EDRC Energy Demand Research Centre

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Retrofit: past and future

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Policy context

- Greater role for local authorities and area-based retrofit; cross-tenure programme from 2028
- PRS must meet minimum standards by 2030
- Focus on heat pumps, district heating, solar PV, simple insulation; shift away from solid wall insulation
- Risks:
  - Continuing to miss homes in poor condition
  - Rent hikes and displacement
  - Subsidies continue to flow to more affluent households

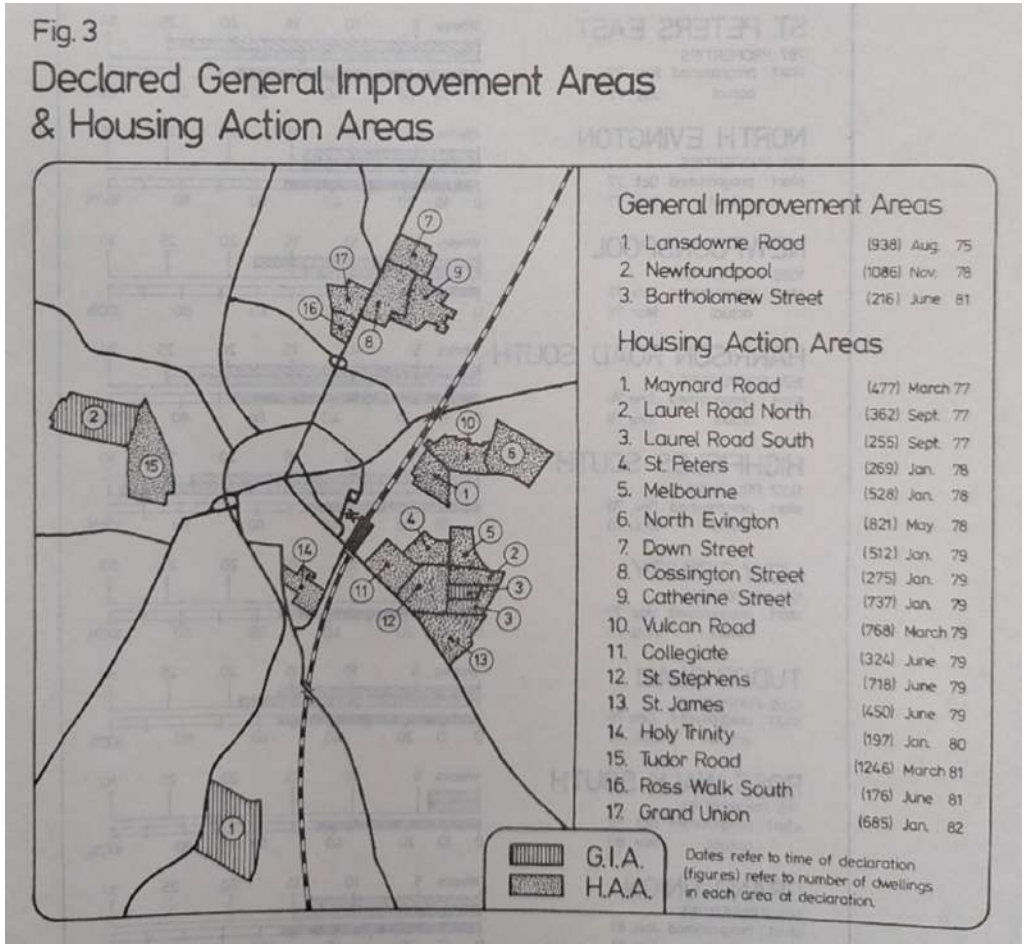


What can we learn from the history of publicly funded home improvement?

A look back at twentieth-century private housing (owner-occupied and private rented) renewal

Postwar housing renewal

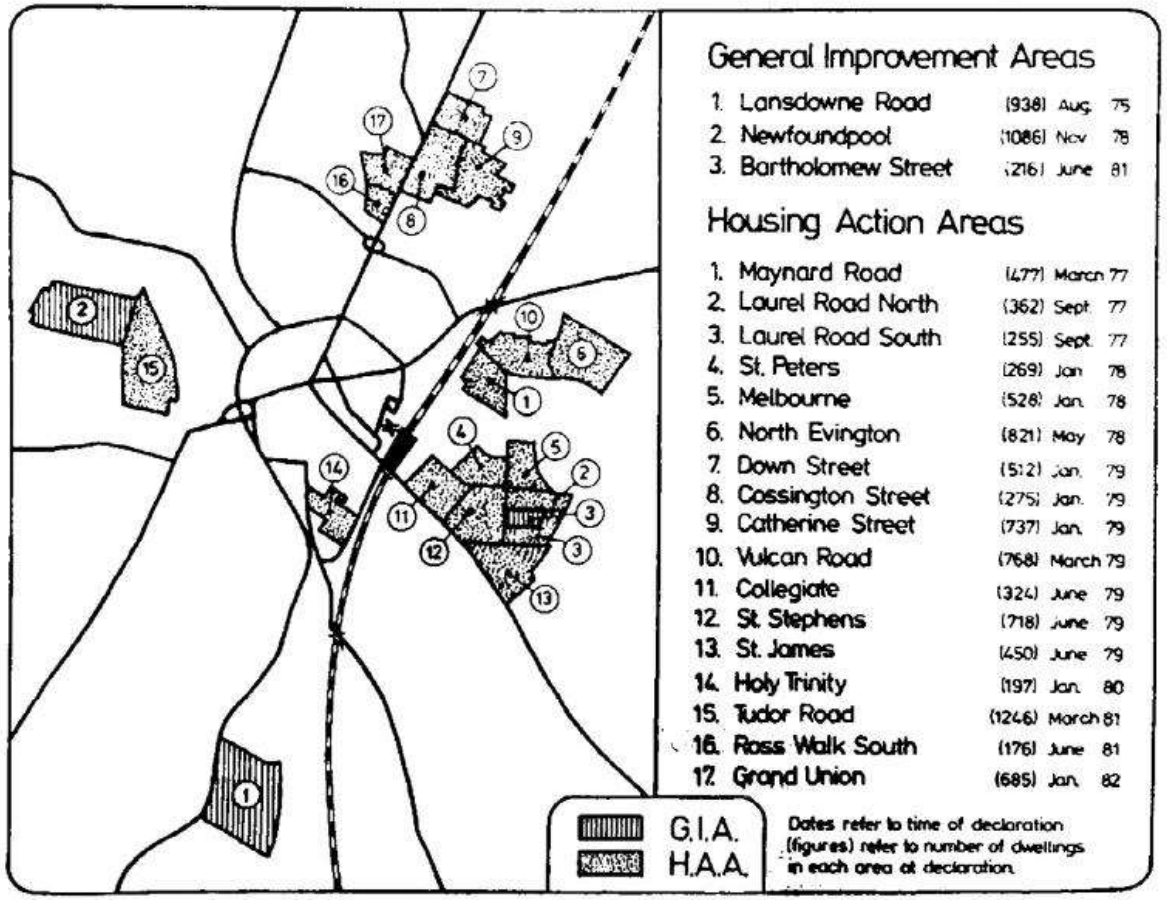
- Governments used housing improvement grants to expand homeownership
- Improvement was also a political response to public backlash against slum clearance
- In the 1970s, more than 200,000 homes a year received grants across England and Wales



Leicester City Council (1982) Renewal Strategy: Sixth Annual Review.

Lessons from area-based renewal

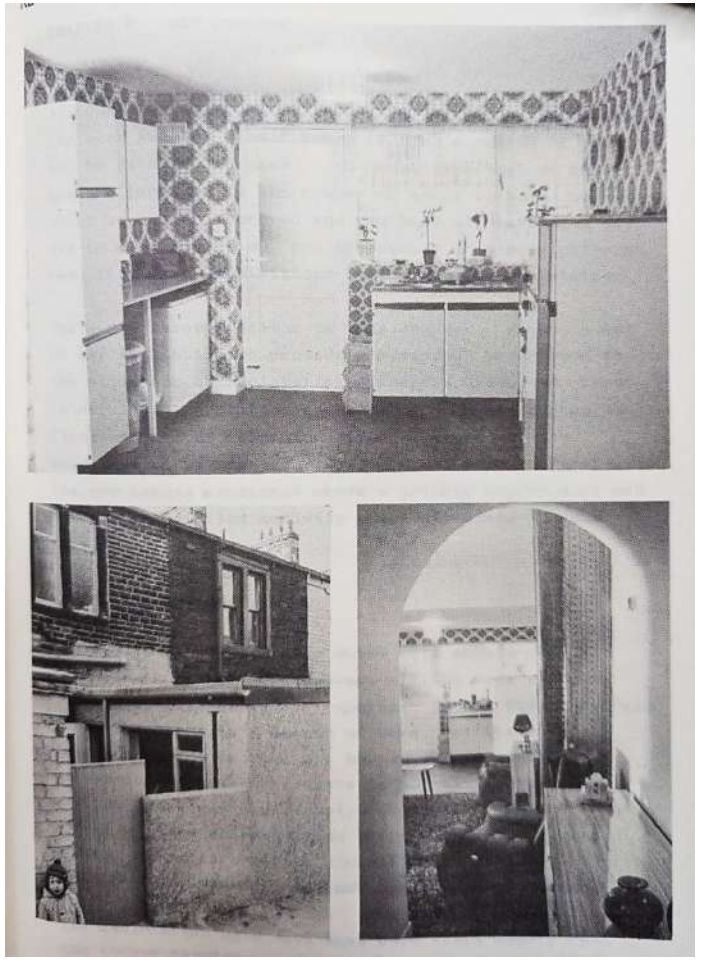
- Housing Action Areas and enveloping schemes in the 1970s and 1980s improved hundreds of terraced homes at a time, working in underserved areas
- These programmes emphasised public participation and tenant protections
- Local authorities could convert non-compliant private rented homes to social housing



Source: Leicester City Council, 1982.

Energy security initiatives

- Between 1979 and 1987, grant-funded loft insulation was installed in 3 million homes
- Between 1968 and 1976, the government coordinated efforts to convert 14 million households from town gas to natural gas from the North Sea
- Despite proposals in the late 1980s to integrate housing renewal and energy efficiency programmes, these remained separate policy areas



New kitchen and renovations in a Housing Action Area. Source: Lomas, G. (1978) Clough Street Housing Action Area: Burnley, Lancashire. London: Centre for Environmental Studies.

What can we take from this history?

- Neighbourhood programmes could achieve wider participation, economies of scale and consistent quality
- Need to integrate repairs with energy upgrades
- Create or extend DLOs
- Make this a civic project: public meetings, participation in decision-making
- Integrate with tenant protections and rent controls
- Leverage programmes to convert empty or non-compliant homes to social housing

