completion of the part/whole of the relevant works.
3. It is a condition of grant that the relevant works are completed within 12 months of the date of approval of the grant. If the grant is not completed within that period, the grant will be withdrawn, and not reconsidered at a future date unless there are extenuating circumstances. Should grant be withdrawn, and costs incurred, such costs will be met by the grant recipient.
4. The Council will inform the grant recipient in writing that the 12 months are due to elapse, incorporating sufficient time for the works to be completed within those 12 months.
5. The Council will only make payment for relevant works stipulated within the specification, a copy of which will be given to the client. Any works that are not included in the specification are the responsibility of the applicant, and such costs must be borne by the client, unless the council deems such work as a legitimate expense.
6. Where the application is accompanied by a certificate of future occupation the condition relating to this certificate requires repayment of grant in certain cases where the dwelling is sold or otherwise disposed of during the 5 years following the certified date. Where an owner occupier makes a disposal of the property within 5 years of the certified date, the grant recipient will be required to repay the whole amount of the grant during the whole 5 year period in accordance with the certificate of owner occupation.
7. Where the application is accompanied by a Tenant's certificate, the 5-year rule in the previous paragraph is applicable.

8. The liability, as denoted in the preliminary conditions (6.3 – p22), is binding in the form of a local land charge, on any person who is the owner of the building during that 5 year period, unless repayment has been made either voluntarily or in response to demand from the Council.
9. Where a certificate of intended letting accompanies the application, the conditions relating to this certificate require payment of the grant in certain cases where the dwelling is sold or otherwise disposed of during the 5 years following the certified date. In addition if the owner disposes of the property within the period, with vacant possession, he/she is obliged to repay to the Council the entire grant.
10. Whilst the conditions as to repayment on disposal cease when a demand is met, the letting conditions remain in force, even after the dwelling has been disposed of and therefore binding on subsequent owners.
11. Any variations such as a change of plans, a change in the works proposed or a change of builder must be notified immediately to the council. Failure to do so once grant has been approved will result in the loss of grant, and costs incurred will be the responsibility of the grant recipient.
12. Where the grant in part or whole relates to an insurance claim, and/or legal claim for damages and a settlement is reached part or the whole of the grant is repayable.
13. If it is ascertained that the person who has received grant award has made a fraudulent application for grant, the grant is repayable, and the applicant may be prosecuted as a result of making a fraudulent application.

6.15 Cessation of grant conditions and repayment

1. Grant is no longer repayable when:
 - (a) The grant conditions have elapsed
 - (b) The applicant moves into either sheltered accommodation, residential or nursing care due to infirmity or disability.
 - (c) The applicant has deceased
 - (d) The whole amount of relocation grant assistance is repayable in full upon sale of the property. There are no extenuating circumstances.

6.16 Vulnerability Criteria.

For the purposes of this document, vulnerable people are classified as applicants who, at date of application, are:

- (a) Residents with a medical/functional disability
- (b) Residents who are above state retirement age
- (c) Residents who are lone parents on income related benefits with children under 16 years of age

7. Customer Satisfaction

7.1 The council is committed to the needs and satisfaction of the client, and continually strives to maintain and improve the services provided. To ensure that the quality of service we monitor our actions, and have in place a complaints procedure.

7.2 Monitoring

- a. Every grant applicant and any client, who receives Grant aid or uses any of our ancillary services, will receive a satisfaction form for completion and return.
- b. The satisfaction forms are collated, and the client's views are noted to see if the service users needs have been met or whether the service can be improved. Service review occurs on an annual basis or as a result of an upheld complaint.

7.3 Complaints Procedure

- a. If a complaint informal or otherwise concerns the test of resources, this procedure does not apply. The test of resources applies equally to every applicant, and precedents cannot be made to an individual. A check of the details will be carried out to verify an outcome only.
- b. If the complaint is informal (e.g. a minor comment on a customer satisfaction form) the remark is either noted on the case file, or is used in a positive way that will enhance the service provision.
- c. If the complaint is formal the council undertakes to investigate and respond to the complaint within 5 working days. If the complaint cannot be dealt with in the 5 days, the complainant will be given a valid reason of such a delay. The outcomes will be written.
- d. A formal complaint can be registered in the following ways:
 1. In person (details will be recorded)
 2. In writing
 3. By telephone or other electronic means
- e. The manager will be immediately notified upon receipt of the complaint and ensure that:
 1. An appropriate Officer deals with the complaint, carefully, sensitively, and accurately.

2. A full written reply sent within 10 days states the decision and reasons for making it, whether the complaint has been resolved, and the action taken as a result of the complaint.
3. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation they will be advised that the matter will be immediately referred to the Departmental Chief Officer who will consider the complaint afresh.
4. The Chief Officer will initiate a review of the complaint and the complainant will be informed of the outcome within 4 weeks of reviewing the complaint.
5. If the complainant is not satisfied with the Chief Officers' response, the complainant will be advised of their rights to approach the Local Government Ombudsman.

8. Equal Opportunities Statement

Policy Statement

Our Position on Equal Opportunities

The Council is committed to ensuring that equality of opportunity exists within all of its functions, both in terms of service delivery and employment practices. Furthermore, our policy has been developed to ensure compliance with all relevant equal opportunities legislation.

Key Objectives

The Council has committed itself to achieving the following:

- ◆ It will ensure that there is no discrimination to staff or customers on the grounds of their race, gender, age, disability, sexuality, marital status, religion, ethnic origin or any other factor upon which discrimination may be used
- ◆ It will continue to implement the Codes of Practice produced by the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission; as well as including the recommendations made in the McPherson Report, in the development of policies and practice
- ◆ It will continue to monitor and review service delivery in terms of Equal Opportunities
- ◆ It will consult with customers and the wider community on equality issues and service delivery
- ◆ It will work with other landlords and agencies within the borough to actively support and value diversity within the local community

Unmet needs and community development

- a) The Council is seeking to engage with all communities and groups living in the borough. To this end it recognises that there is a need to carry out a baseline study to establish what the needs of under-represented groups and individuals are.
- b) The Council will ensure that links are set up with under-represented groups to enable this aim to be achieved.

- c) The Council will carry out a comprehensive analysis of the Census Data that arises from the 2001 Census in order to assist in identifying the needs of under- represented groups.
- d) The Council will consult with under-represented groups on its' Equal Opportunities Strategies and any changes to specific policies and procedures that may arise.
- e) All community development and regeneration work will ensure consultation and involvement of under - represented groups.
- f) The Council will consult and be informed by voluntary and statutory agencies that act on behalf of under-represented groups within the borough.

9. Publicity and Availability.

A copy of this policy will be lodged within the following buildings and Organisations for members of the public to examine.

Solihull Central Library	Chelmsley Wood Library
Shirley Library	Meriden Library
Castle Bromwich Library	Chelmsley Wood Area Office
Solihull Council – main reception	Kingshurst Area Office

Voluntary bodies such as Age Concern ~ Solihull will be provided with copies of the main criteria to assist their clients.

10. Review Details.

Unless immediate legislative changes or other changes are required (possibly, as a result of an upheld complaint or the policy proves unattractive to local residents) the policy document will be reviewed and revised annually. This time commitment allows for any periodic legislative and local changes, affecting the delivery of the services contained within the policy document, to be considered and implemented.

The Private Sector Services Manager will assess the identified required changes in line with the delivery targets of the Housing Strategy, which will link with the delivery of the Directorate and Divisional Performance Plans, which in turn link to the Community Strategy.

RENOVATION ~ POLICY DOCUMENT

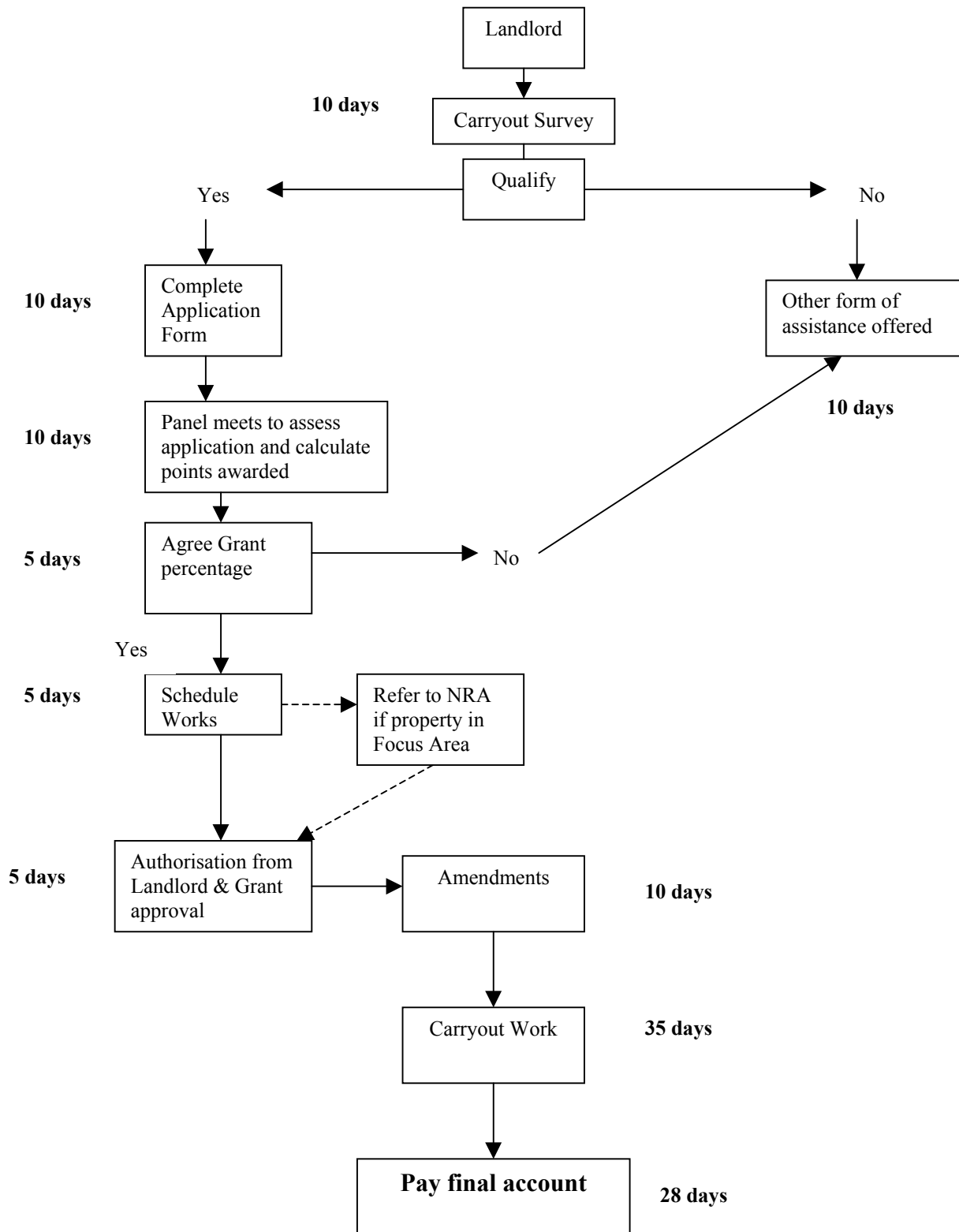
Bibliography

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) ~ Guidance Document	Housing Health and Safety Rating System ~ The Guidance (version 1)	July 2000
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) ~ Consultation Paper	Private Sector Housing Renewal: Reform of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Housing Act 1985.	March 2001
Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) ~ Consultation Paper	Selective Licensing of Private Landlords	October 2001
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) ~ Consultation Document	Housing Renewal Guidance	June 2002
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) ~ Guidance Document	Addressing the needs of run down private sector housing ~ A good practice guide	October 2002
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) ~ Consultation Document	Sustainable Communities: Building for the future ~ National Action Plan	Crown copyright 2003
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) ~ Consultation Document	Sustainable Communities in the West Midlands ~ Regional Action Plan	Crown copyright 2003
Department of Health ~ Consultation Document	Delivering Adaptations – Desk Guide	February 2003
Department of Health ~ Social Services Inspectorate – Local Inspection Report	Inspection of Social Care Services for Disabled People – Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	October 2002

RENOVATION ~ POLICY DOCUMENT

Appendix II

Process Diagram ~ Landlords





Appendix III **INITIAL ENQUIRY FORM**

THIS IS NOT AN APPLICATION FORM

Please return this form to:
Strategic Services Directorate
Private Sector Services Team
Capitol House
42 Kingshurst Way
Kingshurst
Solihull
West Midlands B37 6DF
Telephone: 0121-717-1451

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE

(To be completed by all applicants)

Your Name:

Address for Correspondence:
.....
.....

Telephone Number:

Address of property to which assistance relates if different to above.
.....
.....
.....
.....

Do you wish to apply for:

GRANT ASSISTANCE -

GO TO SECTION A

SECTION A

Please describe briefly the works for which you are seeking grant aid:

.....
.....
.....
.....

SECTION B

- (a) All the information supplied will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be used for any other purpose or disclosed to any unauthorised person without the applicant’s approval.
- (b) This form is an **INITIAL ENQUIRY** only and does not constitute a formal offer of grant aid. No works must be commenced by you at this stage or grant will not be payable.
- (c) If any work has been started on the project prior to inspection, or prior to you receiving notification of the grant, no grant can be approved or paid.

SECTION C

Is the property more than 10 years old? **YES** () **NO** () (please ✓ as appropriate)

Are you:

- (a) The owner occupier () () (please ✓ as appropriate)
- (b) The landlord () ()
- (c) Council Tenant () ()
- (d) Housing Association Tenant () ()
- (e) Private Tenant () ()

Please give the name(s) and (if different from your own) address(es) of those people holding a joint interest who are residing or intending to reside in the property.

.....
.....

Do you wish to apply for:

- (a) Renovation Grant **YES** () **NO** () (please ✓ as appropriate)
- (b) Disabled Facilities Grant () ()

How long have you lived at the property? _____

EMPLOYMENT DETAILS

SELF

PARTNER

Occupation:

Employer's Name

& Address:

Please fill in details for gross/salary including overtime, bonus, commission and any other remuneration before making any deduction for Income Tax, National Insurance, Superannuation etc for the five weeks or two months (if paid monthly).

	DATES	GROSS EARNINGS	INCOME TAX	NI	SUPP PEN
Yourselves					
Month/Week	£.....	£.....	£.....	£.....
		£.....	£.....	£.....	£.....
Your Partner	£.....	£.....	£.....	£.....
		£.....	£.....	£.....	£.....

If earnings vary during the period stated above please give details. Or if bonus or commission please state frequency of payments i.e. monthly etc.

.....

Do you or your partner have other jobs in addition to those mentioned previously?
YES () **NO** () (please ✓ as appropriate)

Enter here details of any **DEPENDANT** children (any child for whom you get child benefit, or any child under the age of nineteen in full-time education).

FULL NAME	AGE	DOB	WHAT THEY DO	ARE THEY REGISTERED DISABLED
.....
.....
.....

Do you or your partner get any of the pensions/benefits shown overleaf?

(Please give details of any others)

YES () **NO** () (please ✓ as appropriate)

If the answer is YES state the amount where shown and indicate the period it covers
e.g. Weekly (W); Monthly (M); Four Weekly (4); Annually (A)

	SELF £	PARTNER £
State retirement pension		
State widows pension		
State War widows pension		
War disablement pension		
Occupational pension		
Disability Living Allowance		
(State the rate of care/mobility).....		
Disabled Tax Credit		
Attendance Allowance		
Incapacity Benefit		
Severe Disablement Allowance		
Invalid Care Allowance		
Working Families' Tax Credit		
Other (give details)		
Maintenance payments		
Job Seekers Allowance		

Property Equity:

(Applicants with an assessed equity of more than £50,000 will not qualify for Grant)

1. Do you own your property outright? **YES** () **NO** () (please ✓ as appropriate)
2. Do you have an outstanding mortgage? **YES** () **NO** () (please ✓ as appropriate)

ABOUT YOUR SAVINGS

Do you or your partner have any cash, savings or investments in the United Kingdom or abroad?

YES () **NO** () (please ✓ as appropriate)

If the answer is YES, please give details overleaf:

	SELF	PARTNER
Cash Savings	£.....	£.....
Bank Current Account	£.....	£.....
Bank Deposit Account	£.....	£.....
Bank other account(s)	£.....	£.....
Post Office ordinary account	£.....	£.....
Post Office investment account	£.....	£.....
Premium Bonds	£.....	£.....
Building Society Accounts	£.....	£.....
National Savings Certificates	Issue No:.....	Issue No:.....
	Date:.....	Date:.....
	Number held:.....	Number held:.....
Stocks, shares and unit trusts
	How many	How many.....
Any other investments

Do you pay, or have you during the last 12 months paid for the care of any child named in page 4 who is not disabled and who is under the age of 15 years?

YES () **NO** ()

If yes, how much £ How often

Do you or your partner make a contribution of a student grant for a son, daughter, or partner?

YES () **NO** () (please ✓ as appropriate)

SECTION D

DECLARATION

I declare to the best of my knowledge, information and belief the information on this form is correct. I authorise the Local Authority to verify the information stated if they so wish.

Date:

Signature:

Initial Enquiry Form - Ethnic Origin:

The following information is designed to help the Council determine whether not it is providing services to a broad cross section of the community. Your completion of the following questions is completely voluntary.

Please ✓ category that best depicts your ethnicity

- White [British () Irish () other ()]**
- Asian or Asian British ()**
- Black or Black British ()**
- Mixed ()**
- Chinese or other ethnic group ()**

Appendix IV

SOLIHULL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

PRIVATE SECTOR SERVICES TEAM

(Renovation Grants & Assistance)

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Your Name & Address:

(Please state if you are not the person for whom the adaptations were installed)

Type of work received: Renovation Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Other

Your general opinion

1. Are you pleased with the works carried out to your property?

Yes No Partially

2. If you had to make a financial contribution, was this process clearly explained to you?

Yes No Partially

3. Whenever you contacted the Private Sector Services Team either by telephone, writing or in person, were staff polite and prompt?

Yes No Sometimes

4. Was it made clear what action was to be taken and how much time this action was likely to take?

Yes No Sometimes

5. When visited at home by a Technical Officer, were you given a name, contact number and advised when they were generally available?

All the time Sometimes Never

If there are any additional comments you wish to make, please do so below:

Your Opinion of the Technical Officer service

6. Overall was the Technical Officer's attitude towards you:

Very good **Good** **Satisfactory** **Poor**

7. Were you able to contact the Technical Officer easily?

All the time **Sometimes** **Never**

8. How would you rate the Technical Officer's explanation of the proposed schedule of work or Adaptations Plans (if applicable)?

Very good **Good** **Satisfactory** **Poor**

9. How would you rate the Technical Officer's ability to deal with any difficulties that arose (if applicable)?

Very good **Good** **Satisfactory** **Poor**

Your Opinion of the Occupational Therapist Service (DFG cases only)

10. Was the Occupational Therapist's general attitude towards you:

Very good **Good** **Satisfactory** **Poor**

11. Were you able to contact the Occupational Therapist easily?

All the time **Sometimes** **Never**

12. How would you rate the Occupational Therapist's explanation of what was happening?

Very good **Good** **Satisfactory** **Poor**

13. How would you rate the Occupational Therapist's ability to deal with any difficulties that arose (if applicable)?

Very good **Good** **Satisfactory** **Poor**

If there are any comments you wish to make about Private Sector Services or Occupational Therapy Service, please do so below:

.....
.....
.....

Your Opinion of the Builder's Service

14. Were you pleased with the quality of work carried out?

Yes No Partially

15. How would you describe the speed at which the work was completed?

Very good Good Satisfactory Poor

16. Was the builders' attitude towards you:

Very good Good Satisfactory Poor

17. Did the builder keep you informed of what was happening?

Yes No Partially

18. Did the builder always arrive when he said he would?

Yes No Sometimes

If you wish to make any additional comments about the service provided by the builder, please do so below:

.....
.....
.....

19. Have the works provided improved your quality of life or the way you live?

Yes No

20. If answered yes, in what way has your quality of life improved?

.....
.....
.....

21. If answered no, in what ways do you think the service could be improved? (e.g. faster service)

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

If you require any further information regarding this questionnaire, then please contact:

Name: **Dave Abbott ~ Senior Surveyor**

Tel: **0121-717 1462**

Thank you for completing the questionnaire, please return in the prepaid envelope provided.

For office use only:

Date received: ___/___/___

Type of Assistance: Renovation DFG Other

Officer: _____ Builder: _____

OT: _____ OT acknowledgement sent: ___/___/___

Client Acknowledgement sent: ___/___/___



Appendix V
Complaints Procedure Form (Sample)

Your Name:

Address for Correspondence:
.....
.....
.....

Telephone Number:

Address of property to which assistance relates if different to above.

.....
.....

Brief details of complaint:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you for completing the form, please return in the prepaid envelope provided.

For office use only

Type of assistance provided:

Officer:

Acknowledgement sent:

Builder:

Officer referred to:

Appendix VI RENOVIATION ~ POLICY DOCUMENT

LANDLORDS ASSESSMENT MATRIX

Name of Landlord.....

Name of Tenant(s).....

Address:.....

ITEM	SCORE BASIS	SCORE
1. Cost Affordable	0 = YES 5 = NO	
2. Nature of Work	1 – 5 Determined by Risk to occupant(s) public and type and nature of work.	
3. Type of Tenancy/Rent	Assured shorthold = 0 Regulated = 5 in consideration of current level.	
4. Age of Property	Pre 1919 = 5 1919 – 1944 = 4 1945 – 1960 = 2 1960 – date = 1	
5. Strategic Objective	Focus area. 15 = yes 0 = no	
6. Capital Value	Based upon estimated increase in value Each increment of £1000 = 1 up to maximum 5 to be deducted.	
7. Landlord Funding	Sinking fund or similar available for repairs £1000 per = 1 up to maximum of 5 to be deducted.	
8. Nomination Rights	Not applicable at present.	
9. Landlord's Record	1 – 5 a matter of judgement by the Panel of officers concerned.	
TOTAL SCORE		

The total score for each applicant is then converted to the percentage of grant/loan mix applicable for grant.

SCORE	GRANT %
0 – 25	0
26 – 30	25
31 – 35	50
36 - 40	75