

Response to Members Questions: Housing Development Programme Update

16 September 2021

Q1: Is East Suffolk achieving the target of building 50 new Council properties per annum?

(a) The LGA has called for 100,000 new social homes a year which would mean 400 in East Suffolk. ([100,000 social homes a year needed as part of COVID -19 recovery - councils warn | Local Government Association](#)). How many have we built this year and what is our target for 2021/2022? (Cllr Beavan)

The LGA article seems to use 'affordable' and 'social' in the same context. This question has therefore been interpreted as asking how many new social homes have been built in East Suffolk in 21/22 and what is the target for the year. Given we are only halfway through the year, the response is that 17 social homes were built and a further 3 homes were added to the HRA through acquisition by East Suffolk led developments in 21/22.

Throughout the district a total of 83 social homes across six sites have been built to date in 21/22 and the target for the year (21/22) is 250 as noted within the East Suffolk Housing Strategy. This response also makes reference to the Council's recently published (early August) Housing Action Plan. [2021 -East-Suffolk-Housing-Action-Plan.pdf \(eastsuffolk.gov.uk\)](#) . Page 47 has a table that documents progress in delivering the ES housing programme and also pages 69 and 70. The 'Actions' pages 79 to 83 at the back of the document includes specific actions to increase and speed up housing delivery generally.

Total AH completions 2020/21 is 132 dwellings

(b) How might the creation of a LATCO have an impact on the purchase of or construction of local authority housing? (Cllr Gooch)

When the LATCo develops sites with a required affordable contribution, it is anticipated that these properties will be acquired by ESC via its Housing Revenue Account and will become part of the Council's housing stock.

(c) The local plans etc. obviously help with the targeting of locations, but are there any other brownfield sites that could be zoned for development? (Cllr Gooch)

The Council is required to maintain a brownfield register that is reviewed annually. This includes all previously developed land considered suitable, available and achievable for residential development. [Brownfield land register » East Suffolk Council](#)

The register comprises:

- Brownfield sites that have been granted planning permission and are either under construction or not started
- Brownfield sites that are allocated in adopted Local Plans or made Neighbourhood Plans
- Brownfield sites identified in the Strategic Housing and Economic Housing Land Availability Assessments that have been assessed as being suitable, available and achievable for housing. It should be noted that inclusion of a site on the register does not imply that planning permission would be granted for residential use. Any planning application would be considered in relation to relevant planning policies and other material considerations.

So, the register provides a basis for considering other sites that currently aren't in the Local Plans or have the benefit of planning permission that may could be appropriate for affordable housing.

(d) Is there enough involvement from town and parish councils in the housing development plans? (Cllr Gooch)

More involvement will always be welcomed, whether it be to advise on an identified local need or to suggest local sites that could be developed for affordable housing.

(e) Is it always the case that a concentration of house-building creates economies of scale in cost? (Cllr Gooch)

Usually, yes. Developing a number of properties on one site will almost certainly involve lower planning and survey fee costs in the pre contract stages, and significantly lower mobilisation and infrastructure investment within construction than developing the same number of properties across a number of sites.

(f) Accepting that it is more economic to build social homes where land is cheaper, i.e., in Lowestoft and Felixstowe, is it socially acceptable that our social home owners will be concentrated in these towns and unable to live elsewhere in our District. Can we defray some of the extra land costs by increasing the social rent in high value areas? (Cllr Beavan)

The presumption behind this question is not necessarily the case. Much of the land in Lowestoft is challenging brownfield land and may involve significant remediation costs that might not be incurred on green field site developments elsewhere in the District. The other unavoidable fact is that the bulk of the Council's developable land is in either Lowestoft or Felixstowe, so developing in these locations does not involve the cost of buying the land. That said, the ESC development programme has a number of sites within ES market towns and more rural areas. Currently - 7 sites out of 12 new builds are NOT in Lowestoft or Felixstowe.

Q2: Types of new Council properties

(g) Is the Council intending to buy any more properties to convert into an HMO as was very successful at 141 St. Peters Road, Lowestoft? (Cllr Coulam)

In short, yes. Where housing need data confirms a specific client group that would benefit from a shared accommodation model, this type of accommodation will be provided. Often, there is an element of support required for these schemes to operate successfully as we have seen in our two Council owned HMO's to date.

(h) Does the Council intend to build any more disabled properties in the foreseeable future? (Cllr Coulam)

Looking at the housing needs data we have, the highest demand is for 2 bed accommodation therefore this has to be our initial driver to ensure we provide as many homes as possible to those in the most need. Where sites can successfully accommodate disabled properties, we are actively pursuing this as demonstrated with the 3 fully accessible wheelchair units being provided at Deben. In addition, we are identifying properties which can be adapted and extended within our current stock to ensure best use of existing assets. A 'flagged' property has recently become void and before being relet it will be extended to provide a ground floor accessible home.

(i) Mention is made of analysis of applicant needs; are we considering constructing or purchasing properties that allow multi-generational occupancy (eg having properties with 'granny annexes' etc) or creating single person communities (eg individual single person occupied dwellings in a communal complex) in a bid to address loneliness and isolation (Cllrs Gooch & Topping)

Developing or acquiring multi-generational properties has not been a priority to date, but we are in the process of developing an older persons' housing strategy which will look more closely at this type of approach. The Council has not created single person communities for the purpose of addressing loneliness and isolation. However, the Council has acquired and converted several properties each of which have then provided a number of units of single person accommodation. 560 London Road and 141 St Peter's Road are two examples. The residents in these properties have then formed small communities which has helped avoid issues of isolation.