

Housing Enabling Strategy

2020 - 2025



Foreword

As the Cabinet Members for Housing and Planning and Coastal Management we are delighted to introduce the first Housing Enabling Strategy for East Suffolk Council. This strategy underlines the importance we place on enabling new housing development in our district across all tenures. We have recognised in the East Suffolk Strategic Plan and our East Suffolk Housing Strategy that there is a need to facilitate new development to meet the demand in our community for good quality affordable homes that are energy efficient and built to environmentally sustainable standards.

In July 2019, East Suffolk Council unanimously voted to declare a climate emergency. We recognise that new housing development has a major part to play in supporting the Council to achieve its commitments to step up its positive work on environmental issues, to reduce its own carbon emissions and to encourage communities to help fight climate change. This strategy sets out our commitment to encourage housing providers and developers across East Suffolk to strive for a greener approach to both existing accommodation and new developments.

We also outline our intentions to encourage diverse developments from large scale housing schemes to self-build single units to community led developments, supporting these where we are able to benefit our residents in East Suffolk.



Cllr Richard Kerry
Cabinet Member for Housing



Cllr David Ritchie
Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management

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Introduction

This strategy sets out our ambitions in relation to housing delivery over the coming years and sets specific actions to take forward between 2020 and 2025.

Our Housing Strategy, Housing Development Strategy and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan have placed a priority on developing new sustainable homes in the district to deliver the housing needed, including new affordable housing to be delivered by both Registered Providers (RPs) and the Council itself. The Housing Strategy identifies certain priorities relevant to this Housing Enabling Strategy. These are:

- Increasing the supply of new housing to meet a range of needs, with a more proactive role for the Council supporting the development of affordable homes.
- Working in partnership - supporting successful communities, regeneration and economic development.
- Delivering on ambitions to ensure development across the district is increasingly sustainable, including through minimising carbon emissions, and ensuring that development is undertaken in a way which protects and enhances the environment.

The formation of the new East Suffolk Council provides a great opportunity for a corporate strategy to be adopted to help deliver on the stated objectives in the Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan.

Our housing ambitions will be taken forward through the delivery of our new Local Plans. The Local Plan for the former Waveney area was adopted in March 2019 and the new Local Plan for the former Suffolk Coastal area was submitted for examination in March 2019 and is anticipated to be adopted in 2020. The Local Plans contain policies and site allocations to deliver the housing needed over the period to 2036, including affordable housing. Whilst the central theme of the strategy is about ensuring that housing is delivered to meet housing needs, it is also essential that new housing is of a high-quality design and contributes to meeting wider objectives such as through sustainable construction.

This strategy integrates with the work of several teams within the Council (Housing, Planning, Asset Management, Communities and Economic Development and Regeneration), and then will be shared with developers and RPs so that it is inclusive as possible and co-ordinated with our other Council strategies and policies.

This Strategy considers specific areas that are each discussed and, where appropriate, actions are clearly identified on the right-hand side of the page. These actions form the basis of our action plan at the end of the document and will be the focus for checking our progress.

This Strategy is also supported by our Housing Action Plan, which has a greater focus on the Planning Service in delivering the new Local Plans and is produced in reflection of policy contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Housing Action Plan identifies further specific actions to increase delivery of housing covering procedural actions, policy implementation, monitoring and resources. The Housing Action Plan was first published in August 2019 and will be monitored and reviewed.

We recognise that this is an initial strategy that will evolve and its implementation will be monitored by housing and planning officers.

Supporting communities and partners to meet local housing need

Our role in enabling housing delivery is to encourage innovation and diversity in the development sector and on community led projects, delivering the housing needed. We know that we have work to do on this, but we are confident we can achieve it and we recognise that our new Council provides a great opportunity to help deliver new homes in the district.

We seek to pro-actively support and encourage resident engagement in both our rural and urban communities to help shape housing needs. Parish and town councils are particularly important, and in the interests of enabling communities to be actively involved in housing delivery we believe that their engagement is vital. There are other groups as well such as Community Land Trusts (CLTs) which our supporting role should encompass. The most appropriate way to support communities may change over time.

Consideration needs to be given to resources being available to enable us to support interested community groups in developing plans that set out a positive policy framework to deliver housing. This may be through the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans, the identification of rural exception sites, delivery of housing through CLTs or other community led initiatives.

This support can involve the provision of relevant housing data which can help communities to assess and understand local needs for housing in their area.

Rural enabling partners can help deliver more homes in our communities. By identifying potential sites and working with partners we will ensure that schemes are completed. We already assist rural housing schemes and have been effective in engaging rural CLTs and working with RPs and parish councils.

The enabling role of the Council needs to be properly defined to ensure adequate resources are committed. We recognise the importance of it to help us deliver our housing aspirations, though this must be balanced against difficult financial constraints.

Action 01

Review the support the Council can offer to local groups in our communities (particularly rural communities) and prepare appropriate recommendations

Action 02

Support Neighbourhood Plan groups and CLTs in creating positive strategies to deliver more housing



Sustainable housebuilding

In promoting housing delivery, the Council is committed to delivering new homes that are sustainable in terms of their resource use and their relationship with the environment.

This strategy forms one part of the Council's policy approach aimed at delivering new homes in a sustainable way. The Local Plans contain a number of policies which aim to deliver development that is increasingly sustainable, including through sustainable construction approaches which will reduce carbon emissions and water consumption from new development. To assist in the delivery of these policies, the Council will be producing a Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document, and in advance of this have been producing an Environmental Guidance Note. The Council's Housing Development Strategy sets out the Council's position on developing its own housing over the period 2020 - 2024. The Strategy sees environmental sustainability as essential in the creation of new homes and communities and sets out an ambition to explore the use of greener building technologies both within the construction process and finished properties.

The proposed introduction of the Government's Future Homes Standard, through changes to the Building Regulations, is anticipated to bring about further improvements in the energy efficiency of new housing. Embedding sustainable construction approaches within the design of new housing development will therefore be key and is also central to the Council's own Housing Development Strategy.

Environmental Guidance Note

We are committed to improving our environment, reducing the impact we have in the area where we live and enhancing the environment wherever possible. We are producing an Environmental Guidance Note covering a range of sustainability issues to guide developers and ourselves. The Guidance Note covers a range of topics including water conservation, energy efficiency, renewable energy, nature and wildlife, siting and orientation, sustainable travel, surface water run-off, and materials and waste.

Whilst not a statutory document, the Council will be promoting the measures contained in the Guidance Note and will encourage developers to use it in delivering sustainable new homes, alongside meeting the requirements of the planning policies. It is anticipated that some elements of the Guidance will be incorporated within the Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document when this is taken forward.

Action 03

Produce a Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document that includes guidance to implement relevant policies in the new Local Plans



Self-build and custom housebuilding

The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016) sets out a duty to grant permission to meet demand for self-build and custom build. We are obliged to maintain a self-build register in our district and our role is ensuring sufficient development permissions are granted to meet identified demand on the register. The Act requires that 'Relevant Authorities' must have regard to the register when carrying out functions relating to planning, housing, disposal of Council land and regeneration.

Planning policies in our new Local Plans require 5% of dwellings on sites of 100 or more dwellings to be self-build or custom build, through the provision of serviced plots. Local Plan policies are also delivering self and custom build plots on smaller sites. We believe that we should support and encourage self-build and custom housebuilding to broaden choice and increase housing delivery, including affordable housing.

The information gathered from the register entries has been reviewed and an East Suffolk register is now in place. There is scope to promote the register and self-build and custom housebuilding more positively and proactively.

Action 04

Engage with self-build and custom build developers, to explore and support delivery of self and custom build housing, including affordable housing

Action 05

Support community led housing where the opportunity arises

Action 06

Review the Council's land disposal process to ensure self and custom build is considered



Encouraging and facilitating developers and Registered Providers

Much of the new housing that will come forward in the district will be developed by private developers or RPs. It is therefore vital that we maintain a productive relationship with the development sector and are able to understand any barriers to delivery and implement measures to address these where appropriate.

In addition to the day to day contact with developers through the consideration of planning applications, we hold a regular Developer Forum through which we engage with developers and agents on topical planning matters and the Council's procedures. We also obtain information on anticipated delivery to inform our housing land supply assessments.

We have established a Major Sites and Infrastructure Team in 2019 which provides a dedicated resource focusing on the delivery of sites which are key to the delivery of the strategies of the Local Plans and establishing ongoing communication with relevant developers and agents. Through this approach we can have a much better ongoing understanding of progress on the delivery of housing including associated infrastructure and a much more proactive role in implementation, such as seeking funding through national sources.

We have published a Brownfield Register (as required by national regulations) which identifies brownfield sites which are considered suitable, available and achievable for housing development. The purpose of Brownfield Registers is to provide up to date information on brownfield land that is available for development.

The Housing Strategy aims to broaden the range of developers operating within the district, and this is reflective of national ambition (notably being a key strand of the 2017 Housing White Paper). The new and emerging Local Plans for the East Suffolk area contain a range of sizes of site allocation which should encourage new housebuilders into the area to deliver alongside established developers.

Through the production and monitoring of the Housing Action Plan we can identify any barriers to delivery, along with identifying appropriate actions to address these. Related to this, we have reviewed the way in which we obtain information on the delivery of sites related to the production of the Statement of Housing Land Supply, in order to improve understanding of delivery issues.

Our close working relationship with our RP partners is crucial in delivering affordable general needs housing and supported housing to meet the needs of our community which could not be met by our own resources.

Action 07

Continue to hold a regular Developer Forum

Action 08

Engage with a wider range of developers / builders / specialist providers (including new entrants into the housing market) to actively enable greater diversity and opportunity

Action 09

Identify opportunities to increase new supply with additional partners including for-profit organisations as well as Registered Providers

Action 10

To develop, publish and maintain a Housing Action Plan. This sits alongside this Housing Enabling Strategy and identifies actions focused on the Planning Service

Action 11

Develop a mechanism for reporting on progress to Members on a regular basis on the delivery of key sites, including any issues / barriers and any measures taken by us

Action 12

Update the Brownfield Register annually

Affordable housing delivery

We are committed to delivering more affordable homes in our district and our Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan state our intentions and the target numbers to be delivered.

There is a need for more detailed data across the district at a local level to supplement the district wide data that we hold. This will help inform delivery objectives at a local level that will meet the needs of our district.

To help us deliver these homes the Local Plans contain policies to secure affordable housing as part of market housing development and which support the development of rural exception sites. We are currently reviewing our arrangements for securing affordable housing through legal agreements related to planning permissions (Section 106 agreement Heads of Terms) to provide greater consistency and clarity, and to ensure that these are as effective as possible in meeting commitments on delivering new affordable homes.



Action 13

Consider how our land assets can be used to meet the aims of our housing strategies and prepare proposals

Action 14

Develop a strategic approach to identifying opportunities for developing our land assets

Action 15

Produce an Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document to provide guidance on implementation of the affordable housing policies contained in the new Local Plans

Action 16

Review the ways in which the Housing Service is engaged in the planning process and implement measures to enhance this where appropriate

Using Council assets to create and unlock opportunities in the district

We aspire to bring forward suitable land for housing development and adopt an enabling role for larger public land sites. We recognise the important role we must play in developing our own assets to help regenerate areas and meet housing need. The North Felixstowe Garden Neighbourhood and the Lake Lothing area of Lowestoft are significant current examples of this operating in practice.

Making effective use of the Council's assets cuts across a number of our functions and it is important that there is an embedded co-ordinated approach that includes our Asset Management, Housing, Planning, and Economic Development and Regeneration teams; positively contributing to and facilitating the regeneration of specific areas, such as our role in land purchase in Lowestoft and supporting the Lowestoft Place Board.

The Housing Service operating a separate Housing Revenue Account plays an additional role in unlocking opportunities in the district. Land has been acquired in the Lowestoft and Outer Harbour area to facilitate development and this is expected to continue, including building out new sites for our own housing stock.

Action 17

Develop close joint working across services, particularly between the Council's Asset Management, Housing, Planning and Economic Development and Regeneration Teams



Action 18

Explore the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders where necessary to bring development forward

Master-planning and development briefs

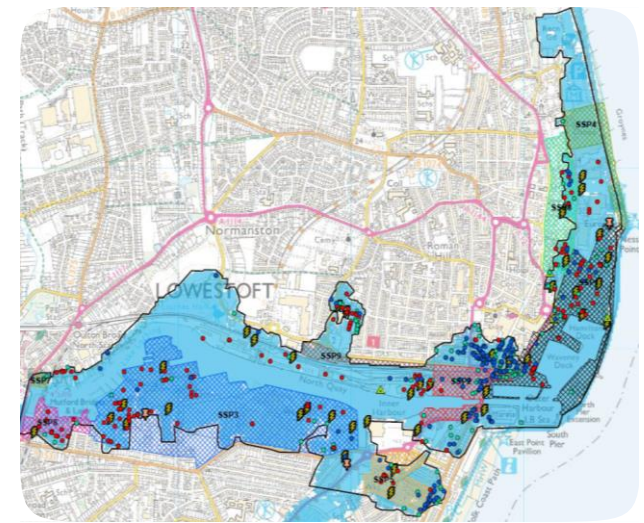
We want to develop a 'master-planning' approach that embeds working collaboratively with a wide range of partners, including communities, to deliver housing and mixed-use developments.

Through the Local Plans there are several policies that aim to deliver development that is increasingly sustainable, including policies on sustainable construction which address reducing carbon emissions and water usage. Any master-planning undertaken will of course reflect these policies.

We also see a role for Development Briefs in providing further guidance on policy expectations to assist in proposals being worked up and delivered whilst achieving high quality design. Our own strategic developments in Lowestoft, Leiston and North Felixstowe demonstrate our commitment to this, where a master-planned approach will ensure that development including infrastructure comes forward in a co-ordinated manner.

Action 19

Consider how our land assets can be used to meet the aims of our housing strategies and prepare proposals



Action Summary

Action Ref	Action
1	Review the support the Council can offer to local groups in our communities (particularly rural communities) and prepare appropriate recommendations
2	Support Neighbourhood Plan groups and CLTs in creating positive strategies to deliver more housing
3	Produce a Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document including guidance to implement relevant policies in the new Local Plans
4	Engage with self-build and custom build developers, to explore and support delivery of self and custom build housing, including affordable housing
5	Support community led housing projects where the opportunity arises
6	Review the Council's land disposal process to ensure self and custom build is considered
7	Continue to hold a regular Developer Forum
8	Engage with a wider range of developers / builders /specialist providers (including new entrants into the housing market) to actively enable greater diversity and opportunity
9	Identify opportunities to increase new supply with additional partners including for-profit organisations as well as Registered Providers

Action Ref	Action
10	To develop, publish and maintain a Housing Action Plan. This sits alongside this Housing Enabling Strategy and identifies actions focused on the Planning Service
11	Develop a mechanism for reporting on progress to Members on a regular basis on the delivery of key sites, including any issues / barriers and any measures taken by us
12	Update the Brownfield Register annually
13	Consider how our land assets can be used to meet the aims of our housing strategies and prepare proposals
14	Develop a strategic approach to identifying opportunities for developing our land assets
15	Produce an Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document to provide guidance on implementation of the affordable housing policies contained in the new Local Plans
16	Review the ways in which the Housing Service is engaged in the planning process and implement measures to enhance this where appropriate.
17	Develop close joint working across services, particularly between the Council's Asset Management, Housing, Planning and Economic Development and Regeneration Teams
18	Explore the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders where necessary to bring development forward
19	Consider how our land assets can be used to meet the aims of our housing strategies and prepare proposals

Glossary

Term	Definition
Affordable Housing	<p>Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:</p> <p>a) Affordable housing for rent meets all of the following conditions:</p> <p>(a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government’s rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable);</p> <p>(b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).</p> <p>b) Starter homes: is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household’s eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.</p> <p>c) Discounted market sales housing is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.</p> <p>d) Other affordable routes to home ownership is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low-cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.</p>
Affordable Homes Programme	Investment Programme to support development of new affordable homes by Government appointed Homes England.
Affordable Rent	See Affordable Housing.

Term	Definition
Brownfield Register	Brownfield sites are previously developed land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. The register is a requirement of the local authority to maintain an up to date record of brownfield sites in the district
Commuted Sums	Capital sums from private developers held by Local Authorities for supporting new affordable housing developments in lieu of providing affordable housing on site.
Community Land Trusts (CLTs)	Independent non-profit trusts which own or control land and facilities in perpetuity for the benefit of the community.
Community Led Housing Development	Where people and communities play a leading role in addressing their own housing needs. The route taken depends on things like the nature of the demand, available resources, location and type of activity. Approaches encompass new build, regeneration and the use of existing buildings. Community-led housing groups may form based on a geographical connection or something else they have in common.
Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)	An order issued by the government or a local authority to acquire land or buildings for public interest purposes. For example, for the construction of a major road or the redevelopment of certain brownfield sites.
Custom Build	See Self-Build.
Design Statement	A design statement can be made at a pre-planning application stage by a developer, indicating the design principles upon which a proposal is to be based. It may also be submitted in support of a planning application.
Development	Development is defined under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act as “the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operation in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any building or other land.” Most forms of development require planning permission (see also “permitted development”).
Development Brief	A document, prepared by a local authority, a developer, or jointly, providing guidance on how a site of significant size or sensitivity should be developed. Site-specific briefs are sometimes known as planning briefs, design briefs or development frameworks.
Homes England	Homes England is the non-departmental public body that funds new affordable housing in England. It was founded on 1 January 2018 to replace the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).
Housing Action Plan	The Housing Action Plan identifies actions to support the delivery of planned housing growth across the East Suffolk local planning authority area, responding to the results of the Government’s Housing Delivery Test.

Term	Definition
Housing Association	A non-profit organization that rents houses and flats to people on low incomes or with particular needs.
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	A ring-fenced account held by local authorities funded by rents to provide landlord services.
Infill Development	The development of a relatively small gap between existing buildings with new housing.
Local Plan	A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A local plan can consist of either strategic or non-strategic policies, or a combination of the two.
Master Planning	A type of planning brief outlining the preferred usage of land and the overall approach to the layout of a developer. To provide detailed guidance for subsequent planning applications.
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (formerly DCLG)	UK Government department whose responsibilities include local government and housing.
National Planning Policy Framework	Sets out governments planning policies for England.
Neighbourhood Plans	A plan prepared by a parish council or a neighbourhood forum for a particular neighbourhood area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004).
Rural Exception Sites	Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.
Section 106 Agreements	Section 106 is part of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990. Agreements under it cover requirements of developers as part of planning permissions. These are agreed in the planning application process, to provide contributions (usually financial) to develop facilities/amenities for the local community (e.g. education, open space affordable housing).

Term	Definition
Self-Build	Housing built by an individual, a group of individuals, or persons working with or for them, to be occupied by that individual. Such housing can be either market or affordable housing. A legal definition, for the purpose of applying the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended), is contained in section 1(A1) and (A2) of that Act.
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	Documents which add further detail to the policies in the development plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on issues such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.
Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document	A document which adds further detail to the policies in the Local Plan in relation to sustainable construction. It can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues. Supplementary planning documents are not part of the development plan.

