



Waveney District Council

Serving the Community

**A HOUSING STRATEGY FOR
THE WAVENEY DISTRICT**

Responding to a Changing Landscape

2010 - 2014

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I. Executive Summary

This Housing Strategy for the Waveney District Council area will reflect the direction of the Regional Housing Statement for the East of England 2010. The strategy is based upon a partnership approach to tackling many of the issues and resolving problems across the District. The strategy also looks forward in recognising the rapidly emerging agenda of shared services and closer working with other geographically close neighbours to deliver housing services in a flexible and pragmatic way.

The strategy is intended to set out the main housing issues, which affect Waveney and guide the actions and interventions of the Council, assisting Waveney in securing future investment in the District. An action plan will be drawn up to progress issues with key stakeholders.

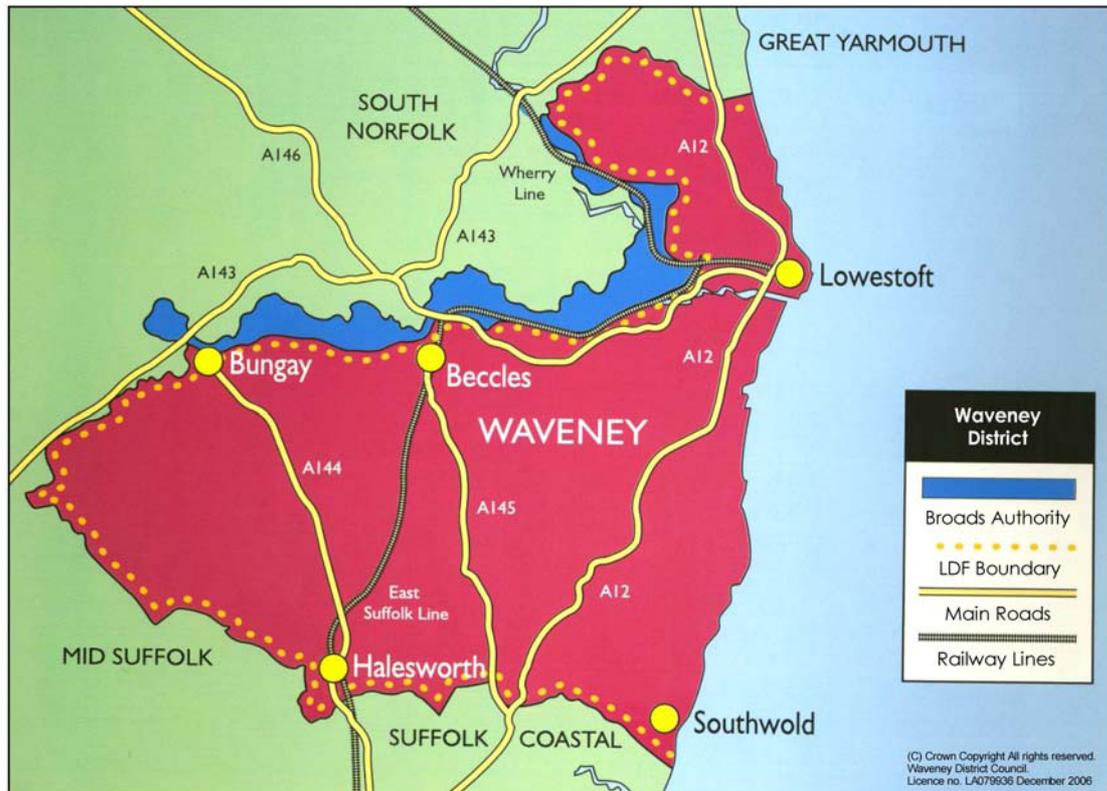
Waveney is characterized by a number of challenging urban problems of deprivation along with concentrations of poor housing and disrepair in inner urban neighbourhoods. There are also significant rural populations, historic market towns, and smaller settlements. The District along with other local authorities, suffers from significant and growing problems of affordability, a reduced supply of affordable housing and continuing problems of homelessness. There are high levels of disability in our population and some gaps in special needs housing provision.

Waveney has benefited in the past from special investment projects in recognition of its economic and social problems, and this has resulted in a strong focus on regeneration of the area. Despite the County boundary divide, there is now committed sub-regional work across Great Yarmouth and Waveney involving the two County Councils, and also between planning, economic development and housing professionals. There is particular potential for our area in the work of the Urban Regeneration Company, which is gaining momentum, and which is focusing on particular areas of urban dereliction in the central Lowestoft area.

Our strategy and action plan for the future focuses particularly on;

- Quantity – Delivery of Affordable Housing and how this can be maximised in the future.
- Quality – look to ensure that both new build and existing social and private sector properties meet current standards and provide a housing choice for all.
- People – look at the specific housing needs of Waveney residents.

II. District Map



III. Introduction

Why do we need a Housing Strategy? Although it is not a statutory requirement to have a Housing Strategy, central Government has stipulated that Local Authorities must become more Strategic in their thinking, developing plans for the longer-term to deliver real outcomes not just outputs. Over recent months, the two Councils at Waveney and Great Yarmouth have been moving towards a joint strategic approach – being clear about the direction for housing and how it will be delivered and communicating this to the relevant partners for the benefit of the community

Our last [Waveney District Housing Strategy “2004 and Beyond”](#) began to be drafted in 2002 in accordance with the Government’s “Fit for Purpose” criteria. This was a highly prescriptive approach that focused on process rather than outcome, placing much emphasis on existing and affordable housing.

The Action Plan from the 2004 document was updated in January 2009 as part of the beginning of the work into writing this new Housing Strategy and it was very reassuring to note that there had been much progress and all of the major objectives had been realised or were partly complete. Further consultation has taken

place with other stakeholders through existing forums such as Scrutiny Committee, Local Strategic Partnership (Housing Delivery Group), Sub-Regional Housing Association Forum and Waveney's Homelessness Forum.

There has been an increase in the supply of affordable housing – 2008/09 saw 108 new affordable housing units made available, a dedicated S106 Officer had been appointed allowing a focus to be brought upon the affordable numbers coming through the mainstream development pipeline.

Similarly, the schemes for 2009/10 will produce in excess of 100 new affordable homes and there is a healthy batch of new bids that have been submitted for funding to the Homes and Communities Agency for the period through to March 2011.

In October 2004, the first [Sub-regional Housing Strategy for Great Yarmouth and Waveney 2005 and beyond](#) was developed. Its purpose was to;

- Set out the main characteristics, key housing issues and objectives for the area.
- Deliver a clear message for the sub-region's needs
- Set out an Action Plan for sub-regional development work.
- Identify housing investment needs for our area over the next three years.
- Set out our potential for maximising investment, realising change and renewal and delivering on agreed priorities.

The identify of the Waveney and Yarmouth Housing sub-region is now fully recognised with a shared aim of "East Coast revival", shared resources and partnership working.

Government has indicated that it is now looking for a Housing Strategy that will demonstrate how housing will achieve high level outcomes that contribute to the corporate priorities of the Council, linking into the Sustainable Communities Strategy, Local Area Agreement and other Regional and Sub-Regional Strategies. The Local Government White Paper "Stronger and Prosperous Communities" (DCLG 2008) placed an expectation on local authorities to take a stronger strategic lead for their area and this is reflected in the document.

This time there will be separate Housing Strategy's for Waveney District Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council. This reflects the maturity of the level of sub-regional working that exists. At some future date, the sub-regional structure for the East of England may be reviewed and re-configured and the intention behind this strategy is to ensure that whatever arrangements are in place will not cause any loss of focus as to the appropriate actions for the Waveney area.

To this end, the Housing Strategy is not a stand-alone document but it is instead linked to, for example, The East of England Housing Statement, the sub-regional Homelessness Strategy, the Local Development Framework, the Suffolk Supporting People Strategy and the approach to the future direction of the Council's own retained housing stock (especially so as the future of the National Housing Revenue Account regime is under review at the time of writing).

As with all aspects of the Council's business, Value for Money is of paramount importance and opportunities for joint procurement and provision of services will be explored.

Although the Housing Strategy will be for 2010/14 it is designed to be a living document, identifying what needs to be built in the District and will need to be flexible and respond to changes that may occur locally, nationally and globally for example, the Homes and Communities Agency is looking to re-invent the ways in which affordable housing is delivered through "The Single Conversation". We need to be able to react quickly to any new initiatives or ways of working, whether as a District Council, as a sub-region or with other partners as potential new structures evolve.

Why refresh our strategy for housing?

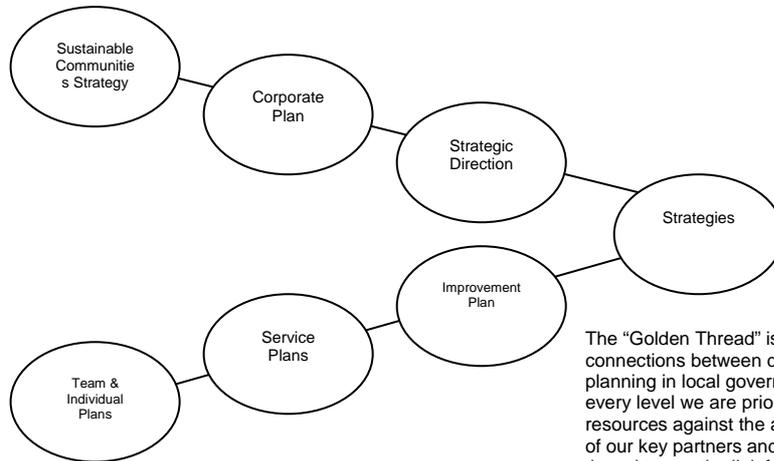
The intention is to refresh, re-visit and build upon the achievements and the work that has taken place in the District and the sub-region since 2004. There have been a number of significant changes in both the District and Sub-Region since 2004 as well as on a national and regional level. The cumulative impact of the financial crises have had a disproportionate effect upon the housing market: a range of volume house builders have gone to the wall and many more have been kept afloat by virtue of interventions by the Homes and Communities Agency and a switch to providing affordable housing until stability returns.

Recent speculation about the future shape of local government across Norfolk and Suffolk has led to the logic of developing separate Action Plans for the sub-region. Currently, there is no clarity over the possible make up of future Local Government arrangements for Suffolk (or Norfolk) but the strategic approach is set out to transcend boundary issues and will be pertinent in any future configuration.

There is a requirement to demonstrate how this strategy links into the Corporate Plan, the Sustainable Communities Strategy, the Local Area Agreement and influences the outcomes within the forthcoming Comprehensive Area Assessment.

There also needs to be a direct relationship to other Council Strategies in order to allow for a broad range of other strategic influences to be brought to bear upon strategic housing issues in Waveney.

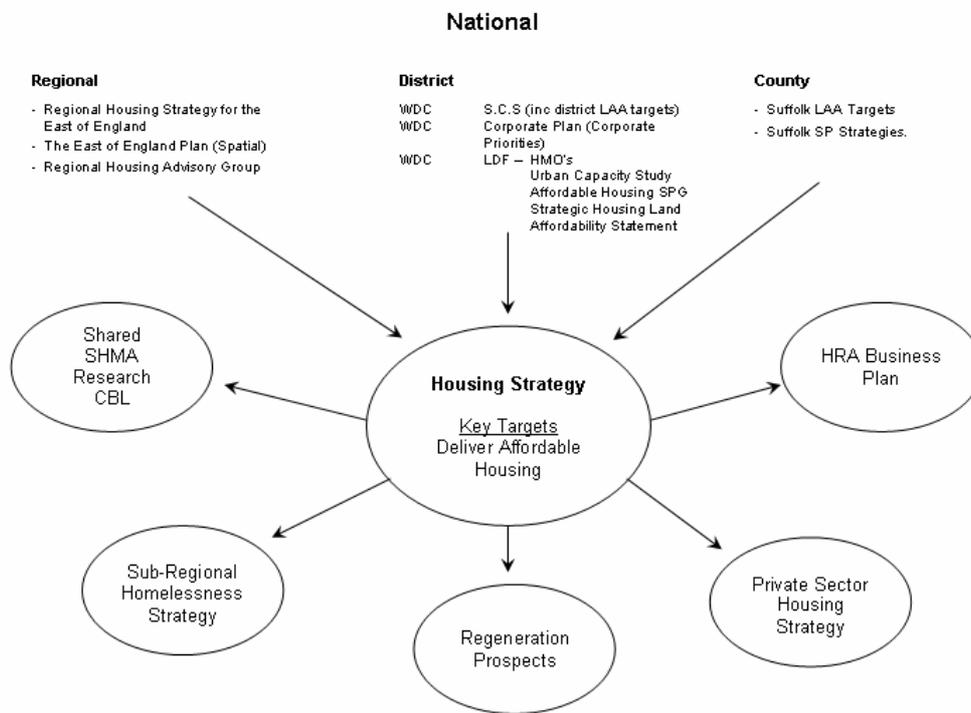
The “Golden Thread” of Local Government



The “Golden Thread” is the term given to the connections between different levels of planning in local government. It shows how at every level we are prioritising our work and resources against the aspirations and priorities of our key partners and the community. The thread traces the link from the Sustainable Communities Strategy, down through the organisations and their strategies combine with those of the authority. When the Golden Thread is working properly, individuals and teams are all working toward delivery of the agreed priority outcomes, leading to the improved services and improved public understanding of Council processes.

Fundamentally, a priority outcome of Waveney’s strategic direction in achieving a vision of a safe, clean, attractive and prosperous environment for the community is through “meeting the housing need of the most vulnerable people living in Waveney”.

IV. Strategic Housing Context –



The Local Government White Paper 2006 recognised the importance of housing as being “at the heart of achieving the social, economic and environmental objectives that shape a community and create a sense of place”. The Housing Green Paper Homes for the Future: More Affordable: More Sustainable further emphasised the importance of the strategic housing role, in terms of delivering new market and affordable housing, making the best use of existing stock and responding to the needs of all residents across all housing tenure.

The Local Government White Paper “Stronger and Prosperous Communities” (DCLG 2008) placed an expectation on Local Authorities to take a stronger strategic lead for their area and gave advice that although Local Authorities have discretion when refreshing their Housing Strategy, whatever format is chosen should;

- Fully reflect the wider vision of the authority and its partners.
- Reflect a clear and evidenced approach
- Provide a strong focus on how partners will deliver their commitments, including on the infrastructure needed to support housing growth.

Where possible, local Housing Strategy’s, should link into local Sustainable Community Strategy’s.

Local Strategic Priorities. What is the vision?

To link in with Waveney's Future and the recently published Sustainable Communities Strategy 2010 – 2028, Waveney's vision for 2028 we need to make Waveney a great place for anyone to grow up, live, work or visit.

The key priority issues for Waveney are;

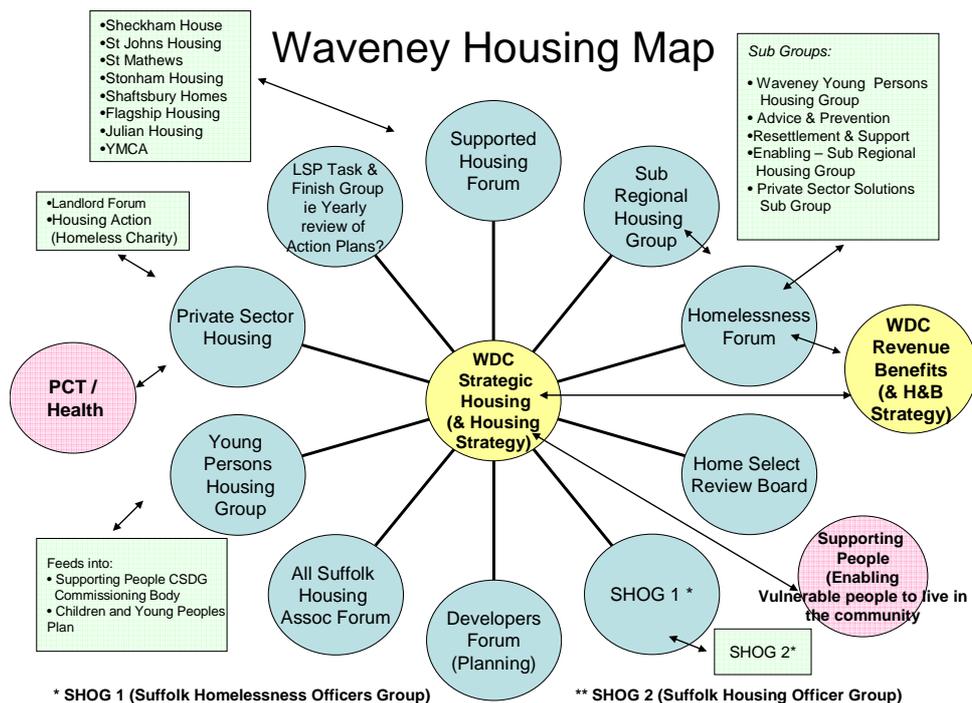
- A prosperous and vibrant economy
- The Greenest County
- Safe, Healthy and Inclusive Communities
- Learning and Skills for the Future.

Housing can be seen to feature predominately in the Safe, Healthy and Inclusive Communities priority issues, with the following housing challenges identified for the Waveney area;

- Address the issues highlighted in the Suffolk Joint Strategic Needs Assessment i.e. a low supply of housing for locals and fuel poverty for pensioners and other vulnerable people.
- Address the issues associated with the growth in the number of older people.
- Provide sufficient levels of affordable and appropriate housing.
- Regenerate the housing stock within Lowestoft and the surrounding area and address the pressures on housing growth.
- Support and improve the condition and standards of private rented housing and reduce the number of long-term empty properties.
- Provide appropriate support and housing to reduce the high level of homelessness among young people and single parent families.

The aim being to;

- Reinvigorate and provide a sustainable mix of housing that recognises employment needs, supporting young people and the elderly.
- Provide new lifetime homes in areas of high elderly population and ensure that greater numbers of older people are living in energy efficient homes that are well adapted with good amenities.
- Provide more affordable housing, incorporating higher "greener" housing standards, that encourage young people to stay in the area and attracts new incoming families.
- Provide appropriate accommodation and support to address and reduce the high level of homelessness amongst vulnerable groups including rough sleepers, single adults, children and young people, families, single parents and offenders leaving custody.



Housing in Waveney – Map of the area

Sub Regional Housing Group- Local Authorities (WDC - Housing Teams, Planners, Elected Members, GYBC,) Housing Associations, Go East, Homes & Communities Agency, Voluntary Sector, *Group to look at all housing issues and the current focus for the group is new developments but the agenda is set and steered by the representatives*

Supported Housing Forum - Coordinated by Space East *All supported housing providers – Suffolk wide. Chaired by CEO of Space East*

Home Select - The Board is the governing body and mechanism for social lettings, forum for housing lettings but considers the wider issues. Representation on the Board includes Housing Associations, CAB, Voluntary Sector, Elected Members from Local Authorities (WDC & GYBC) and Tenant representatives. *The Board oversees the Home Select Scheme and ALL the social lettings in the Sub Region (GY & Waveney)*

Homelessness Forum

SHOG 1 (Suffolk Homelessness Officers Group) – County link for Homelessness

SHOG 2 (Suffolk Housing Chief Officer Group)

All Suffolk Housing Association Forums

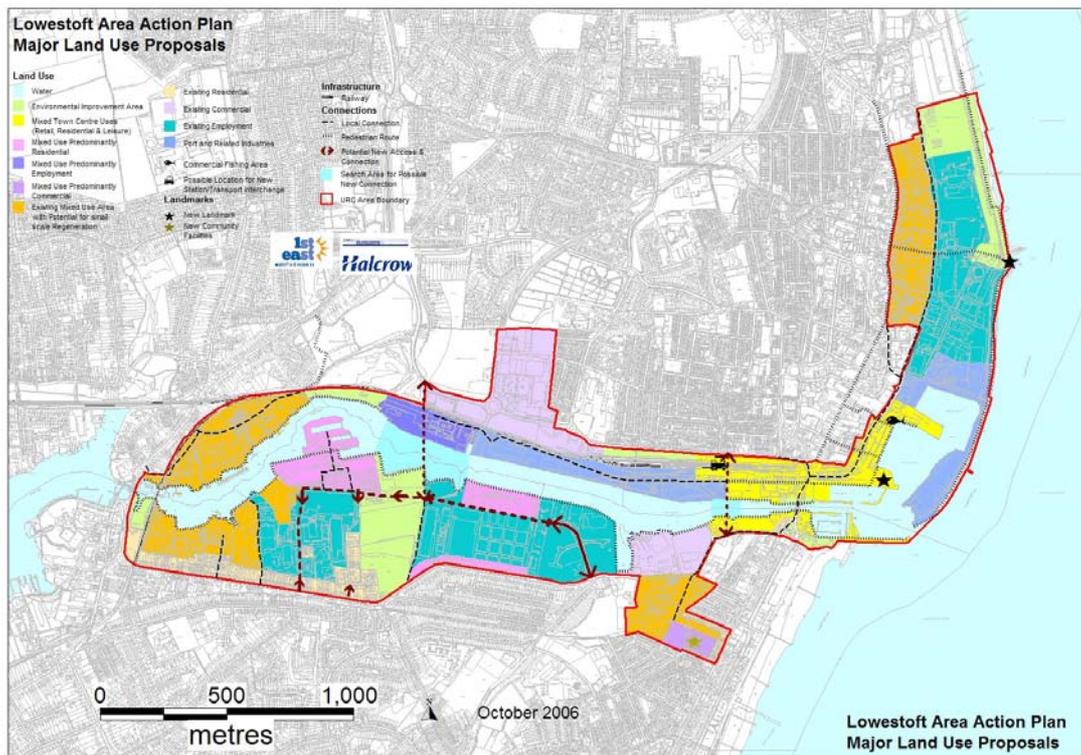
Suffolk Young Persons Housing Action Group - is chaired by a housing authority rep and led by the District Authority (currently WDC). It feeds through to Suffolk Supporting People and the Children's and Young Peoples Priority Plan. It has its own Suffolk wide young people and housing needs strategy which supports the CYP PP

Private Sector Housing - Landlords Forum - Eastern Landlords Association

WDC Revenue & Housing Benefits

Developers Forum – a 4-monthly meeting to encourage better communication between Waveney District Council and local development stakeholders. The group has met to discuss many of the difficult planning issues facing the district, to develop policies for both encouraging and controlling new development to meet the needs of all. It also proves a useful means of updating developers on government proposals and changes in the planning system.

[Waveney's Economic Regeneration Strategy 2008-2017](#) identifies the tremendous potential within Waveney for both economic and community prosperity which, is particularly evidenced in physical regeneration initiatives like the recently completed Sunrise Scheme and the establishment of 1st East Urban Regeneration Company. It is envisaged that a wide range of outcomes will flow from their work, in particular around the goal of the Centre of Excellence for renewable energy. One of the challenges for Waveney identified in this document is the lack of affordable housing, low density and high house prices.



The role of Housing within this vision is central and if the area is to prosper over coming years, there is a need to an on-going commitment to secure more and better accommodation for the workforce attached to the regeneration enterprises.

During 2008/09 good progress has been made against the timetable set out in the revised Local Development Scheme. The Core Strategy has been formally adopted by the Council and work is progressing on [Development Management Policies](#).

In 2007 Yarmouth and Waveney developed a [Sub-Regional Homelessness Strategy](#) concentrating on the following areas;

- Advice and Prevention
- Affordable Housing
- Temporary Accommodation
- Private Sector Housing
- Youth Homelessness
- Resettlement and Support Action

However, we are now currently working on separate Action Plans which will be referred to throughout this document.

Sub-Regional Strategic Priorities

The first distinct housing strategy for the sub-region developed for 2005 and beyond set out the main issues that jointly affected the sub-region and where there could be added value by working together. It also set out for the first time our case for regional investment. As has been recognised earlier in this Strategy, our identity as a housing sub-region is fully known with a shared aim of “East Coast Revival”, shared resources and partnership working. See up-dated Action Plan for our progress to-date.

County Priorities

A Local Area Agreement is a three year agreement between partners and central government to improve local services and increase economic prosperity for local people. This three year “deal” sets out the priorities and targets agreed by all partner organisations represented on the Suffolk Strategic Partnership. Suffolk is now on its second Local [Area Agreement \(LAA 2\)](#) which contains 28 targets chosen from the national menu of 189 National Indicators and 10 locally developed targets specifically pertinent to Suffolk. It is one of these local targets that is specifically relevant to this document – Local Target 9 “Increase the number of affordable homes commencing on site across Suffolk”

[Comprehensive Area Assessment \(CAA\)](#) is a new way of assessing local public services. It examines how well councils are working together with other public bodies to meet the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of six independent watchdogs;

- Audit Commission
- Care Quality Commission
- HM Inspector of Constabulary
- HM Inspectorate of Prisons
- HM Inspectorate of Probation
- Ofsted

Assessments will be made publicly available every year and will provide an annual snapshot of quality of life in the area. The first CAA results are now available on www.oneplace.directgov.uk.

[Suffolk Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010](#) which was updated in October 2008 confirmed the following key strategic priorities for the Supporting People programme;

- Enabling older people to remain at home if they want to
- Reducing the number of people who are homeless and breaking the cycle of repeat homelessness.
- Ensuring people can move out of institutional care and have a choice about where they live particularly clients with learning disabilities and offenders.

The above strategic priorities for Suffolk Supporting People are fully represented later in this strategy when the issue of vulnerable people is highlighted.

Regional Strategic Priorities

The Regional Housing Statement 2010/14 is still in draft but, upon initial inspection reflects well for Waveney as regeneration rather than growth is linked to the development of successful housing.

There is specific mention of coastal towns as priority regeneration areas as, well as the recognition of rural housing needs and the related issue of the high number of second homes. The complex relationship of housing/place making and the economy is also recognised in the document.

The long-term planning framework for the sustainable development of the region is provided by the [East of England Plan](#) (Regional Spatial Strategy) which, currently sets out regional planning policy to 2021. It provides the basis for local authorities to prepare their local development plan, As Regional plans should set-out a long-term strategy for at least 20 years and the current East of England Plan now only covers the next 12 years, a focused review is needed to make provision for the East of England development needs from 2011 to 2031. Different scenarios to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to rent or buy a home at a price they can afford are currently out for consultation.

The accommodation needs for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show-people in the East of England as part of the Regional Spatial Strategy have been reviewed and as part of our Local Development Plan provision should be made for an additional 11 permanent pitches by 2011. Local authorities should work together to establish a network of transient pitches in the Suffolk area

National Strategic Priorities.

As has been mentioned above, the Local Government White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities” identified the need for local authorities to take a more strategic approach to housing as part of their wider place shaping role. By ensuring that housing is of the highest quality, located in the right place with the necessary infrastructure and support Local Authorities can seek to create vibrant and mixed communities.

The Housing Green Paper published in 2007 “Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable” called on all Local Authorities to play a stronger role in addressing the housing needs of all residents. It encourages authorities to develop their strategic role by use the full range of housing and planning tools. They should work with partners to meet the needs of residents by ensuring the delivery of new and affordable housing whilst making the best use of existing stock. By contributing to place shaping it is recognised that strategic housing activity can help to improve other services such as health, education and social services, provide a safe environment, accessible transport, a sense of community and a decent home for all at a price people can afford.

As part of the Government’s Building Britain’s Future plans published in June 2009, Councils were placed centre-stage, being encouraged to build more homes quickly whilst creating employment opportunities in the construction industry. New home ownership schemes would give greater choice and opportunity to first time buyers and tenants, all social housing will meet decent homes standard. Rough sleeping and the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for homeless families has been tackled and the Supporting People Programme enables vulnerable people improve their quality of life.

Through their strategic role, Local Authorities are best placed to seek to meet the housing needs of all their residents. Local Authorities have the democratic mandate to lead spatial planning and place-shaping in their area. Currently, the Homes and Community Agency is engaging in their “Single Conversation” business process with Local Authorities which, they hope to have started in all areas by April 2010. It is envisaged that this process will see the development of Local Investment Plans for 2011 onwards.

V. The Current Situation

In conjunction with Great Yarmouth BC, Waveney DC carried out a [Strategic Housing Market Assessment](#) across the sub-region in 2007; this information is due to be up-dated later this year and this will be issued as a separate document.

Below are the following broad conclusions from our SHMA September 2007:

Key strategic points:

- The lack of balance in our housing markets is of concern (as is the case in almost every other housing market in the country) and is addressed in our strategy:
- Though Waveney house prices are still lower in our urban areas than in neighbouring districts, the affordability gap has increased with rapid price inflation, notwithstanding the relative slowdown since the beginning of 2008 and is showing in increased demand for social housing as evidenced in the steep rise in the housing register.
- House price inflation is affected by land availability and the pace of new housing production
- There is variation in housing markets within our region but we share the impact of the recent rapid growth in Greater Norwich. On-going work on housing markets will be a feature of the work of the strategic housing team.
- The private rented sector is becoming increasingly important as a resource and much successful work has taken place over recent years that will be built upon into the future. Action has been taken to resolve many of the worst features of Housing in Multiple Occupation, which has had a beneficial knock-on effect in the areas where they are found.
- The supply of affordable housing has seen a steady net reduction over the past 20 years, because of the impact of the Right to Buy. The rate of new housing association build has been unable to keep pace and the majority of properties coming available for re-letting are in high demand.

District Profile

Population Projections for Waveney

	2001	2009	2021	% Increase
Waveney	112,500	117,700	120,300	2.2%
Suffolk	670,200	697,700	733,600	9.5%

Over half the population live in Lowestoft (56,588) with the remainder in the towns of Beccles (9,746), Bungay (4,895), Halesworth (4,637) and Southwold (1,458) and the surrounding rural areas (Census 2001) 25 of the 53 Parishes have populations of fewer than 300.

We have areas of outstanding natural beauty – the Broads, wildlife areas and coastline – and heritage. But we are isolated geographically, as far east as it is possible to go in the UK. Poor road and rail links with other parts of the country are major issues for us.

Our urban areas in particular have suffered from economic decline. Coastal resort tourism has declined over many years but recent activity has been encouraging, and its seasonal importance and impact is still very significant.

- Traditional employment has suffered over many years, which has been exacerbated by the recent recession.
- Other more recent industries such as offshore gas and oil related employment and the rapidly growing renewable energy sector show promising signs for the future.
- Though unemployment has greatly reduced, our sub region remains a hotspot for joblessness and seasonal unemployment.

Duration of Unemployment (2009) (Suffolk Observatory)

	< 6 Months	6-12 Months	12-24 Months	> 24 Months	Total
No.	1,680	905	305	95	2,685
%	62.6%	22.5%	11.4%	3.5%	100.0%

Percentage of Population Claiming Job Seekers Allowance (2007) (JSNA)

	Suffolk	Waveney	Lowestoft
%	1.7%	2.9%	4.0%

We have significant problems with deprivation, as demonstrated by the national Index of Deprivation, which again places all English local authority areas on a scale from 1 (worst) to 354.

Deprivation Indices for Suffolk (2007) (Suffolk Observatory)

	2007
Waveney	114
Babergh	277
Forest Heath	265
Ipswich	99
Mid Suffolk	306
St Edmundsbury	260
Suffolk Coastal	274

Issues of poor health, low incomes and unsatisfactory housing particularly feature in the urban wards of the District.

The Impact of the Credit Crunch.

The current global economic crisis has impacted on many households ability to maintain their accommodation. Numbers applying to register on the District's Housing Waiting List have reached an all-time high of 4,000 (as at November 2009 although it should be noted that an element of this increase could be related to the introduction of a choice-based lettings scheme in March 2008.

To prepare for a predicted increase in demand for housing advice, prevention and housing option services, the Department of Communities and Local Government have provided additional funding. Waveney has been allocated £57,000 (2009/10) to be used as a recession prevention fund. Currently this is used to provide small loans in conjunction with the CAB and Rainbow Credit Union. The above Government interventions are just one aspect of homelessness prevention and it has encouraged local authorities to take collaborative action with money advice services, Registered Providers and private landlords to prevent repossessions. Our Advice and Prevention Action Plan within the sub-regional homelessness strategy reflects the above.

Another impact of the global credit crunch locally has been the reduction in new house-building in the district for 2009/10 based on a reduction of starts on site for 2008/09 and early 2009/10. However, there are recent indications that in terms of affordable housing this could be back on target for 2010/11.

VI. The Housing Strategy

This section examines the strategic housing priorities identified as to contributing to achieve the Council's housing vision and how they will be delivered.

Theme 1: Quantity of affordable housing – looks at how this can be facilitated and maximised in the future

Affordable Housing Delivery

Year	Total Completions	Affordable Units	Percentage
2004/05	402	29	7%
2005/06	359	18	5%
2006/07	242	37	15%
2007/08	336	47	14%
2008/09	278	109	39%

How is this going to be achieved in the future?

We will continue to work in partnership with Registered Providers and private developers to ensure affordable housing is developed to meet identified local needs. Through our “Single Conversation” with HCA we will seek to secure future funding for the District.

Planning context

As part of our Local Development Framework which is key to the development of new housing supply, an [Affordable Housing Viability Study](#) was commissioned in July 2009. This concluded that the previous policy of requiring a 30% Affordable Housing element as part of any scheme of 3 units or more was no longer viable. There is now a requirement on developments of 5 or more dwellings for an element of housing to be included within the development. 20 – 35% of the development will be required as affordable housing dependent on the size of the site

Making best use of our housing stock in the Private and Public Sector,

Use of empty private properties – [The Empty Homes Strategy](#) adopts a very pro-active approach to bringing properties back into useful occupation. Where the budget permits, investment is made to bring homes up to a decent standard of repair and these are then used for a 5 year period as part of the Council’s Housing Options.

Waveney continues to review the make-up of its housing stock to ensure it remains desirable and suitable for up to date living conditions. Where it is recognised that some accommodation types such as bedsits are becoming less desirable, consideration is given to the long-term future of such accommodation. Alternative uses have been explored by different client groups or a complete remodelling and demolition of schemes has been proposed.

Theme 2: Quality - This section aims to ensure that both new build and existing social and private sector properties meet current standards and provide a choice for all.

Improving Housing Standards

The majority of housing across all tenures in the Waveney area is in reasonable condition. Historic properties in Waveney’s market towns, the rural settlements and main urban centres add considerably to the quality of life and environment, and in some areas, carry very high property values. A substantial proportion of

the housing in the District is comparatively modern at 40 years old or less.

However, the District requires significant investment to maintain and improve the existing housing stock. In addition to the Council's need to continue to improve its own housing stock (through the Housing Revenue Account) there are particular challenges around the renewal and regeneration of older private sector terrace housing and the relatively small number of empty properties in the main urban area.

Much progress has been made since 2007 in tackling the most vulnerable parts of the private sector housing stock in Waveney. A ['Housing in Multiple Occupation'](#) strategy and an Empty Homes strategy have been implemented, which has led to a wide range of positive outcomes. A private sector stock condition survey is scheduled to be carried out during the latter part of 2009/10 subject to the final budgetary approval being granted.

The Private Sector team has been successful with a range of enforcement actions and interventions which have seen improvements made, empty properties returned to use and fines incurred where landlords have refused to cooperate with the Councils requirements.

- Key problems in our older properties are disrepair, dampness, poor heating and insulation, and inadequate amenities. A more detailed range of information will be available upon completion of the stock condition survey.

The Home Improvement Agency for Suffolk was introduced into the Waveney area at the beginning of August 2009 and this will have a beneficial impact upon many of the most vulnerable people living in the private sector. A handyperson service is to be rolled out as part of the package on offer.

As of 1st April 2009, Waveney DC was responsible for the management and maintenance of 4619 homes and 85 leaseholders. The total stock number is currently decreasing through right to buy sales and the Council has commenced Social Homebuy as a pilot with Government. However, RTB sales have fallen significantly in recent years (2 in 2008/9) and no Social Homebuy completions have been made to date.

The Business Plan for Waveney's housing stock shows that all of our Council Housing meets the Decent Homes Standard set by the Government – ahead of the March 2010 deadline. This is an important goal, which has reduced the overall levels of housing stress.

In due course, the Council will consider a further stock options appraisal and this will be influenced by the outcome of the emerging national debate around the future of the Housing Revenue Account system, which is now a matter for urgent national debate. The outcome will be to provide objective assessments of the best way forward for our tenants, for our stock and for Waveney District Council.

Waveney's Housing Asset Management Strategy 2010-2013 was written in conjunction with the Waveney's Tenants Forum and followed consultation with tenants. In September 2009 a postal survey was sent to all tenants asking them to prioritise work programmes and identify any other works they felt may be necessary in the future to their homes. A return rate of 48% was received back, providing an excellent response from our tenants as to what they considered to be important.

The following areas of work were considered to be important to tenants;

- Modern facilities such as bathrooms and kitchens.
- Energy efficiency/affordable warmth issues.
- Assisting with decorations for the elderly and disabled tenants.
- Improved security measures.
- External works such as fencing and gates.
- Community area improvements.

Some of these results have already endorsed current work programmes, others will be factored into longer-term works whilst, some such as redecoration for the elderly and the disabled may need further consideration.

Stock owned by Registered Providers in Waveney ranges from modern purpose-built stock, including sheltered and very sheltered schemes. Also included are terrace and other properties purchased as part of our historical empty property and renewal strategies, or in order to respond to particular needs and programmes (for example to provide special needs, temporary accommodation or specific larger size family units). All of our partner Registered Providers have confirmed that they have achieved the Decent Homes Standard.

Key strategic points:

- Housing in the poorest condition is in the private sector, particularly the private rented sector around the multi occupied flatted properties. Poor internal and external conditions are particularly clustered in the older urban areas, and can impact disproportionately upon the most vulnerable groups.

- There is a growing number of older owner occupiers whose properties are in disrepair but who are unable to afford the cost of upkeep and particular attention will be focussed on this group
- Waveney's own Council Housing stock is well maintained and we meet with the decent homes standard. However, as well as the decent homes standard we have major programmes focussed on the renewal of particular schemes and estates aimed at improving sustainability. In due course we will be examining proposals for the next level of improvement to follow on from the decent homes standard.

Improving energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty – Waveney are currently working in partnership with The Mark Group who offer low cost or free loft and cavity wall insulation. From early 2010 we will also be taking part in 'Heat Seeker'; a project that incorporates thermal imaging of properties to show which are the least energy efficient. These households will then be contacted by the Mark Group with the above offers.

New Build accommodation

In its policy statement "Building a Greener Future" (July 2007), Government set out that all new homes will be net zero carbon from 2016. As steps to achieving this target, energy efficiency standards for new homes are to be improved by 25 per cent in 2010 and 44 per cent in 2013 relative to current 2006 standards. – WDC Policy statement.

All newly built housing funded by The Homes and Community Agency is currently required to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 although, new developments which meet code levels 4 and 5 are actively encouraged. Net zero carbon housing will be equivalent to Sustainable Homes Level 6.

Theme 3: People - This section looks at specific housing needs in Waveney including where there is a need for support and specific partnerships are required in order to meet the needs of vulnerable people.

Significant problems of affordability in our area, in common with most other local authorities, have manifested themselves most notably in terms of the recorded demand for housing on the Waveney register. As at November 2009, there were some 4, 00 cases on the register. Some of this increase can be attributed to the successful introduction of Choice Based Lettings (Homeselect) in March 2008 which, was introduced at the beginning of the global economic crisis.

There are particularly high levels of need for:

- Accessible accommodation for households where there is a disabled person

- Family sized accommodation
- Some additional 4 bedroom accommodation

However, not all households in need and with affordability problems require social rented housing. House price inflation has out-priced people on modest as well as low earnings – this means there may well be other intermediate or sub-market solutions, which could help.

Currently there are five main low-cost home ownership products offered on the [Homebuy](#) scheme and it could be argued that the recent turmoil in the housing markets means that these products are now more attractive as formerly low average prices made such schemes less attractive. There is a need to develop a range of models appropriate for our sub regional housing market subject to up-dated housing needs information.



Gosford House, Beccles

“This innovative housing scheme was the brainchild of Wellington Construction Ltd who had the vision to preserve a piece of the town’s heritage on an existing brownfield site in the heart of the town. Owned by Flagship Housing Group, on behalf of Suffolk Heritage Housing Association.”

“Gosford Heights is a five storey building and comprises a mix of two two-bedroom wheelchair flats, four one-bedroom flats and 16 two-bedroom flats, all for shared ownership.”

Quotes taken from Suffolk Heritage Press Release 8th July 2008

One of the key reasons behind the recent rapid rise in demand for affordable housing has been the recession which began in late 2007 and is not expected to fully unwind until late 2011. The spectre of increasing rates of repossession has led to many people joining the housing register as an insurance measure.

Who is vulnerable?

Housing can no longer be seen as a stand-alone service no more so than when dealing with vulnerable people who, are likely to need some form of social care as well as a place to live. Waveney DC seeks to provide the appropriate form of housing support by working in partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies. “Vulnerable people” can be seen across a wide section of the population and can include the following;

- Elderly
- Physically disabled
- Learning disabilities
- Homeless families and rough sleepers
- Offenders
- Suffering from alcohol and drug problems
- Afflicted with mental health problems

- At risk from Domestic Violence
- Young people at risk or leaving care.

In reality, people often have multiple needs and may fall within a number of vulnerable categories. Their support needs may be able to be met within their own home or within a supported housing environment such as sheltered housing, hostel or refuge.

Housing Support Need Priorities

Section IV outlined Suffolk Supporting People's key strategic priorities;

- Enabling older people to remain at home if they want to
- Reducing the number of people who are homeless and breaking the cycle of repeat homelessness.
- Ensuring people can move out of institution care and have a choice about where they live particularly clients with learning disabilities and offenders.

In June 2008 a central gateway went live providing holistic floating support in Suffolk which, in Waveney is provided by Flagship. The service provides short-term support that enables clients to avoid losing their home, achieve economic wellbeing, enjoy and achieve, be healthy, stay sane and make a positive contribution. This service is provided across tenure, assisting with the strategic priorities listed above.

In March 2008, Suffolk Supporting People recruited Homeless Link to role out the Move On Plans Protocol (MOPP) which encourages hostel managers to identify the scale and causes of bed blocking in their hostels. A MOPP audit was carried out in Waveney in September 2008 and these results form a Resettlement and Support Action Plan as part of the sub-regional homelessness strategy.

Homelessness

In recent years, the Council has adopted a very forthright stance to prevent homelessness from occurring. This prevention regime has seen a dramatic fall in the overall numbers of homeless acceptances notwithstanding that there has been a continuing rise in the number of people seeking the assistance of the housing options team.

There has been a very significant reduction in the number of temporary accommodation units used by the Council. At its peak the number of properties used to provide temporary accommodation was 188 but by August 2009 this figure was below 30. This was in response to the Government requirement to reduce the number down to 50% of the 2004 figure by 2010.

The housing options team continues to apply a strong preventative approach coupled with a focus on providing solutions in the private sector and this work has successfully yielded hundreds of additional homes in recent years. There is a strong commitment to joint working with our private sector landlord partners and the guarantees provided by the Council ensure that such landlords continue to trust the Council and bring forward properties for letting.

The Council has drawn up a sub-regional homelessness strategy and developed a separate action plan to address the challenges into the future. The Homelessness Strategy shows we have significant problems of single homelessness in our District, with our local direct access hostels under strain.

Very often, the single homeless have a range of other needs, which makes them additionally vulnerable and potentially more difficult to place.

Example of work carried out to free-up hostel bed spaces and support youth homelessness.

People with support needs

Within the District there are high numbers of people with a physical disability or mobility problem - see our SHMA for further detailed analysis:

- Over 20% of the Waveney population identify themselves as having a long-term illness or disability (national average 18.2)
- More than 1/3 of households have at least 1 resident with a disability or limiting long-term illness.
- There is a rapidly ageing population within the District particularly those aged over 85, who will need support, adaptations and appropriate accommodation to help them remain independent as this strategy and successive plans roll out.



Marram Green Very Sheltered Housing Scheme, Kessingland

“This innovative scheme will incorporate a public library and café to create a community focus. We aim to promote and deliver local services that add to people's independence, knowledge and wellbeing.”

“It will Provide a community focussed building, accessible to all with a café and community rooms for mixed agency uses. e.g. parish council, Citizens Advice Bureau.”

Quotes provided by Flagship Housing Association

Over 85 Population Projections for Waveney (JSNA)

	2001	2011	% Increase	2016	2021	% Increase
Waveney	3,200	4,300	35.7%	4,700	5,400	70.1%
Suffolk	15,800	22,900	44.8%	26,100	30,000	90.1%

Demand for disabled adaptations is strong and is set to continue to grow. In each of the past 5 financial years, the Council has spent 100% of the available budget for Disabled Facility Grants. Given that demand always exceeds the available supply of finance, this situation will remain into the foreseeable future.

In the main urban area of Lowestoft, there are characteristics of relatively high rates of mental illness, substance abuse and dual diagnosis. Teenage pregnancy rates are high and domestic violence is still a significant issue, often leading to an increased demand for homelessness services.

Waveney is working with local and County partnerships and the Supporting People team to assess and progress service and accommodation priorities. Well developed strategies are in place to address these issues but a reducing level of funding into the overall Supporting People budget will inevitably lead to challenges in future.

Black and ethnic minority groups

The Census (2001) indicated that less than 3% of the District's population are from black or ethnic minority groups and although there was seen to have been an increase in the numbers of EU migrant workers arriving in the District, this has reduced significantly in the light of the current economic situation. There is evidence that more are leaving than arriving. This has resulted in a small number of migrant workers putting down roots and beginning to integrate widely into the community. Housing officers work very closely with Lowestoft International Support Group to ensure that any emerging housing issues are being picked up.

Gypsy and Travellers

There is currently one permanent site at Kessingland which provides 24 pitches the District. The RSS Single Issue Review on accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show-people requires Waveney to deliver 11 new permanent pitches by 2011, having delivered 4 additional pitches in 2008/09 on the current existing site.

Key strategic points:

- The District has a high level of housing need; however, a proportion of this could be met by the provision of different forms of affordable housing, not necessarily social renting which can only provide for approximately 10% of the numbers on the housing register annually.
- Homelessness continues to be a challenge and there may be problems with temporary accommodation supply if the number of repossessions rises significantly as a consequence of any hard line approach by lenders.
- There is a high level of disability in the Waveney population – the adaptations budget is always over-subscribed.
- There are gaps in special needs housing provision and services, some of which we may be able to meet by working across border with other Councils.

VII. Measuring the Impact

As this document indicates, the role of housing is important in making a real difference to the places where people live and the lives that they lead, it is important not just to count the number of homes built or the number of families re-housed.

In October 2007 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced a new set of National Indicators for English Local Authorities and local partnerships which, met with the Government's commitment as set out in the Local Government Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities". Housing played a key part in this new local performance framework through;

- 14 of the 198 National Indicators have links with wider housing issues and are listed below;
NI 141 – Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living.
NI 142 – Number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living.
NI 143 – Offenders under probation supervision living in settled and suitable accommodation at the end of their order of license.
NI 145 – Adults with learning disabilities in settled accommodation.
NI 147 – Care leavers in suitable accommodation.
NI 149 – Adults in contact with secondary mental health services in settled accommodation.
NI 154 – Net additional homes provided.
NI 155 – Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)
NI 156 – Number of households living in temporary accommodation.
NI 157 – Processing of planning applications as measured against targets for 'major', 'minor' and 'other' applications.

NI 158 – Percentage of decent council homes.
NI 159 – Supply of ready to develop housing sites.
NI 160 – Local Authority tenants' satisfaction with landlord services.
NI 170 – Previously developed land that has been vacant or derelict for more than five years.

- Allowing Local Area Agreements (LAA) to identify housing as a priority and where housing contributes to other local objectives such as economic development, cohesion, regeneration, improved environment etc.
- The future - Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)

Details of the specific targets for the Strategic Housing Service can be found in the Annual Service Plans.

VII. Developing the Waveney Approach

The Waveney approach is to emphasise the following:

- **A highly pro-active partnership approach;** particularly around regeneration and neighbourhood renewal. Partnerships with the community are aiming to address current inequalities with regard to health, education, child development, teenage pregnancy and community safety. The, local strategic partnership (LSP) now actively co-ordinates the range of initiatives, with Housing playing a key, cross cutting role. Where possible, we have brought funding streams together in order to tackle rundown neighbourhoods. Similarly, we have adopted a highly pragmatic dialogue with our Housing Association partners to ensure that when funding opportunities are available, that they are tapped to best effect.
- **Strengthening our strategic housing role;** developing better assessments of our housing market, and positioning the Council more effectively to influence and intervene where appropriate. Also working with other Suffolk local authorities to ensure that the outcomes for the LAA and CAA are as positive as they can be.
- **Our role as efficient and customer-oriented** service providers and social landlords; ensuring that the needs and aspirations of our customers are frequently checked and tested to meet expectations.
- **Well-managed and effectively delivered** investment programmes; aimed at renewing and regenerating older neighbourhoods, tackling vulnerable conditions and improving community safety and creating additional affordable housing to meet a range of needs.

The sub-regional dimension and future patterns of working

Over the past three years, sub-regional working has been highly successful and has delivered a number of tangible outcomes as follows:

- The Homeselect choice based letting scheme
- A shared resource for the development of affordable housing
- A sub-regional homelessness strategy
- Close cooperation over issues such as domestic violence
- A cohesive sub-region with a strong identity
- A shared vision of the future based upon economic regeneration and the erosion of inequalities
- A clear sense of the dynamics of the local housing market

This work has given Waveney a more secure and strategically based platform than has been the case in the past. From this solid foundation, the Council can move forward drawing upon the joint strength of the working arrangements.

In due course, there is a strong probability of a closer working relationship developing with other Councils in Suffolk, particularly our close neighbours at Suffolk Coastal. Such an evolution can be accommodated and would not work contrary to the on-going aspects of the sub-regional working arrangements. The ability to adopt a flexible and pragmatic approach will be the key to this dimension of strategic thinking in future. Such an approach will provide a number of benefits as follows:

- It will give our area, with some well-documented, deep-seated problems, **a stronger role within the region**. Resources for investment in affordable housing have risen through the 2008/11 funding period but, in future, priority is likely to continue to be given to the growth areas in our region. The Waveney and Great Yarmouth sub region requires a fair share of investment, and we will continue to make clear our targets and demonstrate that we can achieve them, given the right levels of resource.
- It will give us a much **better handle on our housing markets and housing needs**. We are very familiar with these issues at local level – but we need to provide a clearer bigger picture.
- It will help us to **widen our partnerships** and work across housing, economic and planning approaches to regenerate neighbourhoods and improve the balance of our housing markets
- It will enable us to **create new vehicles and attract new partners** and resources, to help regenerate areas and increase the overall levels of affordable housing in the District.

- It will also enable us to **share good practice** and, where appropriate, to share undertakings, service provision and sharing the cost of resources to provide increased value for money.

As mentioned above, the recent permutations around the future of local government re-organisation have highlighted the need to respond in a flexible way to future challenges. Many strategic issues may be better tackled locally or on a County basis - or we may not be able as yet to deal with them sub regionally, given our separate County and governance structures. There is a need to avoid potential pitfalls that might arise from having our approaches and thinking conditioned too much by what has occurred in the past and not seeing the opportunities that new future arrangements might bring.

This housing strategy bears in mind the priorities and themes that are predominant in the Regional Housing Statement, as it becomes fully developed. These strategic aims previously were;

- To ensure as many people as possible can live in a decent home at an affordable price
- To contribute effectively to social inclusion within sustainable communities
- To enable housing to contribute fully to ensure good health and promote health equality
- To use housing investment to complement sustainable economic development
- To contribute to a sustainable environment

Investment themes and priorities for the Regional Housing Advisory Group have been to-date;

- Growth – incorporating regeneration, homelessness and Housing Needs
- Key workers
- Rural
- Supported housing
- BME groups

This housing strategy will ensure that the resonance with Regional priorities as identified in the Regional Housing Statement continues.

IX. Priorities for the Future

Theme 1: Quantity – Continue to ensure the delivery of affordable housing and looking at how this can be maximised in the future.

One of the biggest challenges facing Waveney District Council is the fact that there is very little Council owned land available for the development of new affordable housing. Over a twenty-year period, the Council has worked closely with a range of housing association partners, providing land at nil cost to facilitate new homes across the District. In recent years, the supply of land has been reduced to a very low level and it is now much harder to identify suitable sites for new build. However, the number of affordable homes provided has been creditable notwithstanding this fundamental challenge, as can be seen below:

Year	Total Completions	Affordable Units	Percentage
2004/05	402	29	7%
2005/06	359	18	5%
2006/07	242	37	15%
2007/08	336	47	14%
2008/09	278	109	39%

The Homes and Communities Agency funding period for 2008-2011 covers part of the life of this strategy and there are several schemes in the pipeline to maintain the rate of delivery. The funding arrangements for April 2011 onwards cannot be predicted but work will carry on to identify suitable sites to go forward as bids into future years programmes. To this end, Waveney will continue to work closely with those partner Housing Associations that have been supportive over recent years to ensure that an optimum supply of new affordable housing is maintained in the District. We will look to explore new innovative ways of funding affordable housing in the future should funding sources be reduced.

The importance of the Planning context cannot be overstated and the emerging Local Development Framework is key to the future aspirations for new housing supply. Another significant challenge to the District is the recent work around the Housing Viability Study. This concluded that the previous policy of requiring a 30% Affordable Housing element as part of any scheme of 3 units or more was not viable any more and that as far as could be reasonably predicted into the future, this is likely to be the case. This will mean that the Council will receive a much lower number of homes through the Section 106 route than hitherto.

Theme 2: Quality – the need to ensure that both new build and existing social and private properties meet current standards and provide a housing choice for all.

Theme 3: People – continue to look at specific housing needs in Waveney ensuring, that where needed there is specific support available to meet those needs.

Assessment indicates that homelessness is a continuing pressure in our area. This issue needs to be tackled at local level to respond to accommodation, prevention and support needs within communities, and our responses will be shaped by local and county services and arrangements. However there are a number of areas where we can work more effectively together, or share good practice.

- Sub regional housing market and needs assessment give our service planning at local level a firmer basis
- Ensuring that we attract funding for regeneration and affordable homes will help to provide more housing solutions
- Separate action plans have been drawn up to implement the sub-regional homelessness strategy and there is on-going consultation with voluntary sector partners.

X. Conclusion

This Strategy represents a distillation of good practice that has worked well in the past and a pragmatic approach to tackling the multitude of issues that arise from differentiated aspects of housing need.

Waveney District Council will continue to place a high value on partnership working to resolve as many of the problems we face as possible. The Council recognises that the medium term financial outlook is set to be particularly challenging and inevitably, some compromises will have to be made as not all of our aspirations can be met.

Above all, this document is designed to be flexible and rooted in the reality of a rapidly evolving housing scene.