



People, Places, Homes

Priorities for Housing and
Regeneration In the East of
England 2010-2014



Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce The East of England Housing Statement – **People, Places, Homes: Priorities for Housing and Regeneration In the East of England 2010-2014**. Its purpose is to articulate the region’s housing and regeneration priorities for the period 2010-14 to inform and influence policy-making. It is not, therefore, accompanied by an implementation plan nor does it set out investment recommendations. Instead, it is more akin to a position statement at the point at which the current Regional Housing Strategy expires in Spring 2010.

The Statement has been developed during a period of economic recession and uncertainty and in the context of change in regional structures and governance arrangements following the enactment of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act. However, despite these changes and uncertainties, it is important that there is a common view on the role and function of housing in the wider place-making context, and in order that we can make the case for housing as an enabler of a stronger and more sustainable economy.

The Vision is to place housing and regeneration at the centre of creating and enhancing sustainable, successful places where people want to live, work and visit.

As well as setting out the region’s housing and regeneration priorities, the Statement emphasises the role of housing in place-making and helping to deliver wider policy objectives such as reducing health inequalities and supporting community cohesion. It underlines the strong linkages between jobs and housing and the importance of achieving a balance between the two for the region’s economic performance and regeneration.

The Priorities are set out in the Executive Summary and reflect many of the new challenges the region faces such as the need to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change and to respond to the changing housing needs of an ageing population. Other Priorities remain constant, however, such as the continuing need

for housing growth in the region, in particular investment in quality, new, affordable homes and to improve the existing stock both of which can catalyse and promote regeneration and economic development.

The Statement also places a strong emphasis on the concept of “invest-to-save” by illustrating how investment in one policy area such as provision of housing related support can help to deliver benefits in another such as reductions in homelessness and improved health and social care outcomes. Similarly it emphasises the importance of housing in creating sustainable places, where a holistic approach to policy and investment planning will help deliver broader policy objectives such as improved educational attainment.

Ove Arup & Partners were commissioned to develop the Statement in three main stages to give stakeholders maximum opportunity to engage with the process and help to shape the document. In an initial consultation in autumn 2009 stakeholders were invited to submit their key priorities for housing and regeneration during 2010-2014. This was followed by workshops held in three locations around the region and meetings with the Regional Housing Advisory Group (RHAG) and Housing & Sustainable Communities Panel (HSCP). The wide range of views and messages gathered during the course of the first two stages were presented in a formal consultation document issued in December 2009.

I would specifically like to thank colleagues from the Government Office, the East of England Development Agency and the Homes and Communities Agency who helped steer development of the Statement, members of the HSCP and RHAG, and to everyone who responded to the various stages of consultation.

Graham Tomlinson

Team Leader, Housing
East of England Regional Assembly

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the East of England Housing Statement is to:

- identify the East of England's strategic priorities for housing and housing-led regeneration; and
- set out the role of housing and housing-led regeneration in enabling sustainable economic growth and contributing to the achievement of other objectives such as place making, economic development and social cohesion.

The Statement covers the period 2010 to 2014 and is designed to inform policy making across the region by setting out the priorities for housing and housing-led regeneration in the East of England. Despite the housing market downturn, the problem of affordability remains acute and the need for new housing remains very high relative to current supply. In addition, the impacts of the recent global financial crisis and concerns about climate change have generated a new set of challenges for housing.

The Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) for the East of England set out the priorities for 2005 – 2010. Its major achievement has been as an influencing document, making the case to Government for increased resources to meet the region's housing and regeneration needs. As such it has provided a strong voice for the region on housing issues and helped to secure over £1.2bn in funding since 2006. The RHS provided the strategic framework for the Regional Funding Advice¹ in 2006 and 2009 as well as the 2006-08 and 2008-11 Regional Housing Investment Plans (RHIP), the latter delivering investment during the life of this Statement. The RHS/RHIP have guided the thematic and spatial distribution of the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) and provided a framework for housing and investment strategies at a sub regional and local level.

Overall the RHS has also fostered strong partnership working which has been the cornerstone of the region's achievements over the past 5 years. The housing sub regions have provided the foundation for partnership working, helping to develop the evidence base and most importantly of all, in achieving a step change in delivery of affordable housing.

Statement Vision

The vision for this Statement:

To ensure that new housing, existing homes and regeneration play an integral part in the creation and enhancement of sustainable, successful places where people want to live, work and visit.

Key Statement messages

Despite the recent housing market downturn, the problem of affordability remains acute and the need for new housing remains very high relative to current supply. In this context there is a need for innovation in forms of delivery including: better use of existing stock; the development and encouragement of new delivery models; and flexibility to develop the appropriate skills and capacity to respond to new initiatives and opportunities as they emerge.

[1] <http://www.eera.gov.uk/What-we-do/representing-the-region/regional-funding-allocations/>

The developing institutional and broader policy context means that whilst the Statement can identify major priorities and inform and influence future actions, it is inappropriate at this stage for the Statement to set out proposals for implementation and recommendations for investment.

Overall in combination the Statement also suggests a number of key messages for the future:

- Increased housing supply (including affordable) is critical to meet the needs of existing residents, address social needs, and to support the economy. However, it is important that growth is accompanied by the supporting infrastructure in order to achieve and deliver sustainable communities.
- As well as quantity, the emphasis should be on improving the quality of new housing and its ability to meet the full range of housing needs.
- Providing appropriate support to allow people to live independently in suitable accommodation and preventing homelessness will have significant benefits in terms of saving public expenditure elsewhere.
- The debate about housing numbers and housing needs should move on beyond gross numbers and new development locations, to a more complete understanding of the economic futures and role of places, which includes the contribution of existing neighbourhoods and how future housing growth may help these adapt and change. This means looking at need and opportunities in parallel, engaging with local communities and developing strong local, bottom up place-based visions.
- There needs to be emphasis on improving and making better use of the existing stock across a wide range of issues including climate change, suitability to the changing needs of the population and in improving overall choice and supply.
- Many places in East of England, including the rural areas offer a good quality of life for residents, but could benefit economically from additional housing supply and a wider diversity of tenures to support the local economy and service provision.
- It is important that future strategies including a Single Regional Strategy make the links between thematic areas and provides a sophisticated consideration of the role of housing in the context of places, the links between housing, economic competitiveness, employment and access to jobs, health and social wellbeing and the potential role of targeted housing delivery in dispersing development pressures and reducing economic disparities.

Priorities

The East of England's priorities for housing and regeneration identified in this Statement are summarised below.

Issue	Objectives	Priorities
Housing and future places	Make sustainable and successful places	Support local authorities and their partners in shaping places where people want to live, work and visit, for example through Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks and in developing the appropriate skills and capacity to respond to new initiatives and opportunities as they emerge.
Existing stock	Improve the stock	Continue to improve the standard of the social rented stock and improve conditions in privately rented and owner occupied homes
	Reduce carbon emissions from existing housing	Improve and retrofit the existing stock in order to mitigate and adapt to climate change
	Achieve regeneration	Develop a better understanding of and address the housing issues in areas in need of regeneration.
	Maximise the use of the existing stock	Ensure that the best use is made of the existing stock, for example, by reducing the number of long term empty homes in the private sector and reducing under occupancy
Housing supply and affordability	Increase housing supply	Increase the supply of housing across all tenures to meet East of England plan policy
	Increase affordable housing supply	Increase the delivery of affordable housing of the right size, type, tenure and quality to meet a diverse range of housing needs
	Improve housing quality and design	Improve quality and design of new housing to ensure that it meets the changing needs of the region's population and successfully integrates with existing places
	Address climate change	Ensure that new housing mitigates and adapts to climate change
	Support rural communities	Ensure the delivery of an appropriate level of new housing (including affordable housing) in rural areas
Meeting the housing needs of a diverse population and vulnerable households	Support vulnerable groups	Understand and respond to the needs of a diverse population, including vulnerable groups and older people, to enable them to live independently in suitable accommodation and to contribute to the local community
	Promote equality	Monitor, better understand and respond to the needs of BME households
	Meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers	Make suitable and adequate provision for Gypsies and Travellers
Housing, economy and jobs	Support economic performance, jobs and regeneration	Provide housing of the right type in the right place to support economic performance and regeneration

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction and role of the Statement

The purpose of the East of England Housing Statement is to:

- identify the East of England's strategic priorities for housing and housing-led regeneration;
- set out the role of housing and housing-led regeneration in enabling sustainable economic growth and contributing to the achievement of other objectives such as place making, economic development and social cohesion.

The Statement covers the period 2010 to 2014 and is designed to inform policy making across the region by setting out the priorities for housing and housing-led regeneration in the East of England. Despite the housing market downturn, the problem of affordability remains acute and the need for new housing remains very high relative to current supply. In addition, the impacts of the recent global financial crisis and concerns about climate change are generating a new set of challenges for housing in this forthcoming period, including:

- significant constraints on household finance and mortgage availability;
- development schemes with planning obligations that were negotiated and agreed in a period of very different market conditions;
- rigidities in land prices which all may take a long period of adjustment and which challenge any short term emphasis on market-based supply models;
- a need to use natural resources such as water more efficiently and promote low carbon development and the energy efficiency of existing stock; and
- significant constraints in terms of institutional, public sector and developer funding requiring innovative approaches to maximise resources.

Despite these challenges, the basic issues and priorities for housing remain unchanged, particularly in terms of issues such as supply and affordability, the quality of housing, the meeting of needs, the support for diverse and vulnerable communities and the critical role of housing in supporting regeneration and the economy.

In the current economic context there is a need for innovation in forms of delivery including better use of existing stock, the development and encouragement of new delivery models and flexibility to develop the appropriate skills and capacity to respond to new initiatives and opportunities as they emerge

The developing institutional and broader policy context means that whilst the Statement can identify major priorities and inform and influence future actions, it cannot at this stage set out proposals for implementation or recommendations for investment.

1.2 Building on the Achievements of the Regional Housing Strategy 2005-10

The Regional Housing Strategy for the East of England set out the priorities for 2005 – 2010. Its major achievement has been as an influencing document acting as a voice for housing issues in the East of England in a context in which the region has had to compete for funding against other regions. As a result it was able to make the case to Government for increased resources to meet the region's housing and regeneration needs and has helped to secure over £1.2bn in funding in the region since 2006. The strategy has also provided the framework for the Regional Funding Advice in 2006 and 2009 as well as the 2006-08 and 2008-11 Regional Housing Investment Plans which will continue to deliver housing investment during the life of this Statement. The Regional Housing Strategy and Housing Investment

Plans have also guided the thematic and spatial distribution of the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) and provided a valuable framework for housing and investment strategies at a sub regional and local level.

The RHS has also fostered strong partnership working which has been the cornerstone of the region's achievements over the past 5 years. The housing sub regions have provided the foundation for partnership working, helping to develop the evidence base and most importantly of all, in achieving a step change in delivery of affordable housing.

Whilst regional housing strategies have often had a focus on issues relating to affordable housing, this Statement also acknowledges the economic and environmental interactions with the social aspects of housing policy. It also emphasises housing's role in creating sustainable and successful places. For example, focusing on the needs of an ageing population involves thinking about issues around housing construction for people with changing needs over time, the desirability or otherwise of mixed communities, intra-regional migration, empty homes policy, public transport provision, location of healthcare facilities, quality of housing, policy around housing densities, housing type and the mechanisms needed to support moves from an existing home.

The 'place' and sustainable communities' agendas are also challenging public agencies to respond in an integrated way to the needs of localities and neighbourhoods, in the context of reduced public financing. Increasingly, public agencies are working together to pool resources and jointly plan their capital programmes through initiatives such as 'Total Place' to ensure maximum effect. Implementation takes two forms: first an examination of all public investment in a place – local, regional and national – and where that investment is made; second, a more cultural element, exploring how agencies can work better together beyond existing institutional, professional and geographic boundaries. Together, these strands aim to identify potential efficiencies, improve outcomes, and allow organisations to work together to achieve them. The Single Conversation and Integrated Development Programmes (IDPs) draw on these principles, and challenge local areas to identify how best to deliver their priorities to support the delivery of housing growth, affordability, regeneration and renewal, and sustainability.

1.3 Addressing issues in the East of England

The East of England is an exceptionally varied region in terms of the housing problems experienced in its constituent parts, for example:

- the areas within commuting distance to London and around Cambridge are some of the most pressured housing markets in the country, while other parts of the region, particularly rural areas and coastal areas, face affordability problems because of the high ratio of housing cost to income;
- a number of coastal areas have higher levels of second home ownership and are more exposed to flood risk;
- Thames Gateway South Essex is the country's largest regeneration area. Other priority regeneration areas in the region include the New Towns (e.g. Harlow and Basildon), parts of the larger centres and larger coastal towns; and
- the condition of the existing stock is a particular concern in some of the region's more urban areas with high concentrations of social and private rented stock.

The East of England does not have a single dominant 'core' city and its diverse needs are dispersed rather than concentrated in high profile, large centres. This means that the region has needed to "shout louder" to ensure that the area is given sufficient priority for resources. Across the region large and small market towns predominate, and the relationship of London to the region's economy is significant. Mitigation and adaptation to the effects of climate change is a critical priority for the East of England which is low lying and the driest region in the country with limited water resources. The region contains world class leading

economic sectors and research activities, but also attracts in-migration of older people as well as having an existing ageing population.

Nine distinct housing sub-regions, broadly reflecting wider housing markets, operate in the East of England. These have been successful in defining issues specific to the areas as well as building capacity and expertise. The groupings have also been used as a basis for investment. The sub-regional strategies and Strategic Housing Market Assessments for these areas form an important part of the evidence base for this Statement (see Appendix).

The region contains three of the Government's Growth Areas and four Growth Points. The East of England Plan sets some challenging housing allocations across the region, and until the recent decline in the housing market, there had been promising signs of success in delivery. Annual housing completions across the region as a whole were expected to exceed RSS dwelling requirements to 2021 by 5,413 units², although delivery has been varied sub-regionally and the recession has yet to be factored into this assessment, but is likely to have caused slippage.

The East of England Plan is currently under review in order to extend the Plan period to 2031 as well as to consider allocations of housing numbers across the region to help stabilise the affordability of homes.

[2] EERA Annual Monitoring Report 2007/8

Key Facts

- There were 2.5 million dwellings in the East of England in 2007, of which 73% were owner occupied, 8% were rented from a Local Authority, 8% were rented from an RSL and 12% were rented privately. This is a higher level of owner occupation than the country as a whole (70%)³.
- The average house price in the region in 2007 was £234,000, 8% higher than the English average and increasing slightly faster than the English average. The average first time buyer was aged 29 and had a household income of £42,500 which is about average for England⁴
- Average weekly private sector rents in 2007 were £127 (lower than the English average of £140); however average social housing rents were higher than the England average⁵.
- The region had 2.4 million households in 2006, projected to rise to 3.2 million by 2031 (a 35% increase)⁶.
- Average household size is projected to decrease from 2.33 persons to 2.14 persons over the same period⁷.
- The rate of overcrowding in East of England households is 2%, lower than the English average in all tenures⁸ but is still a significant local issue in some areas.
- 29,262 private sector dwellings in the region have been empty for more than 6 months⁹
- There were 153,475 people on local authority housing waiting lists in the region in 2009, which are growing at a faster rate than the English average¹⁰.
- 5,050 households in the region were accepted as homeless in 2008-09.

The diversity of the East of England means that it experiences widespread disparities in housing circumstances from some of the best housing in the UK to some in most need of regeneration, with disparities existing at both a sub regional and very local scale which is often obscured in area-wide data.

1.4 Vision

The vision for this Statement:

To ensure that new housing, existing homes and regeneration play an integral part in the creation and enhancement of sustainable, successful places where people want to live, work and visit.

The Vision draws on and distils key messages emerging from the evidence base and stakeholder consultation. In particular:

- an emphasis on improving supply in terms of quantity and quality and housing's contribution to a strong economy as well as forming more sustainable and viable places;
- the need to increase the supply of affordable housing across the region;
- an emphasis on the role of housing and housing-led regeneration in much broader social issues such as health, community cohesion and in enabling economic development;

[3] Regional Trends 41 October 2009
 [4] CLG Housing Statistics, Table 622
 [5] 2009 Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix
 [6] CLG 2006-based Household Projections to 2031
 [7] CLG 2006-based Household Projections to 2031
 [8] CLG Housing Statistics, Table 621, 2008-09
 [9] 2009 Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix
 [10] CLG Housing Statistics, Table 600

- whether the existing housing stock is fit for the demands of 21st Century communities in terms of what people expect, aspire to and which addresses demographic needs including an ageing population;
- a need to incorporate climate change mitigation and adaptation measures into housing policy, including retrofit measures for the existing stock, and to ensure the future delivery of sustainable homes;
- a need to focus on providing housing of a design and quality that meets the needs of key groups, such as older people, and to ensure its integration with existing communities;
- the importance of housing related support as a key element to ensure the delivery of community cohesion, place shaping and tenancy sustainment; and
- a shared responsibility across a range of services and disciplines for the Statement and its implementation, including public, private and third sectors.

1.5 Objectives

The objectives of the Statement are to:

- champion the role of housing and regeneration in place making (Chapter 2);
- consider how existing housing stock can be upgraded and improved, especially in the private sector, to improve living conditions, reduce fuel poverty, and contribute to meeting climate change objectives (Chapter 3);
- consider housing supply and affordability, in particular a quality-led approach to developing new housing stock and the delivery of affordable housing (Chapter 4);
- consider how diverse housing needs can be accommodated within existing and new housing stock (Chapter 5); and
- champion housing's role in supporting economic development and jobs (Chapter 6).

Overall conclusions are drawn in Chapter 7.

1.6 Production of this document

The Statement has been developed in three main stages to give stakeholders maximum opportunity to engage with the process and help to shape the document. In an initial consultation in autumn 2009 stakeholders were invited to submit their key priorities for housing and regeneration during 2010-2014. This was followed by workshops held in three locations around the region and meetings with the Housing & Sustainable Communities Panel and Regional Housing Advisory Group. Over 100 stakeholders from across the region were involved in these first two stages and the wide range of views and messages gathered were presented in a formal consultation document issued in December 2009 to which 34 responses were received.

The process has been overseen by a project steering group comprising representatives from the East of England Regional Assembly, the Homes and Communities Agency, the Government Office for the East of England, and the East of England Regional Development Agency.

1.7 Relationship to other strategies

Housing and housing-led regeneration are integral to the delivery of wider policy objectives and necessarily overlap with the overarching spatial planning process and transport policy. The Statement is consistent with the East of England Implementation Plan, which includes the following priorities:

- ensuring the supply of market and affordable homes;
- increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of existing homes;
- increasing the supply of affordable homes in rural areas; and
- skills and support for delivering and managing sustainable communities.

Following the enactment of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, each region is required to produce a Single Regional Strategy which the Local Authority Leaders Board and Regional Development Agency are jointly responsible for developing, delivering and monitoring.

The Priorities set out in the Statement suggest there is a need for a strong emphasis on “raising the game” at all levels, particularly in thinking through housing’s contribution to economic performance and wider social policy areas such as health, education, and tackling deprivation.

It is expected that the strategic priorities set out in this Statement will make a substantive contribution to preparation of a Single Regional Strategy. The East of England Plan is under review to extend the plan period to 2031. A draft plan was presented to the East of England Regional Assembly in March 2010.

It is hoped the Statement will also influence the development of Housing Strategies, Local Development Frameworks and Sustainable Community Strategies at the local level and future reviews of the East of England Implementation Plan. It should also inform a range of stakeholders including housing associations and private developers as well as provide a strategic context for IDPs and the Homes and Communities Agency’s Regional Investment Plan and its Single Conversation with local authorities in the region.

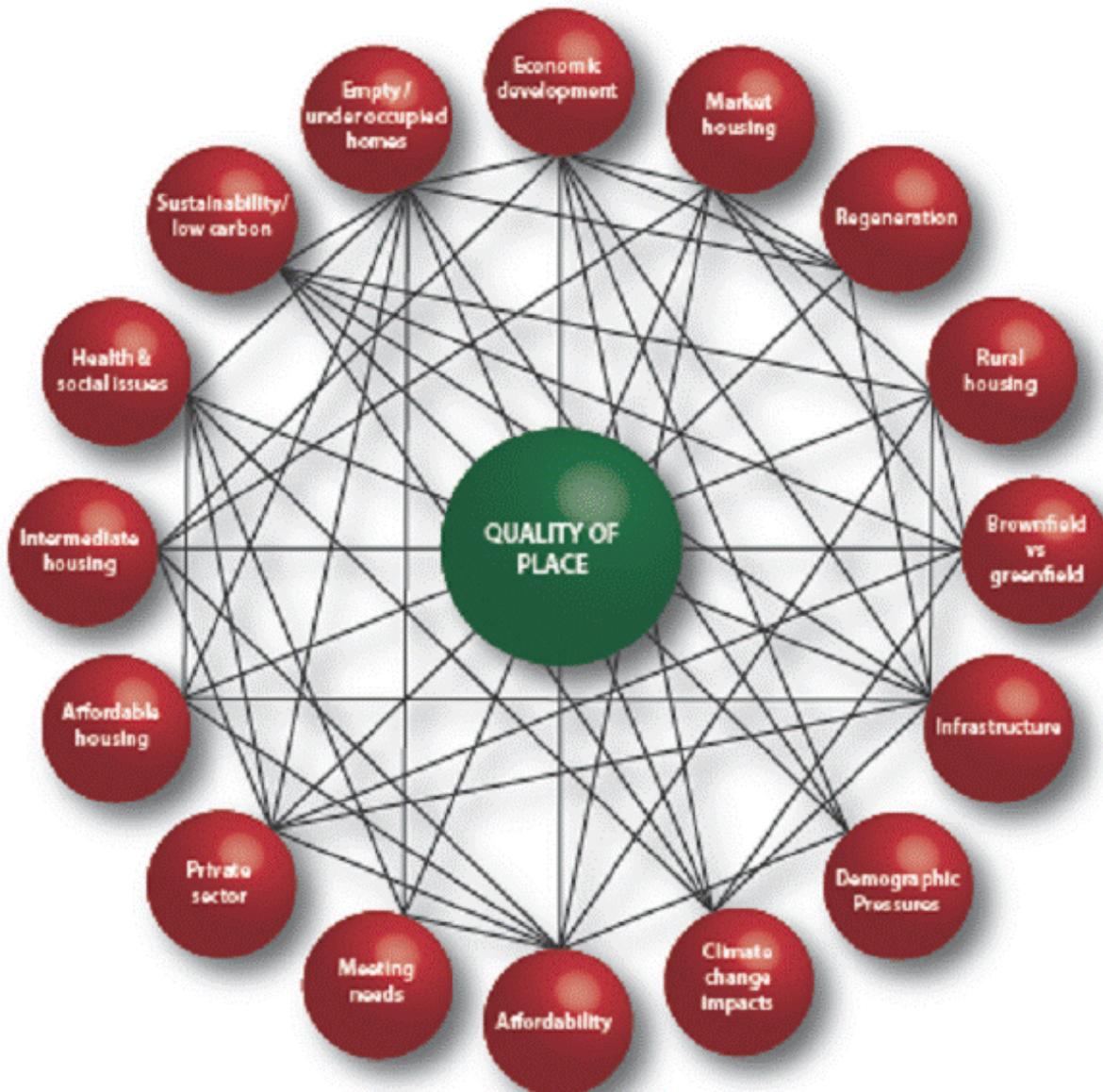


Figure 1.1: Linkages across housing and housing-led regeneration

2 Housing and Future Places

2.1 Objectives and issues

The major challenge for the East of England is to ensure that future growth is delivered in a way that results in high quality, sustainable and successful places as well as addressing issues such as deprivation, regeneration and climate change. An overarching objective for the region is to make quality places, new and existing, where people will want to live, work and conduct their day to day lives.

Developing a sense of a quality “place” is very much a bottom-up process that needs to be shaped locally by the people who either live there now or will do so in the future. Housing and regeneration is at the very heart of this process and can make a significant contribution towards achieving social cohesion. Where new housing is provided the benefits and integration with existing communities is essential. Rebalancing communities is a way of tackling the social and economic imbalance that occurs when residents in an area are drawn from a limited range of types of household and a very limited socio economic base.

“Good housing influences people’s quality of life, their life expectancy and the economic and social opportunities available to them. Local economies will only thrive if people who work in an area can find the right housing within reach of their jobs. Sustainable, cohesive communities will only develop if there are jobs, good education services, good public health and leisure, sport and cultural activities within reach of their homes”¹¹

Key facts

- Some 88% of existing East of England residents are very or fairly satisfied with their area, higher than the English average of 86%¹². But, stakeholders suggest a need for much greater emphasis on the quality of places and housing as well as the adequate provision of hard and soft infrastructure. There are also concerns about the linkage with jobs and the quality of the private rental offer.
- A higher than average proportion of East of England residents feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get along, are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live, feel they belong to their immediate neighbourhood, and are generally satisfied with both home and neighbourhood¹³.
- The region includes significant areas of deprivation, particularly in the larger centres and coastal areas and Thames Gateway South Essex is part of the country’s largest regeneration area and is a national and regional priority for regeneration.

The programme for devolving powers to local authorities and improving community outcomes¹⁴ is fundamentally about delivering sustainable communities. It includes a new aim for housing supply to support economic development. It also sets out an implicit challenge for housing strategists and economic development professionals in communicating the evidence to support growth and housing development, and engaging with local communities to agree a way forward that balances the interests of all within the community to provide more market and affordable housing.

[11] Building Better Lives, Audit Commission, 2009

[12] Regional Trends 41, October 2009, Table 7.11

[13] CLG Place Survey 2008, Table 1

[14] Local Government White Paper: Strong, safe, prosperous communities July 2008

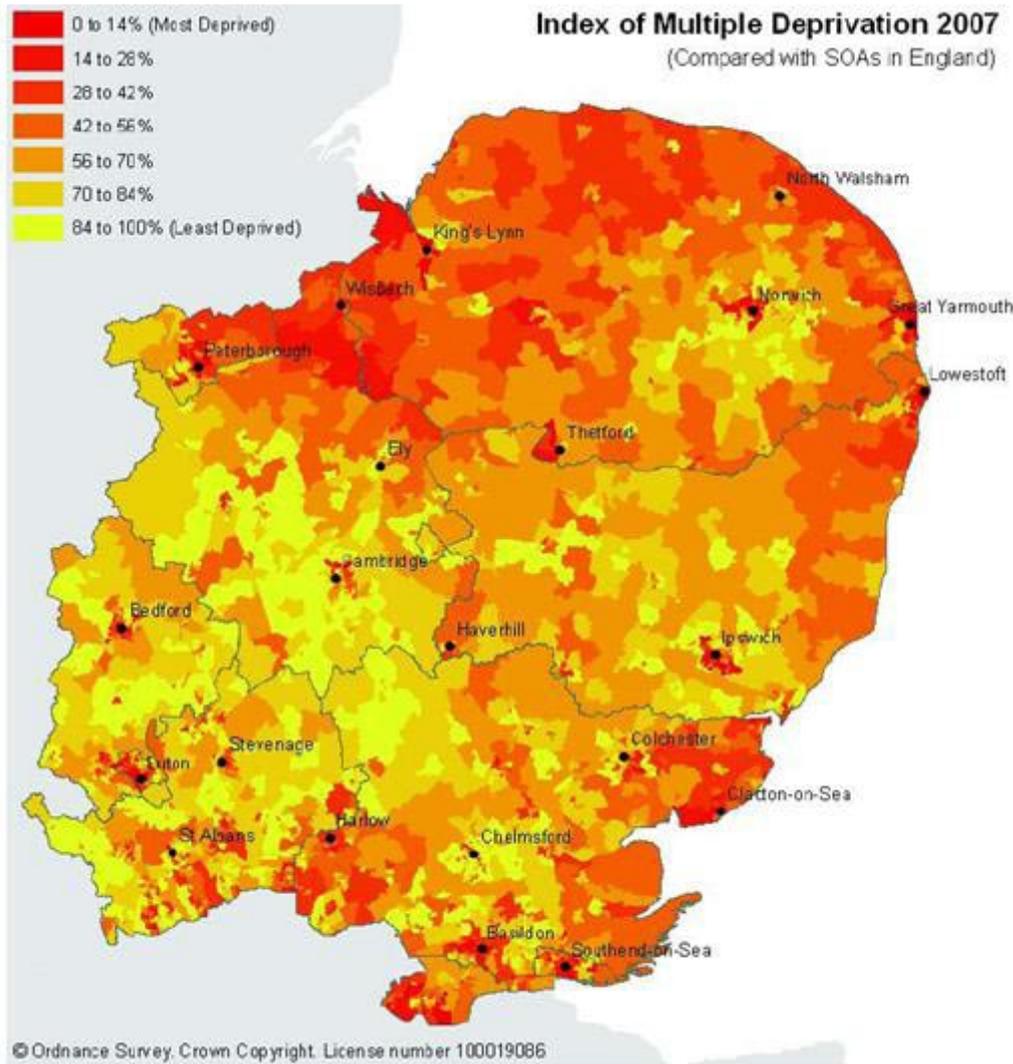


Figure 2.1: Index of Multiple Deprivation
Source: Regional Economic Strategy

Housing plays an important role in tackling deprivation and social exclusion. Research shows¹⁵ clear concentrations of poverty and exclusion in the social rented sector, and that those with other housing opportunities are likely to choose the private sector. On current trends, the main groups likely to be in social housing are:

- households for whom the sector is a permanent, long-term secure tenure for life. These households are generally more disadvantaged in terms of income, health and disability, with lower participation in the labour market than those who are more transitory; and
- households for whom social renting is a relatively temporary or transitional tenure; and those who enter the sector at a later stage in their life, often for the first time.

[15] See Table 109, CLG Statistics for tenure breakdown in region. Also, see CCHPR study for CLG on who lives in social housing - The Demand for Social Rented Housing, CLG, 2007.

2.2 Make sustainable and successful places

Priority

Support local authorities and their partners in shaping places where people want to live, work and visit, for example, through the Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks and in developing the appropriate skills and capacity to respond to new initiatives and opportunities as they emerge.

Implementation of this Priority relates to the broad range of actions that impact directly on the creation of attractive and quality places where people will wish to live, work and visit. It requires developers and other housing providers to engage with existing communities and be prepared to amend their products and formats and for planning authorities to take a more challenging and strategic approach based on stronger place based visions and spatial strategy. While the recession offers some breathing space to consider place based visions, house builders are likely to bring forward the most straightforward, smaller and low risk schemes in the short term. This means that it may be more difficult to realise the relationships to wider place making. However, the long term advantage is through the development of local visions for sustainable places and their comprehensive application.

There already exists extensive guidance on place-making, notably from the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) including the application of Building for Life standards (see box) which should be applied. In addition, to reflect concerns in the East of England, the focus needs both to be broadened beyond design and to reflect the broader East of England strategic context. This is in terms of access to work and services, transport and affordability, as well as to encompass larger developments and develop solutions more appropriate to the East of England context, especially rural areas.

Building for Life Standards

The Building for Life standard is the national benchmark for well designed housing in England. It is awarded to house builders and housing associations who demonstrate a commitment to high design standards, good place making and sustainable development.

Supported by the government and the house building industry, the standard awards are open to all new housing schemes. There is no limit to the number of awards; rather awards are given based on meeting prescribed standards.

Schemes in the East of England which have so far achieved the award, include:

- **Accordia, Cambridge.** Close to the centre, this scheme has been developed on a site which formerly housed government offices and WWII buildings
- **Bishops Walk, Ely.** Set in an extremely sensitive location between Ely Cathedral and the River Ouse.
- **Cala Domus, Harlow.** The third phase of Newhall, a development of 2800 homes on the outskirts of Harlow
- **Grange View, Henlow, Bedfordshire.** A low density development of houses and flats in the middle of a large village.

Further details are available at www.buildingforlife.org

The Government's publication *World Class Places*¹⁸ lays out helpful, broad approaches to improving quality of place. The analysis underpinning this publication, undertaken by the Strategy Unit in the Cabinet Office, is also published separately¹⁹. The eco-town worksheets produced by the Town and Country Planning Association²⁰ are also useful as they set out recommendations and pointers to sources of further information, for planners and developers in both public and private sectors. A further source of information is through various toolkits and checklists such as sustainability checklists developed at regional and local levels. In the East of England, Inspire East developed the Excellence Framework to assist with reviewing how projects meet sustainable development criteria. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) has also developed a certification scheme known as BREEM Communities to apply broad sustainable objectives for all developments at a community level.

A checklist of the basic requirements for delivering better quality place-based housing in the East of England is also provided below based on CABE reviews and East of England stakeholder comments.

[18] available at: www.communities.gov.uk

[19] available at: www.strategy.gov.uk

[20] available at: www.tcpa.org.uk

Suggested Checklist of Requirements for Housing Developments in the East of England

- **Vision.** Housing schemes need to be underpinned by a clear vision and therefore a strong idea for what the character, target resident and identity of this place will be, as well as how it will work. It can be expected to have responded to local patterns of development, the views of the existing community and broader landscape and therefore what it is that makes any development particular to the context and needs of the local area.
- **Provision of services and employment.** The design and mix of uses should recognise that there is a balance to be struck between an inward facing self-sufficiency in basic provision and links and shares with facilities and services with the existing built environment. The Ecotown principles, set out in the supplement to PPS1 are also relevant. These include that new homes should be within ten minutes' walk of frequent public transport and neighbourhood services and that there should be accessible job opportunities at a rate of one job per dwelling, that is easily reached by walking, cycling and/or public transport as well as provision to support home and flexible working (especially in rural areas). Neighbourhood services must be more than a major supermarket. In rural areas there should be a clear view of how housing will support local jobs and services although it is acknowledged that the above list of requirements is more difficult to achieve in a rural setting.
- **Connectivity and Sustainable Transport.** The requirement is for a comprehensive multi modal access strategy that minimises car use and promotes public transport, cycling and walking and links new housing development with existing places and services. Again it is recognised that this is more difficult to apply in a rural context.
- **Plot layout and urban hierarchy.** Working with the topography, building types, blocks, streets and greenways, a graduated hierarchy should be established to help people understand and read the new townscape. Clarity in layout, including a gradation in urban form between the residential areas and other mixed use areas should be established. Internal transport routes should add up to a legible and therefore easily navigable network.
- **Housing mix and balanced communities.** The development of a housing strategy that aims to achieve a balance or reflect the existing community. In some cases the scheme can be expected to address imbalances in provision that have arisen from development in the recent past.
- **Open spaces.** These should interact with the built form, indicate what the function of the open spaces are and demonstrate how the edges of the development will respond to the broader open or built landscape. Open space is also important in encouraging social interaction and contributing to community cohesion. The benefits provided by the natural environment are known as Ecosystems services, e.g. food, clean water, protection from flooding and traditional landscapes. A study has recently been carried out in the region to develop a method of using Ecosystems Services in overall policy-making.²¹
- **Sustainability.** As we move towards zero carbon homes, the ambition should be to achieve at least Code Level four in the Code for Sustainable Homes. The relevant parameters of the master plan, such as orientation, and the role of decentralised energy should be worked through at this outline stage so that they do not limit the chances of achieving code four at later design stages.

[21] Valuing Ecosystems in the East of England (2009) Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, Environment Agency, Natural England, East of England Development Agency, East of England Regional Assembly and the Forestry Commission. http://www.gos.gov.uk/goeast/environment_and_rural/environment_issues/ecosystems_services/

2.3 Case studies

Essex Design Initiative

The Essex Design Initiative (EDI) is part of Essex County Council's built environment team. It promotes excellence in design for new development, and supports place-making across Essex. The team provides landscape and urban design services, advice on historic buildings and conservation, input into public art projects, planning and design guidance, Design Review, and bespoke training and consultation events. The EDI works with local authorities and regeneration agencies, Members, private clients and consultants, liaising with national bodies such as English Heritage and CABE.

By championing design the EDI aims to:

- improve design quality;
- increase urban vitality;
- retain historic character;
- reduce carbon emissions; and
- create excellent places.

The Excellence Framework

The Excellence Framework is a practical online toolkit. It can help projects achieve excellence by considering the components of a sustainable community. It has been created by Inspire East, with support from the Building Research Establishment and Sillet Consulting Ltd. The toolkit has been adopted by the East of England Development Agency.

The Excellence Framework is made up of standards. Each standard is achieved by using a toolkit, set of principles, a checklist, a process or a quality mark. Full details are available at:

<http://www.inspire-east.org.uk/standardsintheexcellenceframework.aspx>

A checklist of the basic requirements for delivering better quality place-based housing in the East of England is also provided below based on CABE reviews and East of England stakeholder comments.

3 Existing Stock

3.1 Objectives

Existing housing in the East of England will provide the majority of homes for many decades. Improving its quality and sustainability is therefore a key priority for achieving the Vision as well as specific needs for regeneration and in delivering reductions in carbon emissions. Making maximum use of the existing stock is particularly relevant in the current context of limited finance for its replacement or additional new stock.

The existing stock illustrates the relationship of housing with other policy areas and outcomes. For example, the economic decline of an area can lead to properties falling into disrepair and contributing to poor health and wider social problems which directly affect quality of life and general wellbeing. Although the region needs more new homes, improving the existing stock will help more people than building new homes²². Significant progress has been made under the Decent Homes initiative but, there is a continuing need to improve the condition of the social rented stock and privately rented and owner occupied homes. There are also major challenges to address in relation to: climate change and energy efficiency, new towns, regeneration, under occupation and empty homes.

Key facts

- Some 80% of existing houses will still be in use in 2050²³.
- Significant progress has been made with the Decent Homes initiative, with over 90%²⁴ of the total RSL stock being decent at the end of April 2009 and the region is on course to meet the national target of 95% by the end of 2010. Over 93% of local authority retained stock was decent at the end of September, 2009.
- Domestic energy use is currently one of the major obstacles to achieving agreed carbon reduction targets. Housing currently accounts for just over 30% of all carbon dioxide emissions in the UK, and by 2010 the emissions from housing are expected to have risen 18.5% above their 1990 level.²⁵
- 371,250 (16.2%) households were in fuel poverty in 2009.²⁶
- Some 29,262 private sector dwellings in the region have been empty for more than 6 months²⁷. Nationally, if only 5% of empty homes could be brought back into use, councils could cut their annual homelessness costs by £0.5bn.²⁸
- The region contains a number of former New Towns developed during periods of rapid housing growth. Many of these towns are now in need of revitalisation and regeneration.

[22] Building Better Lives, Audit Commission, 2009

[23] www.forumforthefuture.org.uk/files/The_Future_is_Retro-fit.pdf

[24] Decent homes progress in the East of England, report by HCA, January 2010

[25] Home Truths A Low Carbon Strategy to Reduce UK Housing Emissions by 80% by 2050

[26] National Energy Action, 2010

[27] 2009 Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix

[28] As above

3.2 Improve the stock

Priority

Continue to improve the standard of the social rented stock and improve conditions in privately rented and owner-occupied homes

The immediate priorities are to continue to improve the condition of the social rented stock and improve the quality of private rented and owner occupied homes. Supported by different funding models, work to improve the existing stock will contribute to the reduction of fuel poverty and carbon emissions as well as the delivery of wider health and environmental benefits. A Government review concluded²⁹ that the delivery of decent homes needs to be part of a holistic approach to regeneration which is about more than just 'bricks and mortar' and which makes the right linkages to wider regeneration objectives such as improving health³⁰ and education outcomes, renewing failing housing markets, tackling poverty and delivering mixed sustainable communities. Other more detailed priorities include the need to improve and adapt out of date sheltered accommodation so that it can meet the challenges of the future.

The private rented sector currently meets a range of needs. These include: the provision of temporary accommodation for homeless people; longer-term accommodation for those who are unable to secure social housing or are unable or do not wish to purchase; supporting economic competitiveness by providing flexibility through short term and flexible accommodation options. Data shows a growing number of newly forming households are choosing private rented accommodation as a preferred option to owner occupation³¹. Although this is in the current context of a lack of mortgage availability and employment insecurity, it is likely the sector will play an increased role in meeting housing need and demand in the future. A number of Choice Based Lettings (CBL) schemes across the region are already considering extending those schemes to include properties in the private rented sector.

Local authorities already support the sector by providing advice, grants and loans for renovation or adaptation coupled with enforcement powers in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation, Empty Dwelling Management Orders and legal powers, particularly in respect of property quality, management standards and security of tenure.

The Government has responded to the Rugg report with proposals to improve the quality of private rented accommodation and strengthen protection for tenants affected by repossession³². More generally, encouraging institutional investment in homes for private rental may be a useful mechanism for increasing quality housing supply.

[29] A decent home: definitional guidance for implementation, June 2006 Update CLG

[30] Margaret Gibson. Health and housing – understanding the interdependencies November 2009

[31] Halifax Press Release: 'record fall in owner occupation in England', 13th February 2008. . Nationally, 2007 (before the house price crash) was the second successive year in which the number of owner-occupiers decreased in the UK, and was the largest annual fall on record, taking owner-occupation levels to below 70% for the first time since 1998. This actually understates the fall in the south and east of the country because over the same period, owner occupation in the north and midlands was increasing

[32] Julie Rugg and David Rhodes, The Private Rented Sector: its Contribution and Potential, Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, (2008).

3.3 Reduce carbon emissions from existing housing

Priority

Improve and retrofit the existing stock in order to mitigate and adapt to climate change

Many existing homes are characterised by poor insulation standards, inefficient or expensive heating systems and appliances. This contributes directly to the incidence of fuel poverty and over the longer term has implications for climate change (because higher energy use typically means more carbon emissions). Addressing climate change by supporting more efficient energy use in the home therefore has added benefits in addressing fuel poverty.

The Government's projection for the residential sector is for an 11-18% carbon reduction by 2020 from 1990 levels. Although evidence is patchy³³, it does suggest that significant progress will need to be made in the short term. Indeed, on some estimates, by 2010, the emissions from housing are expected to have risen (nationally) by up to 18.5% above 1990 levels. As the reduction is expressed absolutely and in total, there are also significant challenges in the East given the scale of projected household growth and the need to take into account the potential of existing carbon from this growth.

Action has been taken on new buildings through 2006 changes to the Building Regulations, and on existing housing through the Carbon Emission Reduction Target. However, there is a strong expectation that local authorities will reduce carbon emissions from housing. Related to these issues there is also an obligation on local authorities to tackle carbon emissions, e.g. through requirements contained within the supplement to PPS1, albeit these mostly cover new build. Action on existing homes arises mostly from the obligations based on energy supply companies, voluntary action or energy cost saving, for example through improved home insulation. It is also possible that the costs of retrofitting home insulation could be offset by higher rents in the RSL and social housing sectors but this has cost implications both for tenants and the funding of housing benefit.

The general evidence is that most local authorities recognise and are seeking to address climate change, as are housing associations, but that the scale of action on retrofit needs to accelerate rapidly over the next few years. The perception amongst stakeholders is of the need for a new programme similar to (but not replacing) the Decent Homes Programme. There is also a perception that there needs to be a clearer spilt in responsibilities between national and local actions.

[33] CLG (2009) PPS1 Climate Change Supplement Evaluation

Case Study

Circle Anglia: Greening the box

The Greening-the-Box initiative aims to demonstrate that retrofitting can transform hard-to-heat housing association and council properties into models of low-tech sustainability and fuel efficiency – with almost zero heating.

Greening the Box is an initiative adopted by Wherry Housing Association for the environmentally responsible adaptation of an existing dwelling to low carbon standards. As with many rural housing providers, Wherry has a number of homes that are not covered by the gas network and therefore residents are more likely to rely on more expensive electric or oil heating options which can exacerbate fuel poverty.

The goals are ambitious – heat-loss reduced tenfold, heating load halved, carbon emissions mitigated by four tonnes a year.

Most of the project's £100,000 cost was spent on general upgrade work to the house, but GTB's organisers have itemised the cost of a purely energy-related refit, and calculate it at £36,613 – a much cheaper and less environmentally damaging proposition than the demolition of old stock and the construction of new.

Case Study

Green House Project, Huntingdonshire

As part of their commitment to tackling climate change and encouraging residents to be energy efficient, the Huntingdonshire council has purchased two properties, one in St Ives and the other in St Neots, and will be turning them into 'green' show homes.

The two homes will be fitted out with practical, cost effective technologies, which will demonstrate how to reduce CO2 emissions, make improvements to the insulation, improve fuel efficiency, save money on heating bills and increase the value of the home.

A team of council officers will be looking at incorporating solar power, ground and/or air source heat pumps along with water efficiency measures such as rainwater recycling.

Once complete local people, landlords, schools and businesses will be invited to visit the homes to see how they may be able to introduce energy efficiency, renewable energy and water saving measures into their own homes, helping them to contribute towards reducing emissions within the district. This will not only help the environment but will also save them money in the long term.

Case Study

Private Sector Renewal and the Regional Housing Pot

In 2009 the region launched a new bid programme for private sector renewal funded by the Regional Housing Pot. Sixteen projects were approved comprising a broad geographical and thematic spread, all are partnership-based and the majority are cross-boundary.

The projects are delivering a range of measures and interventions including low and zero carbon technologies, solar thermal panels for heating hot water, as well as retro-fitting solutions such as cavity and solid wall insulation and fuel switching together with a range of initiatives to bring empty homes back into use. The projects also include the region's first sub-regional loan/equity release scheme which could provide the foundation for an expanded, regional scheme in the future.

3.4 Achieve regeneration

Priority

Develop a better understanding of and address the housing issues in areas in need of regeneration

Although the region is widely seen as prosperous there are areas of deprivation within coastal towns such as Jaywick, Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth, as well as pockets of deprivation within larger urban areas such as Thames Gateway South Essex, Luton, Peterborough and Norwich.

There is a need to identify the region's regeneration areas and find new and innovative ways to meet the needs and aspirations of these communities, whether it is a small estate or a major town bringing together those who live there and service providers in order to regenerate and create sustainable communities.

The region's new towns (including Basildon, Harlow, Hatfield, Stevenage, Peterborough and Welwyn Garden City) have been economically successful and were pioneering in terms of achieving balanced communities, but many are now experiencing social and economic challenges by way of ageing infrastructure and large numbers of inappropriate or older design housing which is in need of repair, refurbishment or redevelopment.

A 2001 Select Committee reported that the estates were often constructed using non-traditional "innovative" methods (with complex maintenance requirements) on a Radburn layout. They were designed for single ownership and unified management, but this changed in the 1980s through asset sales, sales to tenants and open market sales. In many cases these estates are predominantly owned by marginal owner occupiers and private landlords and hard to manage because of high turnover, as well as estate design and layout.

Case Study

SHARP Scheme, Great Yarmouth

The Secondary Holiday Area Regeneration Project (SHARP) focuses on neighbourhood renewal in Camperdown, Great Yarmouth. It is a £1.9 million 2-year project, funded by the East of England Regional Housing Pot that began in 2006. The area was chosen because of its importance to the tourism industry, due to its proximity to the sea front. There was also a recognised need to address issues of decline in the hotel industry, increasing numbers of empty properties, houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and the general rundown appearance of the area.

Components of the project include:

- A strategy to bring the empty homes in the area back into use;
- Grants to give the fronts of all properties in the area a face-lift;
- Working with owners to advance the living standards of residential properties; and
- “Street-scene” development to improve the feel of the neighbourhood.

The project is recognised for its innovative approach, which:

- Specifically involves the partnership of tourism, planning and housing authorities as the area falls within the Secondary Tourist Area and a Conservation Area. The aim is that the local economy and Tourist industry will benefit from the investment into housing including tackling empty homes and HMO management issues.
- Targets a specific geographical area brings focus and maximises impact.
- Develops housing options to improve the tenure mix in the area, including possibilities of intermediate rent and shared ownership schemes. It also involves the development of a local key worker definition to help draw this group to the town.

3.5 Maximise the use of the existing stock

Priority

Ensure that the best use is made of the existing stock, for example, by reducing the number of long-term empty homes in the private sector and reducing under occupancy

Vacant properties form a small proportion of existing housing stock but still represent a potential resource to meet housing need, particularly in the private rented sector. A degree of frictional vacancy is to be expected, particularly in locations where there is a high turnover of residents (e.g. the larger centres) and where there are voids between tenancies. Some existing housing is also unpopular and hard to let and stakeholders suggest that this includes some of the sheltered housing stock. There is an acknowledgement that vacant properties can present a nuisance to neighbourhoods and while the general conclusion is that the overwhelming need cannot be met purely by bringing these properties back into use, initiatives aimed at returning empty properties to use can have benefits for those in need of homes and the immediate neighbourhood.

Emerging research suggests that under-occupation, defined as one or more spare bedrooms per person, is higher among owner occupiers and lower among social tenants³⁴. It suggests that only 2.7% of homes are overcrowded, while 36% are under occupied. The same work also suggests that under-occupation is more frequent in predominantly rural districts in the region. Single person households in the 65-74 age range most frequently downsize, with the most popular type of dwelling being a two bedroom bungalow, flat or house. Most downsizers also aim to give up only one bedroom and surveyed housing associations suggest that a policy of offering one bedroom accommodation to single person downsizers is not sufficiently attractive.

These emerging findings suggest there is scope to increase occupancy of the existing stock by providing attractive alternatives to encourage downsizing. Just under half of all East of England authorities have a scheme for addressing under occupation and supporting downsizing, mainly through a combination of finding the right property, practical support in respect of moving and cash incentives.

Case Study

Greater Norwich Empty Homes Project

The Greater Norwich Empty Homes project was designed to return empty homes to use for use by households at risk of homelessness. Funded by the Regional Housing Pot (2006-08), it uses a combination of stick (the Housing Act empty homes powers) and carrot (grants) to persuade the owners of empty homes to put them into a private sector leasing scheme managed by Norwich City Council. To date 158 empty homes have been brought back into use, 105 of which have been occupied by families referred by the respective authorities' advice teams. The team has gained considerable experience of the new empty homes legislation particularly the use of empty dwellings management orders.

[34] Emerging research into Under-occupation in the East of England (NHF)

Case Study

Rawlyn Court Refurbishment Project

Rawlyn Court is a sheltered housing scheme offering 26 modern flats and bungalows for older persons. In 2004, it underwent a major refurbishment as part of Cambridge City Council's strategy to address under occupation in its existing housing stock. The project encouraged older persons to move into the self-contained flats, upgraded to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standards, as well as three brand new one- and two-bed bungalows. Facilities available for residents include an alarm system linked to a care-call centre, CCTV, smoke detectors, car park, passenger lift and a communal landscaped courtyard. The aim of the project was to release a number of two and three bed houses, which could be re-let to families.

To encourage and assist with moving arrangements, all residents are offered a financial support package, including a £500 'new home' payment for people to spend in their new home. Other support services include a personal advisor, free transferring of gas, electric and water services, paying and arranging removals, and clearing unwanted furniture and rubbish. Residents were fully informed throughout the whole refurbishment programme and were involved with the procurement and design of the new building and external landscaping.

The project also boasts strong environmental credentials, achieving a 'very good' Ecohomes rating. Environmental features include solar water heating systems, recycling sorting bins, loft insulation and energy efficient washing machines.

4 Housing Supply and Affordability

4.1 Objectives and issues

Delivering an adequate and affordable supply of housing across the East of England is crucial to maintaining the health of the region's economy, supporting its varied housing markets, and ensuring the population's full range of housing needs is met.

Total housing supply and affordability are key issues that determine whether households can access the sort of housing they want at a price they can afford and whether the region can remain economically competitive. Although both house prices and incomes vary across the region, affordability is a region-wide issue.

Nationally there has been a significant increase in house prices relative to real incomes over the past decade. This has been partly due to an under-supply of new homes in previous decades relative to demand, particularly demand from people moving into the area to work. It has also been influenced by the easy availability of mortgages until the recent 'credit crunch'. Lower interest rates and resulting mortgage repayment costs have also enabled households to afford more expensive houses which has driven up prices. Volatility in broader investment markets and until recently the "guarantee" of rising housing prices have also increased the attractiveness of housing as an investment, including the emergence of a "buy to let" market.

Emphasising the need to increase supply, the economist Kate Barker, as a consequence of her review of housing supply concluded:

I do not believe that continuing at the current rate of house building is a realistic option, unless we are prepared to accept increasing problems of homelessness, affordability and social division, decline in standards of public service delivery and increasing costs of doing business in the UK – hampering our economic success³⁵.

Progress towards delivery of East of England plan policy on supply is summarised in Figure 4.1 based on data from 2008. Against current RSS housing targets, the region has so far delivered 158,739 (31%) of the 508,000 dwellings required by 2021. Delivery has mostly been in the context of a strong housing market, yet underlying this 31% is a significant shortfall in the supply of affordable housing. A number of factors should help to ensure better delivery over the longer term. This includes taking forward the region's Implementation Plan³⁶ and the gradual development and adoption of Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) which provide the local framework for housing supply and require the identification of a 5 year land supply for housing. As at December 2009 only eleven LDF core strategies were adopted in the East of England.

The type of schemes developed in recent boom conditions may be currently undeliverable or 'stalled' and it is not clear when or if such schemes will become viable again in the face of the recent collapse in demand and availability of finance. A further reason for stalling is the need for, often expensive, infrastructure. A recent survey of local authorities on the impact of current market conditions³⁷ suggests that "stalled sites" in the region comprise capacity of 27,750 homes of which 7,300 homes are affordable.

[35] Kate Barker (2004) Foreword letter to the Chancellor and Deputy Prime Minister in Review of Housing Supply Final Report.

[36] EEDA and EERA (2010) East of England Implementation Plan

[37] Impact of Current Market Conditions on Housing Issues in East of England Local Housing Authorities and Sub regions, Quarter 2 2009-10, SQW for EERA 2009. Note: Respondents used their own definition of a "stalled" site based on local knowledge.

Key facts

- Sufficient housing must be delivered to meet the region's growing population, which is expected to increase from 5.5 million in 2006 to 6.5m in 2021 and 7.0 million in 2031, translating into a 35% (840,000) increase in the number of households³⁸.
- Within the East of England overall housing delivery was increasing from 2001 to 2007. The delivery of new affordable housing also increased over the same period, although still fell short of the region's policy target of 35%.
- In 2008 the ratio of median house prices to income for the East of England was 7.78 which is the fastest rising ratio in the country over the last 10 years; and also more than double the 1998 ratio.
- Evidence suggests that only about a third of (new) younger working households in the East of England can afford to buy based on the lowest 10% of local house prices.³⁹
- Over the period 2001/2 to 2007/8 a total of 32,570 social rented units were built or acquired in the East of England compared with 37,480 such homes sold under the Right to Buy. That is to say, only 86% of the stock lost through Right to Buy since 2001/2 has been replaced to date.
- Intermediate housing has increased almost threefold in the last ten years, and has increased from 14% to 40% of all new affordable housing stock provision in the East of England.

In terms of deliverability of a five year supply, the EERA survey of local authorities (Quarter 2, 2009-10) suggests that anticipated outcomes differ, with areas more resilient to the downturn more confident than others. Where economies have been hit and where the intended trajectory was above long term trend, there is less optimism.

Current market conditions may provide breathing space to reconsider some of these schemes. The EERA survey suggests just over half of authorities have received requests to renegotiate affordable housing. Understandably, few authorities are willing to relax requirements, but the overall situation is being effectively eased by enabling more flexibility on the timing of payments or delivery. Some authorities are providing some upfront funding with later clawback. These are clearly useful and pragmatic arrangements for the current market. Sharing of such experiences is also useful to ensure that authorities are not 'over compromising'.

[38] ONS 2006 based population projections and CLG 2006 based household projections

[39] Steve Wilcox (2008) Can't Supply: Can't Buy The affordability of private housing in Great Britain, Hometrack

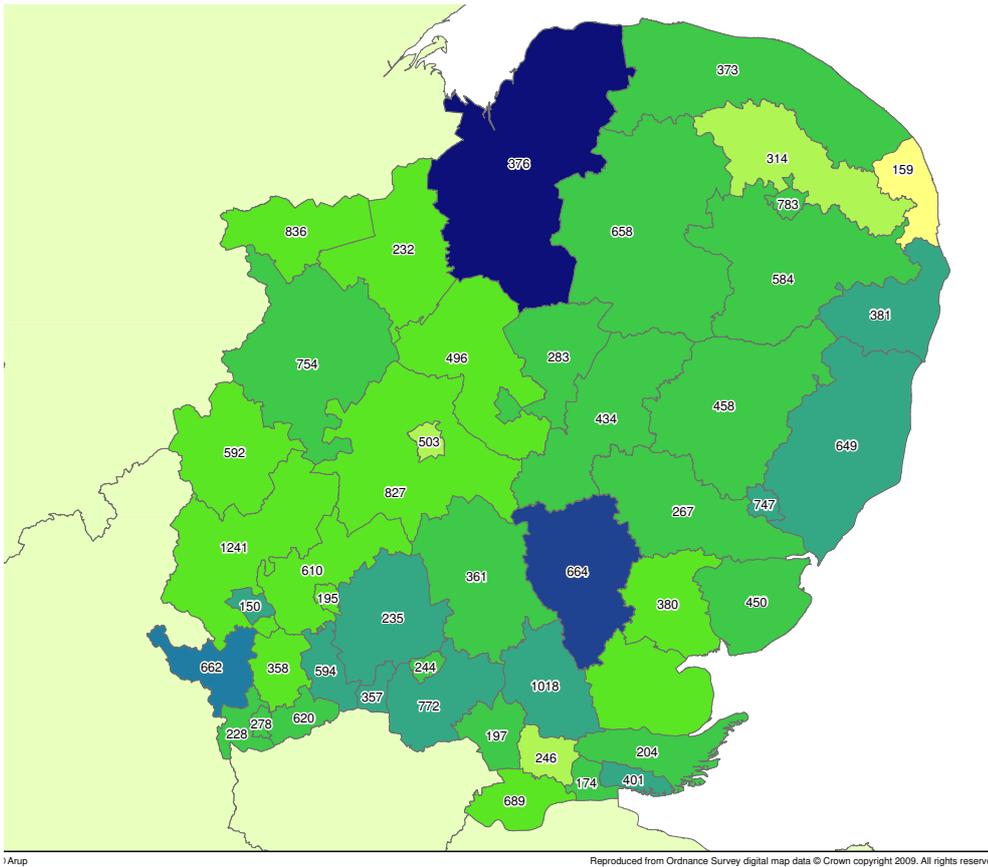


Figure 4.1: AMR Build Rates as a proportion of RSS targets
 Source: Arup, East of England Regional Assembly Annual Monitoring Report 2007/8 Note: shading shows build rate as a percentage of target for the years 2001-2008. Numbers show actual annual build rate at 2008

4.2 Increase housing supply

Priority
Increase the supply of housing across all tenures to meet East of England plan policy.

The East of England’s housing market has traditionally been buoyant, but with worsening affordability. Even though house prices have fallen somewhat in recent years, this has not been sufficient to redress the balance between house prices and incomes – particularly at the lower end of the scale. Affordability problems are exacerbated by constraints on the availability of mortgage finance.

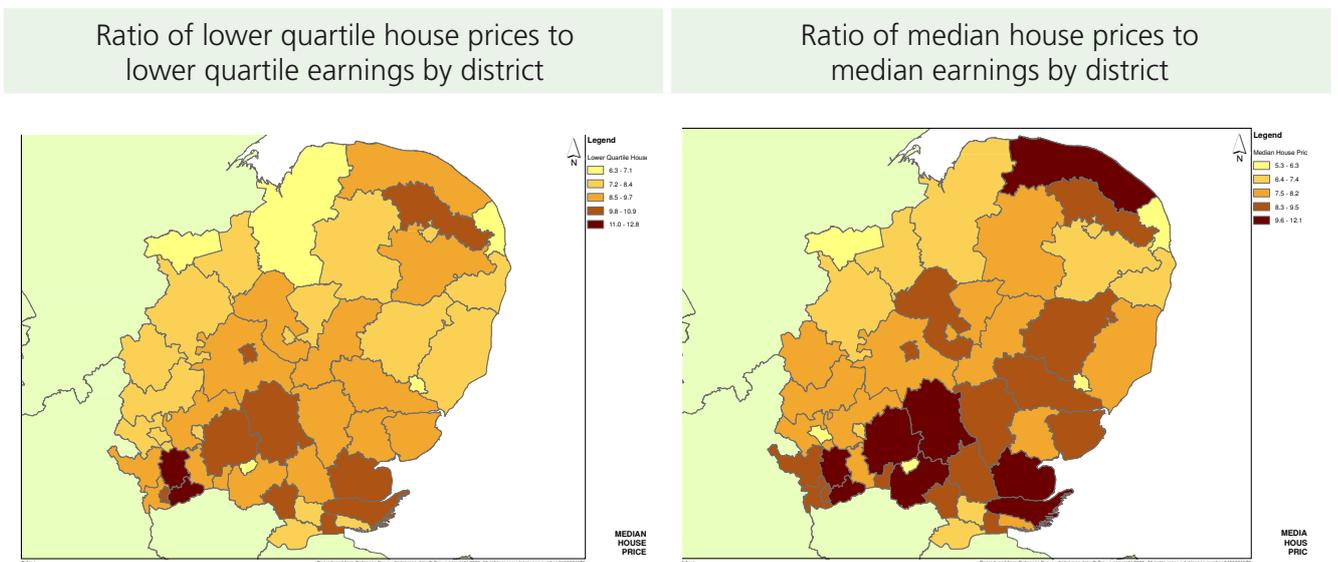
In 2008 the ratio of lower quartile house prices to income was 8.26 and the median ratio 7.78 which is more than double the corresponding ratios in 1998. This is good news for a small proportion of the region’s homeowners without mortgages, and the success of the housing market has underpinned housing development, and housing-led regeneration. Nevertheless, it puts the prospect of buying a house on the open market out of reach for many households in the region.

House prices show a very strong south to north/east gradient, with some of the most expensive homes in the country in Hertfordshire and South Essex. However affordability is also a problem in other parts of the region because wages are correspondingly lower. Beyond restricting access to housing, affordability

threatens the economic prosperity of ‘hotspot’ areas, particularly when key workers and other workers in sectors which support economic drivers are deterred from the area.

The relationship between housing supply and affordability is complex. Authorities often lack the means of increasing supply beyond providing allocations and consents. Increased housing supply can be a sign of a buoyant housing market which is responding to demand and can therefore charge a premium for new products. In contrast, under supply does have a direct relationship with increasing house prices as demand exceeds supply. The current reluctance of lenders to offer mortgages without large deposits may impact on demand which in turn can lead to reduced supply that mitigates any downward movement in house prices.

Figure 4.2: Affordability ratios in the East of England, 2008



Source: CLG Housing Statistics (Tables 576 and 577), Arup

4.3 Increase affordable housing supply

Priority
Increase the delivery of affordable housing of the right size, type, tenure and quality to meet a diverse range of housing needs

Ranked performance in delivering affordable housing at the local authority level in the period 2001- 2008 is summarised in Table 4.1.

Based on a top down approach and taking account of recent market changes, the Assessment of Future Regional Requirement for Affordable Housing (2009) estimates the net requirement for affordable housing across the region up to 2031 to be 11,600 units per annum. This is slightly higher than the need for 11,000 new affordable homes each year identified in the current East of England Plan.

Table 4.1 Affordable Housing Delivery Performance 2001-08

Top 10 local authorities for % affordable housing delivery 2001-08	Bottom 10 local authorities for % affordable housing delivery 2001-08
Stevenage Welwyn Hatfield Hertsmere Three Rivers Cambridge City Norwich South Cambridgeshire Broxbourne East Hertfordshire Babergh	Great Yarmouth Tendring Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Castle Point Harlow Maldon Breckland Mid Bedfordshire Thurrock Suffolk Coastal
Greatest increases in ratio of lower quartile house prices to incomes	Most acute ratios of earnings to housing prices
North Hertfordshire Rochford Stevenage Hertsmere Great Yarmouth Welwyn Hatfield Braintree Southend on Sea Norwich Chelmsford	St Albans Hertsmere Uttlesford East Hertfordshire Watford Cambridge City Maldon Rochford Brentwood Broadland

(NB Ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile income increased in all districts from 2001-2008). (Source: Annual Monitoring Report 2007/8)

Worsening affordability has led to a growing number of households being added to affordable housing registers. This has increased demand for an already strained resource, at a time when delivery of new affordable housing across the region has been low. Compared to a region wide target of 35% affordable housing, 19% of all housing delivered through the planning system in the region in 2007/08 was affordable housing. This percentage figure has increased recently, but in part reflects the fall in market housing supply.

Homes sold under the "Right to Buy" policy have not been replaced in sufficient numbers, and so total social rented stock, particularly family housing, has reduced over the last decade. Over the period 2001/2 to 2007/8 a total of 32,570 social rented units were built or acquired in the East of England compared with 37,480 such homes sold under Right to Buy (that is to say only 86% of those released were replaced). This trend is reversing and, in recent years, provision has outstripped loss of social rented housing. Since 2004/5 there has been an annual net gain in social rented housing stock throughout the region.

Other issues associated with the delivery of affordable housing include:

- site thresholds set at levels which do not maximise the amount of affordable housing that could be secured;
- a large proportion of smaller sites coming forward below thresholds for providing affordable housing;
- a planning policy preference for brownfield site redevelopment with implications for financial viability and potentially reducing the proportion of affordable units that can be provided;
- current economic conditions which have caused the development of a significant number of sites to stall. Some 34 of 39 authorities in the Region report stalled sites in their districts, of which 20% are sites with over 300 units;
- the continuing high cost of land (which has not fallen as far as might have been expected during the recession) means that affordable housing is less financially viable for developers or housing associations;
- local opposition to affordable housing schemes in all locations, from rural to market towns and urban areas;
- concern that existing mechanisms for providing affordable housing, such as developer contributions, will not be sufficient to fully meet needs and respond to current market conditions.

Intermediate housing

Strategic Housing Market Assessments show that many households within lower income brackets cannot afford to purchase on the open market, leading to increasing demand for affordable housing and private rented accommodation. Whilst intermediate housing represents an alternative option between market housing and social rented housing, stakeholders have suggested that it remains out of reach for many, which may be compounded by the limited overall supply of intermediate housing in the region.

There has been a fourfold increase in intermediate housing in the last ten years to 2,900 units delivered in the region in 2007/8. It has increased from 14% to 40% of all new affordable housing stock provision in the East of England.

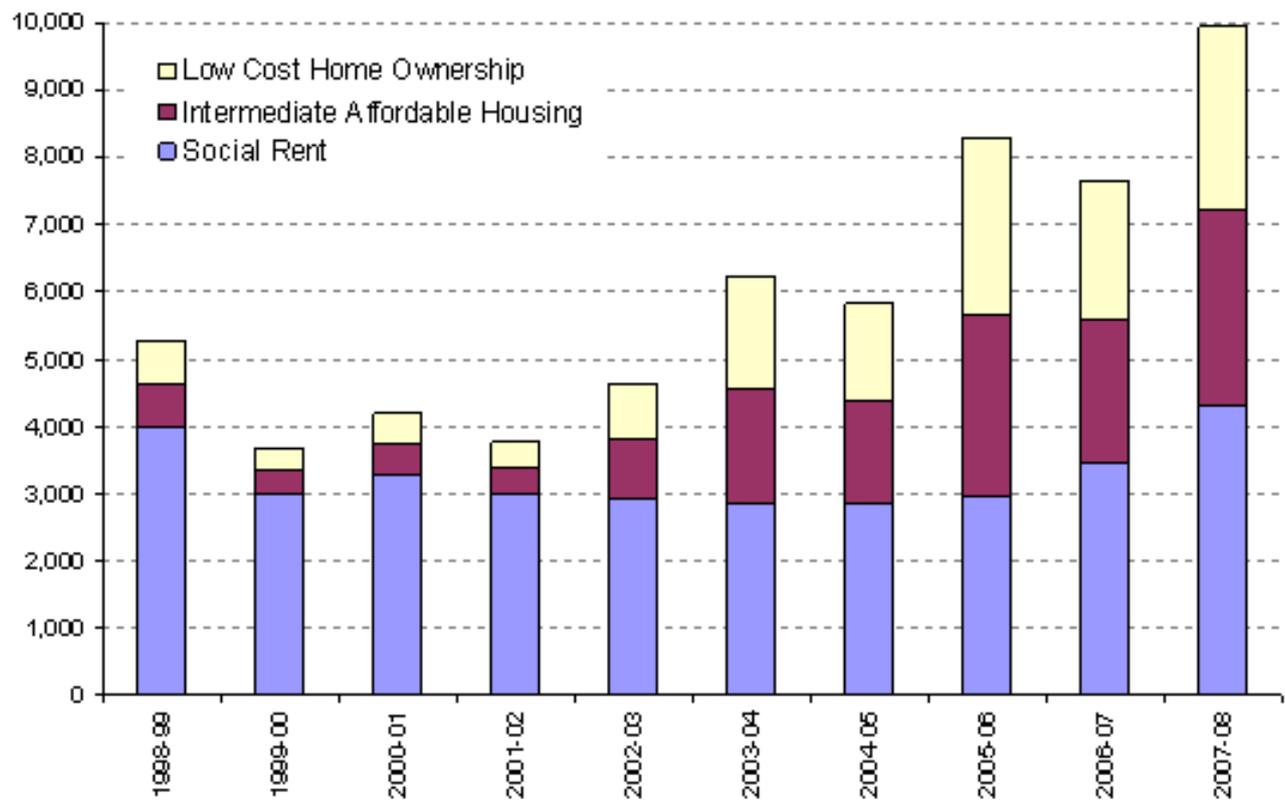


Figure 4.3: Provision of affordable housing by type, East of England, 1998-99 to 2007-8
Source: CLG Housing Statistics Table 1000

In spite of this increase, there remain a number of issues:

- limited overall supply of intermediate housing options, particularly in the economic downturn;
- limited awareness amongst potential residents about intermediate housing options;
- uncertainty over who qualifies for intermediate housing;
- limitations placed on who can apply for intermediate housing;
- the price of some intermediate housing options (in particular low cost home ownership), which has put them outside the price range of prospective applicants, usually due to the size of deposit required and limited availability of mortgage finance.

Case Study

Foundations for Living, Huntingdonshire

Foundations for Living (FFL) is an award-winning scheme in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, which demonstrates how mainstream housing and community learning facilities can be designed to be accessible to all including disabled people. The scheme contains affordable, wheelchair accessible homes for disabled people and private flats, as well as providing a range of services, including housing, support, employment and education. The scheme provides 24 affordable rented wheelchair-accessible flats, 22 private flats and the Saxongate Community Learning Centre. Key aspects of the housing design include:



- Discrete and integrated access features throughout, based on guidance from the Centre for Accessible Environments;
- A traditional architectural appearance that is sensitive to the conservation environs of this site's town centre location;
- Large areas of glass to maximise natural light, low sills to allow views into and out of the building to emphasise its openness to all; and
- Mirrored entrances providing equality between vehicle and pedestrian access.

The developer and landlord is the Papworth Trust, a disability charity and a registered social landlord. The landlord provides support to the residents and personal care is provided by another organisation under contract to the county council. The scheme was funded by the Papworth Trust, from land sales and through a dedicated fundraising campaign. The private housing was funded by a private developer. The project was completed in 2007 and won a Housing Corporation Gold Award in 2008.

4.4 Improve housing quality and design

Priority

Improve quality and design of new housing to ensure it meets the changing needs of the region's population and successfully integrates with existing places.

The quality of new housing stock was discussed in the RHS 2005-10, drawing on the conclusions of CABE⁴⁰ in their housing audit of London, the South East and East of England. This found that results in the East of England were not encouraging when compared to results overall. Discussion with stakeholders during the course of developing this Statement supports this view and suggests there are a number of dimensions to the issue, particularly in the provision of private housing: the role and effect of prices; the need to ensure that housing better meets the needs and requirements of occupiers and the lack of integration with existing places.

[40] <http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/housing-audit-2004.pdf>

Evidence suggests that there is also a specific need to ensure greater longevity in new stock by improving its quality and ability to meet the changing needs of its occupants. For example, falls experienced by older people cost the NHS around £726 million annually. It is estimated that a large proportion of these falls⁴¹ could be averted where houses are well designed and adapted, e.g. through grants or advice.

A CABE study into how design can support social inclusion finds that poor and otherwise disadvantaged people are more likely to live in poor quality housing and poor quality environments. Both have implications for the way in which people interact with, or are excluded from society. In terms of home design, key features of inclusive design are sufficient space, the ability to adapt it to specific requirements (in particular those of wheelchair and pushchair users), and a place that is well designed for day to day use to minimise resources⁴².

Poor quality homes also contribute to fuel poverty in terms of the consequences of poor insulation and inefficient heating systems. Fuel poverty can exacerbate existing illnesses and recovery times and increase visits to doctors and hospital stays which are costly for the health service.

It is difficult to verify progress in terms of improving quality of meeting occupant needs, although the challenges in providing a sufficient affordable housing supply are likely to impact on younger families, and the population as a whole is ageing (this is a national trend which is exacerbated in the East of England by a larger than average net inflow of middle aged and older domestic migrants). Policy objectives to raise densities have resulted in a shift away from low density formats such as bungalows to apartments, particularly in areas where land supply is constrained.

4.5 Address climate change

Priority

Ensure that new housing mitigates and adapts to climate change.

As Chapter 3 has suggested, there are significant challenges arising from climate change. Mitigation means reducing carbon emissions from housing through efficient use of low carbon energy through an emphasis on sustainable homes. Adaptation is also particularly critical because the East of England is the country's driest region, is low-lying and therefore particularly vulnerable to coastal inundation and sea level rise. In addition, hotter summers and cooler winters can be expected which means that buildings will need to be able to perform better in these conditions as well as be capable of withstanding more frequent severe weather events⁴³. These issues are especially pertinent in the context of projected growth of population and jobs in the region.

Policy-makers will need to respond to the strategic impacts of climate change in three ways: reacting to increased flooding, coastal erosion or extreme weather events; providing support to those who may be displaced over the longer term by the impacts of climate change or coastal erosion (e.g. through sea level rise); and planning settlements which are resilient to these effects either by moving them away from the affected areas or making them better able to adapt to a changing natural environment. The region is also expected to suffer increasingly from water shortages as the climate becomes drier⁴⁴ placing emphasis on the need for water saving technologies.

[41] Estimates vary widely from 3% to 60% depending on how well targeted interventions are. Source: 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society', CLG, February 2008 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/lifetimehomes.pdf>

[42] Inclusion by Design: Equality, Diversity and the Built Environment, CABE, 2008

[43] 'Draft Climate Change Action Plan' The East of England Climate Change Partnership, April 2009

[44] 'Water for People and Environment: Water Resources Strategy for England and Wales', Environment Agency, March 2009

Further guidance on how to implement the Climate Change PPS can be found in the East of England Implementation Plan and Climate Change Action Plan⁴⁵.

Case Study

Accordia, Cambridge

The modern housing development of Accordia has been designed to complement the character of the conservation area that surrounds it. Good architectural design offers an exciting range of design, especially in the private housing. The significant number of affordable units (30%) benefit from proximity to open spaces, have slow speed streets, communal play areas and external materials to match the private units.

The development was a brownfield site, virtually surrounded by a conservation area, which previously accommodated single storey government offices – now transferred to a new multi-storey building onsite. Restrictive covenants and planning restraints limited housing numbers, defined distances from neighbouring roads and protected mature trees, the setting of a neighbouring Grade II listed building and the landscape corridor of Hobson's Brook and footpath to the west. The masterplan's quality and sensitivity allayed public concerns and gained the support of the local architectural centre, Shape Cambridge. The spatial variety of the surrounding neighbourhood – characterised by individual villas and denser Victorian housing, along with the spacious Botanic Garden nearby – has been convincingly adopted into Accordia, which delivers generous open space for walking and for play. Accordia became the first housing scheme to win the Stirling Prize in 2008.



Case Study

Emerging South West Guidance for Local Authorities

The South West is developing guidance to support local planning authorities in effectively and efficiently delivering the Climate Change PPS. The guidance will include:

- A sustainable energy toolkit, including guidance on how to break down regional targets to the sub-regional level, guidance on implementing existing and emerging regulations and policy, examples of best practice, templates for model policy wording and recommendations for monitoring against targets;
- Provision of generic aspects of the evidence base;
- A menu of bespoke, low cost CPD training options;
- Guidance on integration of adaptation options into LDDs; and
- 'Train the advisors' aspect to ensure that regional expertise is up to date.

[45] EEDA/EERA 2010 East of England Implementation Plan

Given the cost of implementing measures to address climate change in new housing, there is scope to draw on other regions' work and offer advice on a level playing field to be established across the region. This could provide increased certainty for the private sector and reduce costs. Government regulations will mean increasingly stringent restrictions on the carbon emissions of new stock (which must meet Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 by 2013), but private homes will still have lower minimum standards than will housing associations, so the disparity will persist.

Case Study

Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme – Lamb Drive, Cambourne, Cambridgeshire

The SUDs scheme, promoted by Cambridge Housing Society and others, is an exemplar project that achieves full natural run-off mitigation without the use of permanent water bodies. The scheme, arguably the first of its kind in the UK, showcases a range of innovative Sustainable Water Management Techniques that can be adopted by both low and high density residential developments, introducing solutions that are simple, natural and visible. Measures demonstrated at Lamb Drive include:

- water butts;
- permeable paving;
- a green roof;
- swales;
- detention and wetland basins; and
- a retention pond.

Not only is this scheme more sustainable, but it transpired it was more financially attractive than more conventional drainage schemes. The scheme demonstrates how SUDs can form more practical, cost effective and efficient solutions to traditional drainage systems, with benefits for both developers and residents. Improvements to biodiversity and ecology have also resulted from the scheme, increasing the overall quality of life for the residents. The project received a commendation award at the 2006 RTPI awards.

4.6 Support rural communities

Priority

Ensure the delivery of an appropriate level of new housing (including affordable housing) in rural areas

Pockets of deprivation exist in many of the region's rural areas such as in Norfolk⁴⁶. In recent years, housing development has in the main been directed towards urban areas or market towns, reflecting the emphasis on brownfield land, urban renaissance and the interpretation of sustainability as requiring new growth to be located in urban areas. In addition social housing construction in rural areas has been far lower than comparable urban construction in both absolute and proportional terms⁴⁷ although policy targets have been exceeded. The consequences have been higher rural house prices and reverse commuting of poorly paid rural workers out of urban areas to rural areas in which they cannot afford to live.

[46] 'Deprivation in Rural Norfolk', OCSI for Norfolk Rural Community Council, December 2006

[47] 'Homes for Rural Communities', Report of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Rural Housing Policy Forum, Richard Best & Marck Shucksmith, 2006, Table 2.7

Based on consultation responses to the Matthew Taylor review, the East of England was the region with the second highest number of responses about the detrimental effect of second homes, including the worsening of affordability. Evidence suggests that second homes are not significant in rural areas generally but primarily around the coast and designated high landscape areas they have reached such high levels that they distort the local housing market and threaten the viability of rural communities⁴⁸. The Taylor Review also presented evidence to suggest that providing new housing, and particularly affordable housing, in rural settlements could help them to become more sustainable by addressing problems such as the reverse commuting by low-paid rural workers.

Attitudes towards new housing development in rural areas are changing. Following the publication of the Taylor Review⁴⁹ and PPS3 a more positive approach to rural housing has been developed but this may take time to translate into delivery.

Rural settlements may be unsustainable, particularly where the population is such that local services cannot be provided. The expansion of existing villages which allows people to both work and live locally (or go to school locally, or reduce trips by shopping locally) may be the more sustainable solution. It also contributes to the social and community fabric of a settlement. Lack of supply and premium house prices can result in the homogenisation of village populations and prevent young adults and families or older residents from staying in their local area.

The long timescales involved in LDF preparation in the East of England and elsewhere mean that old-style policies in local plans prevail and may not necessarily be in line with PPS3 which recognises the need for new housing in rural areas.

Case Study

Rural Community Council of Essex: Rural Housing Enabler

The Essex Local Area Agreement 2 identified affordable housing as a local indicator. Given the very rural nature of the county (over 70%) the advice of the Rural Housing Enabler was sought to help identify what is preventing more affordable rural schemes being developed in the county. A major issue was the lack of understanding of the principles of exception sites, in response to which a work plan has been developed aimed at parish, district and county councillors to raise awareness and inform decision-makers about the benefits of affordable rural housing.

Financial support has been provided by the LAA Housing Board for:

- Information pack;
- DVD and website update;
- Half day seminar;
- Tours to existing schemes;
- Drop in event.

[48] 'Matthew Taylor Review on Rural Economy and Affordable Housing: Analysis of Responses to the Call for Evidence', Arup, June 2008

[49] 'Living Working Countryside: The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing', CLG, July 2008

5 Meeting the Housing Needs of a Diverse Population and Vulnerable Households

5.1 Objectives and issues

Addressing the needs of vulnerable groups is a critical challenge, particularly given worsening affordability, existing pockets of deprivation, economic challenges including job losses and demographic trends such as an ageing population.

Homelessness remains a key issue for the region with continuing pressure on Local Authorities to avoid the use of Bed and Breakfast, reduce use of temporary accommodation and reduce rough sleeping.

The provision of appropriate housing-related support is important in enabling people to live independently, in particular the region's increasing older population and to provide safe and suitable accommodation for people who are vulnerable or have complex needs.

While the black and minority ethnic (BME) population of the region is below the national average these households are more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation and disproportionately present as homelessness, they are also less likely to access services and support.

Key facts

- A total of 5050 households were accepted as statutorily homeless in 2008/09 compared to 5900 in 2007/8⁵⁰. There is a continuing use of bed and breakfast as temporary accommodation and pockets of rough sleeping remain in the region, although the number of households in temporary accommodation had fallen from 8,350 in December 2004 – the Government baseline – to 3,020 in the second quarter of 2009⁵¹.
- Some 91.9% of former care leavers in the region are in suitable accommodation. 61.6% of adults with learning difficulties are in settled accommodation compared to 17.9% of adults in contact with secondary mental health services. 79.8% of offenders under probation supervision are in settled and suitable accommodation⁵².
- The East of England, along with the South East and the South West, has a net inflow of middle aged and older people to the region⁵³. A large proportion of older people, including around half of all vulnerable older people, own their own home (overall 68%, projected to rise to 75% by 2026⁵⁴), and only a very small minority live in sheltered housing.
- Some 5.2% of households in the region are overcrowded, with households with a black or minority ethnic (BME) head of household showing a much higher proportion of overcrowding; particularly affected are those in the Bangladeshi group and those in Pakistani and Black African groups⁵⁵.
- Some 3,210 applications for the Workers Registration Scheme were approved in the East of England during the first quarter of 2009-10⁵⁶.
- The region had 4,025 Gypsy & Traveller caravans at the last count in 2009⁵⁷, the highest number of any region in England.

[50] CLG, homelessness statistics, Table 621

[51] CLG, homelessness statistics, Table 634

[52] National Indicator data for NI147 (Care Leavers, 2009), NI145 (Learning Difficulties, 2008-09), NI143 (Offenders under probation supervision 2008-09)

[53] 6,700 net inflow of internal migrants aged 45 and over between 2007 and 2008. Source: Migration Statistics Unit, Office for National Statistics

[54] 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society', CLG, February 2008

[55] Review of Ethnicity in the East of England, MENTER, 2006

[56] Source: UKBA. Statistics available from: <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelId=1095225>

[57] CLG Count of Gypsy and Traveller Caravans on 16th July 2009

5.2 Respond to the housing needs of a diverse population and vulnerable households

Priority

Understand and respond to the needs of a diverse population, including vulnerable groups and older people, to enable them to live independently in suitable accommodation and to contribute to the local community.

The region has worked hard to prevent homelessness across the region reflected in lower levels of acceptance rates in recent quarters. Experimental statistics on Homelessness Prevention and Relief⁵⁸ show that nationally 61% of homelessness prevention cases involved the household being helped with alternative accommodation, such as private rented housing. The remaining 39% were helped to remain in their own home. This illustrates the huge amount of pressure and work on local authorities and partner agencies in assisting those most at risk to avoid homelessness.

Nationally, the numbers of BME households who are homeless and in priority need is disproportionate⁵⁹ and many rough sleepers have complex needs living chaotic lives. Often linked to substance misuse, many also have serious mental and physical health problems.⁶⁰ In addition, care leavers, ex-offenders, adults in contact with secondary mental health services and adults with a severe to moderate learning disability have complex needs for accommodation and support. Whilst recent successful policies have enabled better integration and reduced levels of homelessness across the region as a whole, it still remains a critical issue, particularly for BME residents and in coastal areas⁶¹.

Providing appropriate support to allow people to live independently in suitable accommodation and preventing homelessness can have significant benefits. For example, it can:

- lead to significant savings in the costs associated with long-term and persistent exclusion;
- contribute to the achievement of broader outcomes, such as reducing reoffending and tackling worklessness; and
- support improved community cohesion by addressing the negative external effects of a small number of highly excluded individuals.

A recent CLG study showed that the net financial benefit from the Supporting People programme is £2.77bn per annum against an overall investment of £1.55bn⁶². Not providing this support would lead to increased costs in the areas of homelessness, tenancy failure, crime, health and residential care packages. The model developed by Cap Gemini to calculate these financial benefits has been adapted for local use and is being rolled out to local authorities which are beginning to populate it.

A cost benefit analysis⁶³ of the value of not for profit supported housing services in the region found that the services were making a net contribution to the national economy. The total cost of the services was £34.2 million (funded through the Supporting People Programme) and a return on investment (with a gross benefit of £46.8m) of £12.6m. Particular areas which yielded net benefits included: alcohol and substance misuse, offenders and those at risk of offending, those with mental health difficulties and the single homeless. The benefits represent the savings of expenditure in the treatment of these groups.

[58] Housing Statistical Release, Homelessness Prevention and Relief: England 2008-09, Experimental Statistics

[59] Nationally, 55% of those accepted as statutorily homeless are minority ethnic, although non-White British residents make up only 16% of the overall population. Sources: CLG Housing Statistics Table 638, ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates by Ethnic Group, 2007

[60] No one left out, Communities ending rough sleeping, CLG 2008

[61] East of England Regional Economic Strategy, Evidence Base Report (Appendix B Section 8)

[62] Research into the financial benefits of the Supporting People Programme, CLG 2009

[63] Added value? – Rebuilding Lives. A cost benefit analysis of the value of the not for profit supported housing services to the economy of the East of England. Written by Spirals in association with Space East

Health and wellbeing in particular is strongly influenced by housing. EERA and Department of Health in partnership with the Supporting People East Region Group (SPERG) have commissioned a review of the region’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and SHMAs to assess the extent to which they have covered housing related support needs and to consider the implications for service provision and delivery of any gaps and weaknesses. The aim is to help ensure future JSNAs and SHMAs in the region can provide full and appropriate evidence of housing-related support needs to inform the commissioning of services. The focus for the review is the Supporting People client groups and those most at risk of exclusion covered by Public Service Agreement 16 (PSA 16)⁶⁴.

Like the rest of the UK, the East of England is experiencing an ageing population, with some areas expecting the over 65 age bracket to increase by more than 50%. The trend has both current and future implications for providing support and suitable housing that meet the needs of older people and dependants.

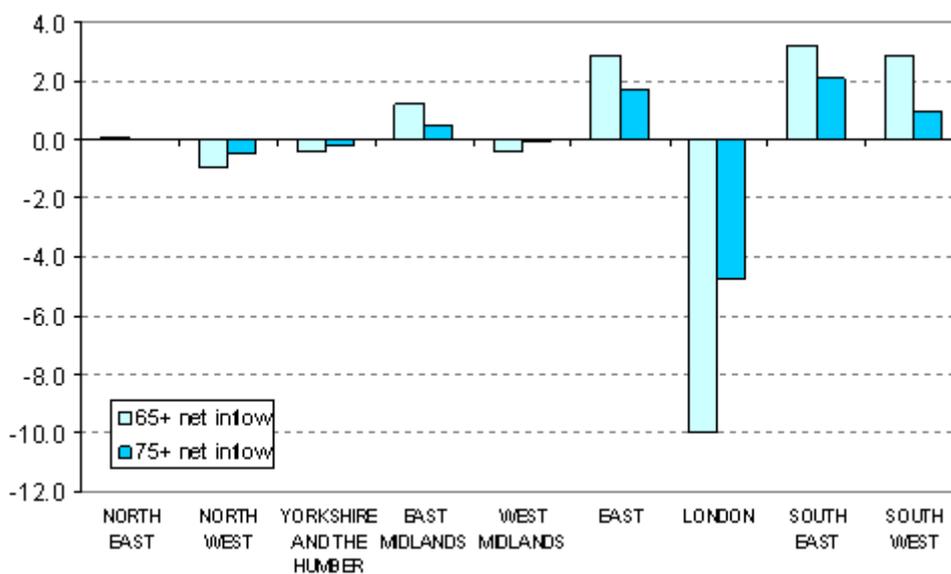


Figure 5.1: Net internal in-migration by region and age, 2008
 Source: ONS Migration Statistics Unit

Disproportionate concentrations of older people can be found in coastal and rural areas. A large proportion (68%) of older people, including around half of all vulnerable older people, own their own home and this is projected to rise to 75% by 2026⁶⁵. Only a very small minority live in sheltered housing and stakeholders suggest that much sheltered housing is often insufficiently attractive to encourage older people to downsize to this form of provision. There is also an increasing polarisation between older people with sufficient incomes and those who do not.

[64] PSA16 is focused on those most at risk of social exclusion, specifically: Care leavers, offenders, adults in contact with secondary mental health services, and adults with a severe to moderate learning disability. It aims to ensure that those adults most at risk of exclusion are offered the chance to get back on a path to a more successful life by increasing the proportion of individuals in settled accommodation, and in employment, education or training.

[65] 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society', CLG, February 2008

Housing together with appropriate housing related support makes a significant contribution to enabling older people to continue to live a healthy, independent life. Spending between £2,000 and £20,000 on adaptations that enable an older person to remain in their own home can save £6,000 per year in care costs.⁶⁶

The government has recognised the need to address the implications of an ageing society in the strategy document: Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods. The Lifetime Homes Standards are a series of sixteen standards intended to make homes more easily adaptable for lifetime use. The concept was initially developed in 1991 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. On 25 February 2008 the UK Government announced its intention to work towards all new homes being built to Lifetime Homes Standards by 2013.

Case Study

Private Sector Leasing Scheme for People With Learning Difficulties

The Norfolk Learning Difficulties Service (pooled fund managers) were awarded a sum of money (£150,000) to support people with learning difficulties in accessing private rented accommodation – grant awarded in 2005/06 from the Department of Health. The fund was to be used to install and maintain assistive technology to support the day-to-day activities of service users and reduce the use of costly care services. Supporting People awarded £70,000 to provide up to 6 hours of housing related support to individuals accessing the service (15 people).

Service users were supported by a housing partner (Saffron Housing Trust) to identify properties of their choice from the private rented sector with the housing provider acting as the managing agent. Leases were signed by the housing partner and assured shorthold tenancies awarded to each service user. The housing provider supported individuals to identify a support provider of their choice with SP and NLDS jointly funding the care and support package based on individual needs assessments.

Case Study

Aligning capital and revenue funding streams to support investment

Partners in the East of England, including SPERG and the HCA, have agreed a process for determining priorities for supported housing capital projects. This applies whether the capital is from the HCA or other sources (e.g. local authority) or whether revenue funding is Supporting People, social care or health. Any proposal – commissioned or speculative – is assessed using the prioritisation matrix. Using this tool the Commissioning Body identifies a list of regional priorities for capital funding and submits its bids to the HCA and other relevant funders.

The aim of the model is to streamline the capital allocations bidding process for local authorities and sub-regions within the East of England and to ensure that those schemes progressing to capital bidding are deliverable and meet identified regional priorities of the East of England's Supporting People clients.

The prioritisation matrix has been commended as an example of good practice by the Audit Commission and also by the former Housing Corporation's auditors in an internal review of the region's National Affordable Housing Programme

[66] Building Better Lives, Audit Commission (2009)

Case Study

Mere View

Mere View is a purpose-built extra care development, comprising of 32 one- and two-bedroom apartments in the village of Haughley near Stowmarket in Suffolk. The scheme is specifically for people aged 55 and over and all apartments are occupied on a shared ownership basis. The scheme was designed so that it fits well with its surroundings, with a design that is sympathetic to its very rural location, making it truly part of the village and sitting comfortably with the surrounding properties and traditional materials were used in its construction.



5.3 Promote equality

Priority

Monitor, better understand and respond to the needs of BME households

The BME population in the region is generally low but historically clustered in a few locations such as Luton, Bedford and Peterborough. In contrast, areas which were not ethnically diverse have seen great change over the past 5-10 years with the arrival of migrant workers from the EU.

BME groups disproportionately occupy homes that are ill-suited to their needs, and are more likely to experience overcrowding, particularly Bangladeshi, Black African and Pakistani groups. In terms of tenure, white British and non-Bangladeshi Asian groups are the most likely groups to be owner-occupiers. Black Africans have the lowest per capita rate of home ownership of all BME groups, and are the most likely to live in private rented accommodation. A disproportionately high number of BME tenants are found in the social rented sector.

BME households often experience difficulties in accessing housing services, for example due to language barriers and the lack of translation services and/or information in appropriate languages. This underlines the importance and value of effective data collection and monitoring systems in enabling providers to better understand and meet the needs of the communities they serve.

The East of England attracts high numbers of migrant workers, particularly from the EU Accession states. Research undertaken by EEDA⁶⁷ estimated that migrant workers contribute £360 million to the region's economy annually. Most workers are unskilled and employed in sectors with the highest levels of vacancies⁶⁸, notably agricultural and hospitality⁶⁹. Some 76% of migrant workers in Greater Norwich are living in the private rented sector⁷⁰. Research shows that migrant workers are more likely to live in poor

[67] 'Migrant Workers in the East of England', McKay & Winkleman Glead for EEDA, 2005

[68] 'Migrant Worker Availability in the East of England: An Economic Risk Assessment', ippr, March 2009

[69] 'Migrant Workers and Vulnerable Employment: A Review of Existing Data', Jayaweera & Anderson, Compass Centre on Migration, Policy and Society

[70] Cited in Workers on the Move, Keystone Trust, 2008

quality, shared housing than the population as a whole⁷¹. Overcrowding is common, with accommodation designed for single people occupied by families.⁷²

The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) Strategic Migration Partnership supports regional migrant worker networks, agencies and projects and also works with asylum seekers and refugees. Current housing issues in the region include houses in multiple occupation, tied housing, tenant-landlord relationships and homelessness. Several housing projects financed by the Migration Impacts Fund⁷³ are currently under way in the region.

Case study

Capturing the Diversity of the Region's Population

Access to reliable data when assessing the needs of emerging communities has been a common problem for many housing providers, most of whom have computer systems designed to capture data in line with the 2001 Census categories. However, the "White Other" category is much too broad to capture the diversity of recent migrant worker applicants. In response the Housing Equality & Diversity Group has developed a set of "regional" categories of information in respect of ethnicity and faith to complement the Census categories and help to improve the quality and consistency of data collection and monitoring systems. Local authorities and sub-regions developing or revising Choice Based Lettings (CBL) schemes have been encouraged to adopt the additional categories which will enable the authorities to better understand who is applying for housing and who is being housed.

[71] Greater Norwich Housing Strategy 2008 - 2011

[72] 'Workers on the Move', Wiles et al for EEDA, no date <http://www.keystonetrust.org.uk/documents/21.pdf>

[73] The Migration Impacts Fund was announced in Spring 2009. Funding has been made available to local services across the country, including police, schools and hospitals. The successful projects were announced in July 2009 – see link: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/racecohesionfaith/asylumandimmigration/migrationimpactfund/>

Case study

The National Reconnection Project (NRP) helps A10 migrants return home or access the labour market

In response to increasing numbers of rough sleepers from A10 countries, Peterborough City Council established a 'peripatetic' assertive outreach and relocation team. Working with other local authorities, it aimed to:

- map the needs within their community
- work with partners to develop effective multi-agency responses
- engage with, and develop action plans for individual rough sleepers and those in 'encampments'
- provide advice, assistance and support in enabling them to access employment, specialist treatment, etc.
- where employment, accommodation, etc. has not been sourced, to work proactively to ensure that individuals are relocated to their home countries where they are more likely to access appropriate services
- provide clear feedback to local authorities and communities about the impact of interventions.

By the end of October 2009, 13 people had been reconnected with their home country. A further 25 were assisted in applying for ID documents - which allows them to access employment and register with Worker Registration Scheme. The project now covers Boston as well as Peterborough and has been extended until the end of March 2010 to reflect the positive outcomes being achieved and ongoing needs

5.4 Meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers

Priority

Make suitable and adequate provision for Gypsies and Travellers

Gypsies and Travellers have specific housing and accommodation needs, but there is a shortage in the supply of authorised sites. Health and life expectancy within the community is significantly worse than the settled population. The CLG count of Gypsy and Traveller caravans undertaken in July 2009 showed the East of England to have 4,025 caravans. It means that the region has the largest number of caravans of any region in England, with particular concentrations in Cambridgeshire and Essex. Around a quarter of these caravans were found on unauthorised sites, although half of these were on 'tolerated' sites.

Policies for the East of England were adopted in July 2009 and replace Policy H3 – Provision for Gypsies and Travellers – and paragraph 5.11 and 5.12 in the East of England Plan published in May 2008. The policies require local authorities to make provision for residential and transit pitches for Gypsy and Traveller caravans and plots for Travelling Showpeople in their local plans. Within that context, there will be a mix of provision including sites brought forward by Gypsies and Travellers and providers such as housing associations and local authorities. Strong community leadership is required to meet the needs with local authorities and providers working together in a mutually supportive way.

6 Housing, Economy and Jobs

6.1 Objectives and issues

Offering an attractive choice of housing, in sustainable places, is a key factor in attracting investment, a well-skilled labour force and businesses in an increasingly competitive international economy. In addition, as the knowledge economy grows there will be increasing competition for skills. Business location decisions will take more account of whether an area has the right environment (including housing) to attract skilled workers.⁷⁴

While there is an external perception that the East of England is performing very strongly, this is put at risk if the region is not able to meet housing demand. There are also spatial disparities including issues of under-performance and regeneration challenges. Housing can help address this by:

- supporting a better balance between housing and employment opportunities;
- encouraging a more balanced workforce in specific places;
- addressing affordability to provide better labour mobility;
- tackling the limitations of former industrial towns and supporting the creation of effective, competitive and affordable places.

The longer term objective is to ensure the region's existing and planned housing stock supports strong, self reliant and sustainable economies and balanced communities.

Key facts

The East of England Plan sets a target of 452,000 jobs and 508,000 net new homes to be built between 2001 and 2021. The way in which new housing and related employment is developed will impact on the economic success and sustainability of the East of England.

Each additional new home provides on average 1.5 full time equivalent jobs in the construction industry in the region.

In addition, across the East of England, there:

- are significant variations in house prices which influence labour mobility;
- are strong variations in projected employment and economic growth over both the short and long term⁷⁵; and
- could be increases in commuting associated with mismatches in housing delivery and employment growth.

6.2 Support economic performance, jobs and regeneration

Priority

Provide housing of the right type in the right place to support economic performance and regeneration

[74] See RES Spatial Economy evidence base and DTZ (2006) Housing, Economic Development and Productivity Literature Review
 [75] Oxford Economics and Arup (2008) East of England; Joint Modelling for the RES and RSS. EEDA and EERA

The quality and range of housing available in an area is an important consideration in attracting skilled labour. As the knowledge economy grows there will be increasing competition for skills and business location decisions will take account of whether an area has the quality environment (including housing) to attract skilled workers. While it is clear that high quality housing alone may not be sufficient to attract investment and new industries, a lack of high quality housing may preclude it.

In relation to affordability, surveys⁷⁶ suggest that companies face staff retention problems, particularly for lower paid workers in higher cost areas, especially in retail, transport and financial services. There is also a greater tendency by firms to concentrate on higher level functions and decentralise lower level ones to lower cost locations. Public sector recruitment difficulties are widely seen as related to the high cost of housing and consequent problems with affordability in the region: this influences the quality of services, including health services and education.

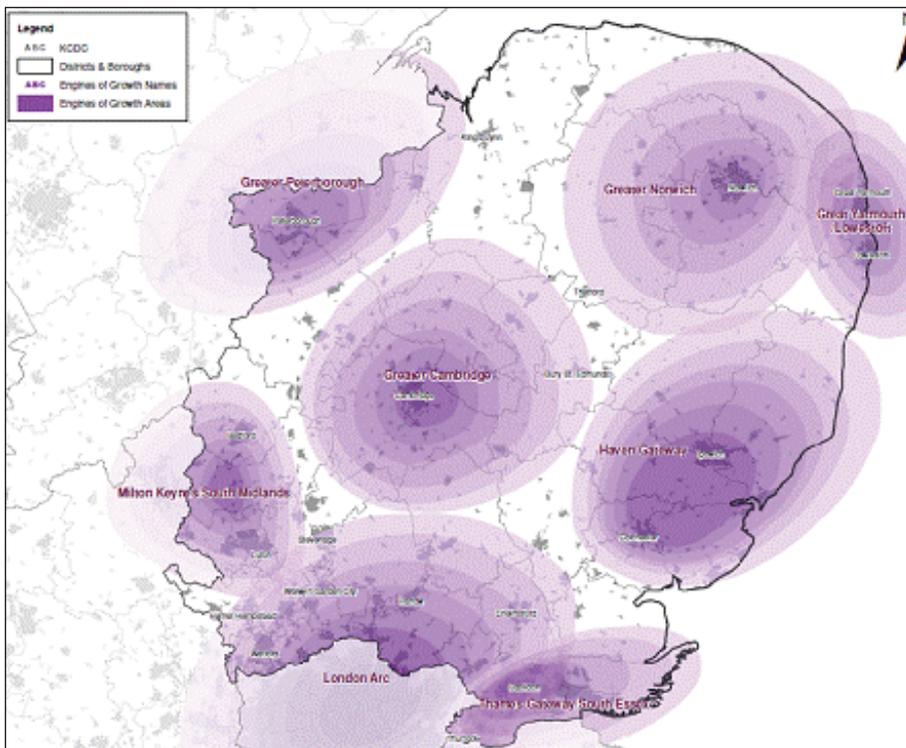


Figure 6.1: East of England 'Engines of Growth'
 Source: East of England Regional Economic Strategy

The polycentric nature of the East of England economy results in particular diversity in terms of house prices and incomes, potentially restricting intra regional labour mobility. The region's economy is based around a number of key engines of growth or regeneration (see Figure 6.1). These are typically powered independently by relationships with the London economy, or by the development of distinct drivers in the larger sub regional centres or ports. These are also the main generators of growth, but prospects and growth rates differ, a factor which also results in differences in affordability and incomes and high house prices in locations with access to stronger economies and income levels such as Cambridge and the London Arc. In some areas such as Norwich there is a strongly defined catchment, whereas in others, such as the London Arc, it is much more complex with in- and out- commuting. Differing economic performance means that there are significant disparities in housing cost, range and quality across the region. However, in an overall context of long term growth, all parts of the region have potential to make a contribution to the economy.

[76] SEEDA (2003) The Economic Impacts of Housing Affordability, Roger Tym and Partners

Housing affects labour mobility through the influence of tenure and prices. The current downturn in property prices makes it difficult to sell, discouraging people from moving. There is low mobility among tenants in the social rented sector. Temporary relocation can also be discouraged by the sometimes low quality of private rented housing. Price differentials also create a labour mobility trap because homeowners from comparatively low priced areas cannot afford to move to higher priced areas.⁷⁷ Homeowners in areas with high house prices are reluctant to move out because they may be unable to move back and people are reluctant to move into areas with falling prices, because investment in such property becomes unwise. Given these rigidities, the dominant response is to trade off affordability with access, resulting in increasingly longer commuting distances. Commuting has both environmental and social implications: environmental effects typically arise from commuting primarily by car; social impacts arise because of the disconnection between workplace and home life and the resulting erosion of a sense of belonging, as well as the time and cost of travel impacting on quality of life.

Longer-distance commuting is not entirely due to a lack of co-location of housing with employment opportunities. There are a growing number of dual “career couples” who seek locations which give partners maximum locational choice of jobs, with one or both partners being prepared to commute long distances as a result. It is suggested that individuals are willing to commute longer distances for managerial and professional positions, particularly within an advanced knowledge economy.

Facilitating greater labour mobility is not necessarily the key to addressing spatial imbalances in performance. There is a risk that increased mobility could increase social polarisation by reinforcing forces of growth and decline. If people move from declining to booming areas, the declining areas lose valuable resources (especially skilled labour) making it more difficult to attract labour in the future and stimulating a vicious circle of decline and worsening affordability in booming areas. Many of the problems of deprived areas can be traced back to key employers leaving an area and the subsequent out-migration of people and resources. The provision of attractive and affordable housing can be used to disperse development pressures, particularly if transport impacts can be managed sustainably.

6.3 Supporting local and sub regional economies

Addressing regeneration and economic disparities through an approach to future housing provision that ensures that all parts of the region have a high quality and balanced residential offer is essential to support long term growth. All areas need to offer a diversity of housing in terms of size, type, services and tenure. The overall delivery of new homes, should be managed in relation to a clear vision of the future community and economy, within the broader priority of creating sustainable and successful places set out in Chapter 2. Some of the region’s towns (including some of the new towns) developed around particular industries and sectors and with limited housing and tenure choice. As their economies have restructured they have found it harder to remain competitive and attract and retain workers in growth sectors because of a limited housing choice.

[77] See DTZ as above

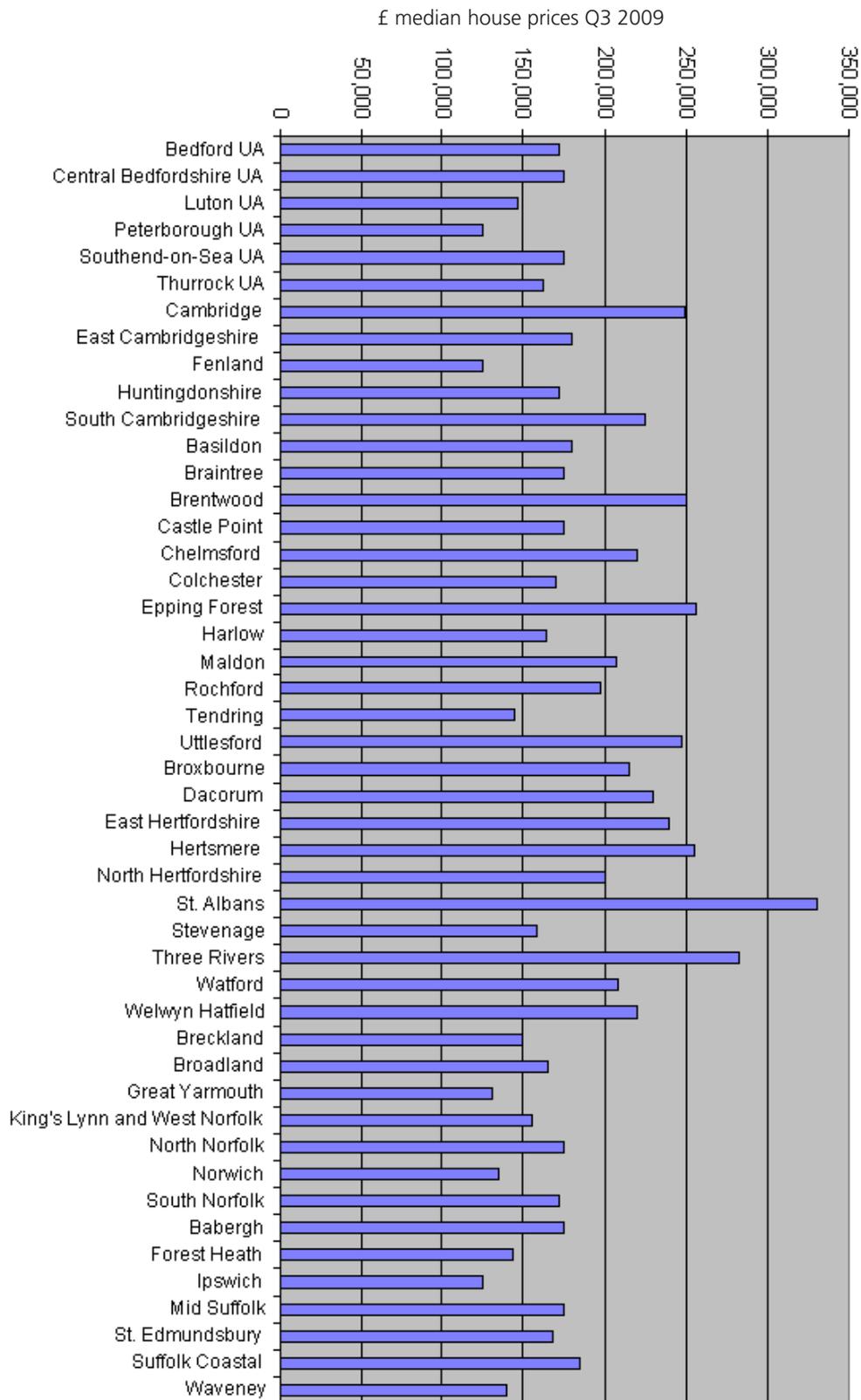


Figure 6.2: Median house prices, by district, quarter 3 2009
 Source: CLG

Case Study

Aspirational Housing Surveys in Stevenage

The aim of the study was to address existing perceived housing market imbalances, reduce in-commuting and encourage high skilled earners to live locally and to identify the market for aspirational homes. The current stock is dominated by three bedroom terraces with a limited supply of smaller and larger homes. A survey was sent to those earning £40,000 in both the town and wider area. The study found that 30% of respondents thought that more large executive properties in the town comprising four or more bedrooms and typically two or more bathrooms were required together with entry level housing to attract young professionals into the town. Other concerns were with the town's image, especially the town centre and education provision.

Source: Stevenage Borough Council

Case Study

Colne Housing Apprentice Scheme

In 2008 Colne Housing Society, in collaboration with the Haven Gateway Partnership, launched and funded an apprenticeship scheme aimed at unemployed 18-25 year olds across North Essex. The scheme was developed for those wishing to work within the construction industry, providing the opportunity for some of Colne's younger residents to gain a qualification in construction.

The Society was inundated with applications, out of which 10 apprentices were finally chosen. Over a 12 month period, the apprentices participated in both classroom based learning and practical on-site activities, developing a range of skills including bricklaying, paving, tiling and guttering.

By the end of the programme, five apprentices successfully gained their Construction Skills Certification Scheme card and passed the industry standard health and safety test. Furthermore each student was accepted onto a three week work placement with local construction firms Trevor Benton, Mersea Homes, R.G.Carter and Rose Builders.

As part of the scheme, the apprentices continued to receive any benefits that they were eligible for, and were paid travel and subsistence costs by the Society.

7 Final Comments

This new Statement covers the period 2010 to 2014 and is designed to inform policy making across the region.

Despite the housing market downturn, the problem of affordability remains acute and the need for new housing remains very high relative to current supply. In this context there is a need for innovation in forms of delivery including better use of existing stock, the development and encouragement of new delivery models and flexibility to respond to new initiatives and opportunities as they emerge.

The developing institutional and broader policy context means that whilst the Statement can identify major priorities and inform and influence future actions, it is inappropriate at this stage for the Statement to set out proposals for implementation or recommendations for investment.

Overall in combination, the Priorities of the Statement suggest a number of key messages for the future:

- Increased housing supply (including affordable) is critical to meet the housing needs of a diverse population and to support the economy.
- Providing appropriate housing related support to enable people to live independently in suitable accommodation and prevent homelessness will have significant benefits both in terms of individual outcomes and saving public expenditure elsewhere.
- The debate about housing numbers and housing needs should move on beyond gross numbers and new development locations, to a more complete understanding of the economic futures and role of places, which includes the contribution of existing neighbourhoods and how future housing growth may help these adapt and change. This means looking at need and opportunities in parallel, engaging with local communities and developing strong local, bottom-up, place-based visions.
- There needs to be emphasis on improving and making better use of the existing stock, improving overall choice and supply to meet changing needs and tackling issues such as climate change.
- Many places in East of England, including rural areas, offer a good quality of life for residents, but could benefit economically from additional housing supply and a wider diversity of tenures to support the local economy and services.
- It is important that future strategies including a Single Regional Strategy make the links between thematic areas and provide a sophisticated consideration of the role of housing in the context of places, the links between housing, economic competitiveness, employment and access to jobs, health and social wellbeing and the potential role of targeted housing delivery in dispersing development pressures and reducing economic disparities.

Glossary

The definitions used relate to the use of the term in this Statement.

Breeam

The Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) is a widely recognised method of assessing the environmental quality of building design. The assessment process takes the form of an external audit carried out by a licensed BREEAM Assessor, during which credits are awarded relating to a range of environmental issues at global, local and indoor impact levels. The credits achieved are translated into a single overall BREEAM rating (Pass, Good, Very Good, Excellent and Outstanding) and a BREEAM certificate is then issued direct from the Building Research Establishment (BRE).

Building Regulations

Building regulations exist principally to ensure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of people in and around buildings, and the water and energy efficiency of buildings. The regulations apply to most new buildings and many alterations of existing buildings in England and Wales, whether domestic, commercial or industrial. These regulations are enforced through Building Control. This function is generally carried out by a Building Control Body (BCB), either the local authority building control service or a private sector Approved Inspector.

Choice-based lettings

Choice-Based Lettings (CBL) replaces the traditional way of allocating housing under which housing officers seek to match applicants who have priority on the waiting list to available vacancies. CBL allows applicants for social housing (and existing tenants seeking a move) to apply for available vacancies which are advertised widely (e.g. in the local newspaper or on a website). Applicants can see the full range of available properties and can bid (i.e. apply) for any home to which they are matched (e.g. a single person would not be eligible for a three-bedroom house). The successful bidder is the one with the highest priority under the scheme. Authorities provide feedback that helps applicants to assess their chances of success in subsequent applications.

Decent Homes Programme

The Decent Homes Programme aims to improve the condition of homes for social tenants and vulnerable households in private sector accommodation in England. The Department for Communities & Local Government (CLG) set a target for all social housing in England to be decent by December 2010. A decent home meets the following four criteria: it meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing; it is in a reasonable state of repair; it has reasonably modern facilities and services; and it provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

EU Accession States

Eight Central and Eastern European countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia), plus the Mediterranean islands of Malta and Cyprus, joined the EU on 1

May 2004. Following this Romania and Bulgaria, who were deemed unready by the Commission to join in 2004, acceded on 1 January 2007.

Fuel Poverty

Fuel poverty is said to occur when in order to heat its home to an adequate standard of warmth a household needs to spend more than 10% of its income on total fuel use. Fuel Poverty is caused by a convergence of low income, high fuel prices (including the use of relatively expensive fuel sources), poor energy efficiency of a home (e.g. through low levels of insulation and old or inefficient heating systems), and under-occupancy.

Growth Areas

The Growth Areas provide a focus for large scale sustainable growth. Nationally they include Ashford, Milton Keynes-South Midlands, and London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough in the East of England. The areas were initially identified as part of the development of Regional Planning Guidance and confirmed through the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan, published in 2003. This established the four Growth Areas with funding support. The Plan suggested that the four Growth Areas would have the potential to deliver an additional 200,000 homes above existing planned numbers by 2016, with housing targets set through the regional planning process.

Growth Points

These were designated as part of Government policy to increase housing supply. A key element was to invite expressions of interest from local partners to put forward proposals for sustainable growth, which could form the basis of a long term partnership with Government. The designated growth points include Greater Norwich, Haven Gateway and Thetford.

Applications were invited from authorities proposing an average rate of new housebuilding at least 20 per cent higher than set in plans in October 2003, and delivering at least 500 new houses per year. This initiative brought a positive response, and in October 2006 the Government announced twenty-nine locations to be supported as Growth Points, and to share in an initial £40m fund for infrastructure projects and essential studies to support sustainable growth. Following the first round of Growth Points, a second round of the initiative was announced in the Housing Green Paper on 23 July 2007. Twenty-one second round Growth Points were announced on 16 July 2008 (this included one location announced in May 2008 at the same time as the East of England RSS was formally adopted).

A Growth Point is not a statutory designation. Regional Spatial Strategies set out strategic policies and proposals that shape the distribution of regionally or sub-regionally significant activities and development including, amongst other things, the scale and distribution of new housing. Local Development Frameworks set the local policy context and allocate specific sites for development. Growth Point proposals will be subject to robust testing and public consultation through these regional and local planning processes.

From 1st December 2008, implementation of the Growth Points programme has been the responsibility of the Homes and Communities Agency.

Housing Associations

Housing associations are government-funded not-for-profit organisations that provide affordable housing. They include housing associations, trusts and cooperatives. They work with local authorities to provide homes for people meeting the affordable homes criteria. As well as developing land and building homes, housing associations undertake a landlord function by maintaining properties and collecting rent.

Inspire East

Inspire East is the regional centre of excellence for sustainable communities in the East of England. Its aim is to deliver the knowledge, skills and advice that will inspire partners to use and apply best practice.

Integrated Development Programmes (IDPs)

Integrated Development Programmes were piloted by EEDA to offer an opportunity and mechanism for all partners in a functional urban area to compare their investment plans and form a single document designed to deliver the totality of growth in a joined up and sensible way. They aim to enable relevant infrastructure to be built at the right time, and increase ability to leverage private sector investment. IDPs are particularly designed to respond to the fact that people no longer live their lives within neat administrative boundaries. They might live within one local authority area, work in another and travel through a third to get to the shops. They enable the infrastructure to support growth needs to be planned at a scale that more accurately reflects functioning economic markets and the real geographic reach of people's daily lives. The HCA and EEDA have agreed to develop a statement of understanding regarding the relationship between IDPs and the Single Conversation.

Local Area Agreement

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government and a local area (the local authority and Local Strategic Partnership) and other key partners at the local level. LAAs simplify some central funding, help join up public services more effectively and allow greater flexibility for local solutions to local circumstances. Through these means, LAAs aim to help to devolve decision making and reduce bureaucracy.

Migration Impacts Fund

Announced on 19 March, 2009, the £70m fund is financed by a levy on migrants and aims to be used to tackle illegal working practices and reduce local pressure on public services. The funding works alongside the Government's points based migration system. The money is potentially available to local services across the country, including police, schools and hospitals. The first successful projects were announced on 9 July 2009

New Towns

A new town is a city, town or community that has been carefully planned from its inception. Stevenage was the first designated new town following the 1946 New Towns Act.

Radburn Layout

A planned urban layout, developed by Clarence Stein, applied in Radburn, New Jersey, USA, in 1928, which separates pedestrians from vehicles by arranging that blocks of housing, shops, offices, schools etc. enclose a green or pedestrian space. Each block has its peripheral ring-roads, off which come service cul de sacs. The central green or pedestrian space has pedestrian access only, by underground passages or surface walks. The approach was subsequently adopted in the UK post war New Towns.

In Britain, however, some aspects were neglected, most notably the ownership and community structures and the focus on management and maintenance of space. The legacy tends to be problems of crime, anti-social behaviour and vandalism, green space with no amenity value, and a lack of well-located parking. In 2002, a government report into the shortcomings of Radburn layouts set out the main issues:

- confusion of public and private space, profusion of dead-ends and disconnectedness, and a lack of legibility;
- alleyways with no natural surveillance, large amounts of anonymous public space, and an obligation for communities to pay a great deal for the upkeep of such space;
- difficulties of effective management and maintenance due to design and layout;
- profusion of unadopted routes, meaning that estates fail to benefit from mainstream street cleansing and highways maintenance; and
- the tendency to concentrate predominantly disadvantaged people (such as poorer social tenants, the elderly and single parent households) in such housing.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

The RSS incorporates a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) and provides a broad development strategy for the region for a fifteen to twenty year period. The RSS also informs the preparation of Local Development Documents (LDDs), Local Transport Plans (LTPs) and regional and sub-regional strategies and programmes that have a bearing on land use activities. The current RSS in the East is the East of England Plan 2008.

Following the commencement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) became RSS in each region outside of London and now forms part of the statutory Development Plan.

Single Conversation

The Single Conversation is a Homes and Community Agency (HCA) facilitated business process – it is the way in which it agrees and secures delivery at the local level in support of the HCA's national objectives. By working in an open and transparent way with local authorities and others the aim is to become local government's best delivery partner, able to secure more and reach better outcomes for each place. The use of the term 'Single' Conversation refers to its comprehensive coverage including the full range of housing, infrastructure, regeneration and community activities. It draws on the priorities for a local area as set out in key local plans and is an ongoing, evolving and dynamic process. It will always be a negotiation and have at its core, shared visions and objectives for places.

Supporting People Programme

Supporting People is the government programme for funding, planning and monitoring housing related support services to help vulnerable people live as independently as possible in the community. This could be in their own homes or in hostels, sheltered housing or other specialised supported housing.

The 2005-2009 Supporting People Audit Commission report published in 2009 highlighted the value of the programme, stating that housing related support services deliver high quality services that represent value for money and that service users, many of whom are very vulnerable, have also played a key role in the design and delivery of the programme.

Sustainable communities

Communities in which people want to live and which are: economically prosperous; have decent homes at a price people can afford; safeguard the countryside; respect and safeguard the environment; enjoy a well-designed, accessible and pleasant living and working environment; and, are effectively and fairly governed with a strong sense of community.

Sustainable Community Strategy

All local authorities have a duty to work with partner organisations to produce a Sustainable Community Strategy. The strategy shows how local organisations will work together to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the people in their area.

Sustainable Urban Drainage

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) are designed to reduce the potential impact of new and existing developments with respect to surface water drainage discharges. The idea behind SUDS is to try replicate natural systems that use cost effective solutions with low environmental impact to drain away dirty and surface water run-off through collection, storage, and cleaning before allowing it to be released slowly back into the environment, such as into water courses. This is to counter the effects of conventional drainage systems that often allow for flooding, pollution of the environment - with the resultant harm to wildlife - and contamination of groundwater sources used to provide drinking water.

Total Place

An initiative that looks at how a 'whole area' approach to public services can lead to better services at less cost. It seeks to identify and avoid overlap and duplication between organisations – delivering a step change in both service improvement and efficiency at the local level, as well as across Whitehall.

Appendix

A1 Achievements of the East of England Housing Strategy 2005 - 2010

A1.1 Introduction

The current Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) was published in summer 2005. Its main purpose is to set out the strategic context and the housing priorities for the region, as well as provide recommendations for housing investment split between existing stock and new, affordable housing.

It has three main themes which reflect housing's central role in promoting sustainable communities: more sustainable housing provision, high quality homes and environments; and creating inclusive communities. Priorities were identified to support each of the themes and were revised and refreshed in 2009 for the Strategy's final year.

EERA leads implementation of the RHS but is strongly supported by a number of Task Groups.

A1.2 What has it achieved?

The major achievement of the RHS has been as an influencing document, most significantly in enabling the region to make a strong, evidenced case to Government for increased resources to meet the region's housing and regeneration needs. The vision and shared Statement of regional priorities has helped to secure over £1.2bn in funding for the region since 2006. It provided the strategic policy framework for the Regional Funding Advice both in 2006 and 2009 as well as the 2006-08 and 2008-11 Regional Housing Investment Plans. It has also guided the thematic and spatial distribution of the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP), and provided a framework for housing and investment strategies at a sub-regional and local level.

A1.2.1 Resources and delivery

As illustrated in the Table below, the RHS has helped the region to secure over £1.2bn in funding since 2006, 88% of which has been allocated to the delivery of new affordable housing and the provision of accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers.

	2006-08 £m	2008-11 £m
NAHP	348	711.70
Public Sector Decent Homes	40	38.21
Private Sector Renewal	15	49
Gypsy & Traveller Site Grant	18	27
Special Projects	10	N/A
TOTAL	431	826

A1.2.2 New affordable housing

The region has achieved a significant step change in delivering affordable housing through the NAHP. Completions rose from 7,186 in 2004-06 to 10,742 in 2006-08.

The Regional Housing Pot allocation for the NAHP (£711m) during 2008-11 is linked to minimum annual completion targets which have been particularly challenging for the region during the current market downturn.

Delivery trajectory:

Year 1	6,800
Year 2	7,900
Year 3	9,000
Total	23,700

The Tenure Split is 60:40 including Open Market HomeBuy

The Government has brought forward a range of support measures to assist continued delivery of the NAHP, including the Housing Pledge announced in June 2009. At the end of December 2009, the cumulative 08-11 programme was £675.65m to deliver 9,731 new rented homes and 7,012 new low cost home-ownership homes including 1,937 Open market HomeBuy and 1,868 HomeBuy Direct.

The Housing Investment Plan 2008-11 proposed that a proportion of the National Affordable Housing Programme BME investment theme is allocated to housing sub-regions demonstrating a culturally sensitive approach to new housing provision. The proposal to allocate funds in this way was a direct response to sub-regions indicating the BME housing needs are being met through mainstream provision.

A1.2.3 Existing stock

Local authorities have received a share of over £39m since 2006 to tackle problems in the private sector, particularly poor stock condition and non-decency. In 2009 EERA launched a new programme aimed at achieving a balance between supporting continuity whilst meeting Government expectations of greater co-ordination and alignment of funding, improved partnership working and a move away from a grant to a loan-based culture. The programme also aimed to respond to the changing policy context, for example in respect of climate change and the environment. Core to the new programme are sixteen partnership based projects which the Regional Housing Board recommended to the Minister for funding support. The majority of the projects are cross-boundary and comprise a broad thematic and geographical spread, and will deliver a range of measures and interventions which include: low and zero carbon technologies, retro-fitting solutions such as cavity and solid wall insulation, together with a range of initiatives to bring empty homes back into use.

The RHS emphasises the importance of maximising the use of the existing stock. The 2006-08 investment programme included £10m to support special projects demonstrating innovation in meeting housing need, three of which were focused on bringing empty homes back into use. The Empty Homes Working Group, successfully raised the profile of empty homes at a strategic level, their work including an innovative piece of research, two conferences and the launch of the Empty Homes Charter in 2007.

The majority of stock-holding authorities in the region are on target to make their stock decent by 2010 except those authorities delivering through an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) who have until 2013-14 to meet the target.

A1.3 Partnership working

The RHS has fostered strong partnership working which has been the cornerstone of the region's achievements over the past five years. The housing sub-regions have provided the foundation for partnership working, helping to develop the evidence base and most importantly of all, in achieving the step-change in delivery of affordable housing completions.

The Regional Housing Advisory Group (RHAG) is the officer technical advisory group to the Housing & Sustainable Communities (HSCP) which performs the functions of the Regional Housing Board in the region. One of its key strengths is its membership which comprises representatives from regional agencies (GO-East, HCA, EEDA and EERA), the third sector and the nine housing sub-regions – effectively providing a voice for each local authority in the region.

This broad membership has helped to secure buy-in from the housing sub-regions, particularly valuable in developing and delivering the strategic priorities set out in the Regional Housing Strategy 2005-10 and the Regional Housing Investment Plan 2008-11. It has advised on policy development (RSS policy H2, the East of England Implementation Plan) and contributed to developing the evidence base, including the Affordable Housing Studies (2003, 2004, 2008, and 2009). It has also played an important role in monitoring the delivery of the RHS and investment outputs. Overall, the group has made a significant contribution towards helping to raise the profile of housing in the region and secure a substantial increase in housing capital investment in both CSR 2006-08 and 2008-11

Sitting beneath RHAG are a number of Task Groups, which have evolved either from existing fora or were established specifically to take forward actions in the RHS. Task Groups have commissioned research on behalf of the region and played a particularly strong role in promoting learning and good practice (see below).

A1.4 Shared evidence base

The evidence base underpinning the 2005 RHS was one of its major strengths, primarily because it was rooted in the advice of the housing sub-regions. Since its publication, a number of regional studies have commissioned led by both regional agencies and the Task Groups, including:

- Need for Housing-Related Support Services in the East of England: a review of the evidence and assessment methods (current, 2010)
- Assessment of future regional requirement for affordable housing in the East of England (2009)⁷⁸
- Beyond Affordable Housing Study Stage II (2008)⁷⁹
- Housing Needs of BME Communities in the East of England (2006)⁸⁰

More recently, EERA has launched a quarterly survey of local authorities to monitor the impact of the economic downturn. The data enables the region to monitor trends and spot new development as well as provide 'soft intelligence' to complement published data and promote innovative approaches to overcoming problems. The information is used to inform national and regional policy development and decision-making in response to the economic downturn.

A1.5 Learning and good practice

The strong partnership working which the RHS has helped to cement, has produced a wealth of learning and good practice, with the sub-regions and Task Groups again taking the lead in many of the projects.

For example, the London Commuter Belt (LCB) sub-region led the Pipeline Project which looked at barriers to development. This led to development of the s106 Good Practice Guide to delivering affordable housing, which was commissioned in partnership with Inspire East. The Guide contains good practice advice on assessing the financial viability of schemes, negotiating, partnership working and monitoring (s106 Good Practice Guide)

In related work, the Cambridge sub-region has developed guidance on standard clauses in s.106 agreements. The project is being supported by Improvement East and ARK consultancy.

The East of England Rural Forum (EERF) Housing Sub-Group is investigating sustainable models of funding Rural Housing Enabler Services as well as models using renewable energy sources which could enable tenants to benefit from lower running costs where their home is not on mains gas.

Inspire East (the regional Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Communities) plays a lead role in helping to improve the skills, knowledge and expertise of everyone involved in creating sustainable communities. It has championed the promotion and adoption of best practice across the housing quality agenda, working with CABE, English Heritage, Shape East and the Essex Design Initiative. In partnership with others, it has published a range of good practice guides⁸¹.

[78] <http://www.eera.gov.uk/publications-and-resources/studies/topic-based-studies/housing-studies/assessment-of-future-regional-requirement-for-affordable-housing/>

[79] <http://www.eera.gov.uk/publications-and-resources/studies/topic-based-studies/housing-studies/beyond-affordable-housing-study-stage-2/>

[80] <http://www.eera.gov.uk/publications-and-resources/studies/topic-based-studies/housing-studies/housing-needs-of-bme-communities-in-the-east-of-england/>

[81] Delivery of Affordable Housing through Section 106 Agreements with the London Commuter Belt Housing Sub Region; Masterplanning in the East of England based on four masterplans part-funded by EEDA; Lessons from Cambourne with Cambridge Architectural Research; Guide to developing inclusive communities with Papworth Trust, Gallagher Estates, Cambridgeshire Horizons, English Partnerships and EEDA; Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth with Cambridgeshire Horizons, Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge Housing Society and Urbed

In 2008, the Housing Equality & Diversity Group (HEDG) agreed 'regional' categories of information in respect of ethnicity and faith to complement the 2001 Census categories. The aim was to reflect the region's emerging communities, in particular to broaden the 'White Other' Census category. HEDG encourages existing and developing CBL schemes to include the 'regional' categories.

The Supporting People East Region Group (SPERG) published its own strategy, Supporting People East of England Strategy 2008-11 in 2008. The group was also involved in a pilot with the former Housing Corporation to test whether a strategic process for synchronising capital and revenue funding streams achieves better outcomes for vulnerable people. It led to development of a 'prioritisation matrix' for the evaluation of projects which, because of the greater degree of certainty of revenue funding, has encouraged more schemes to come forward. The approach has been widely recognised as a model of good practice at a national level. More recently, SPERG and the HCA have reviewed the matrix to ensure its continued use under Continuous/Regular Market Engagement. In partnership with EERA and Dept Health, SPERG is also currently leading a project to review and strengthen alignment of the region's JSNAs and SHMAs in respect of housing-related support needs.

