8. HOUSING

Introduction

8.1

Government forecasts indicate a projected growth in households in England of 3.8 million between 1996 and 2021. Some key factors in this growth are:

• people not only live longer but also have better health and financial security and are therefore able to live longer in their own homes;

• people generally want a home of their own and remain single for longer; and

• family break-up, which, if present trends continue, will result in less than 20 per cent of all households nationally being married couples with dependent children by 2016.

8.2

In Norfolk, the need for new housing will result in part from population growth and in part from this increase in households. The key considerations for the Structure Plan are predicting the scale of housing need and determining its distribution in the County in the context of the County Strategy which seeks to reduce the need to travel.

8.3 Policy H.1

Provision will be made for about 61,000 new dwellings in the period 1993 to 2011. The provision for each District is as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>PLAN PROVISION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breckland</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadland</td>
<td>9,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Yarmouth</td>
<td>4,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King’s Lynn &amp; West Norfolk</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Norfolk</td>
<td>7,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwich</td>
<td>7,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Norfolk</td>
<td>10,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Norwich Policy Area)</td>
<td>(21,500*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>61,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Housing provision for the Norwich Policy Area parts of Broadland and South Norfolk District Council areas and for Norwich City Council is included in the District figures.
8.4

The County and District housing provision figures are based on an assessment of housing need. This is derived in part from:

- a forecast growth in the County’s population from 765,100 in 1993 to 845,900 in 2011; and

- a fall in the average household size from 2.36 to 2.18 people over the same period.

8.5

The combination of these factors leads to a County housing provision of some 61,000 between mid-1993 and mid-2011 (18 years). There is currently a commitment of about 44,000 dwellings in terms of homes built since the base year of the Plan, planning permissions and allocations in Local Plans.

8.6

Provision for Districts reflects individual population forecasts based on the development strategy set out below. These figures will be the basis for District Councils to review and roll forward their Local Plans. It is important that they are followed closely in order to create greater certainty in the planning process and to avoid problems associated with housing land over-supply, including reduced scope for future Structure Plan reviews to influence the location and scale of development (due to a higher proportion of development already being committed) and inadequate provision of services.

8.7

In reviewing their Local Plans, District Councils will need to ensure that all current housing allocations without planning permission are reassessed in the light of the new development strategy. In addition to making appropriate allocations for housing, District Councils will also have to make allowances for unidentified sites to come forward. Such allowances should be realistic and should not rely on past rates of unidentified site development since it is important that as many sites as possible are positively identified in Local Plans. It is also possible that redevelopment opportunities will diminish and that the greater certainty provided by Local Plans will result in significantly fewer unidentified sites becoming available during the Structure Plan period.

8.8

Policy H.2

Higher housing densities should be encouraged consistent with:

(i) a high quality of design;

(ii) the form and character of the settlement; and

(iii) adequate open space provision.

8.9

PPG13 encourages the setting of standards which maintain and, where appropriate, increase densities. Higher densities in appropriate locations mean that larger numbers of people may live closer to local facilities. They also improve the viability of public transport services as more people are within walking distance of routes. It is, therefore, particularly important that higher housing densities should be achieved near public transport routes. Increased densities overall lead to a more efficient use of land, reduce the demand for greenfield sites and are more resource and energy efficient. However, it is important that densities should not be increased at the expense of environmental considerations.
8.10 Policy H.3

Major housing provision will be made at selected locations in the Norwich Policy Area, and at the towns of King’s Lynn, Great Yarmouth, Thetford and Dereham. New housing provision will be predominantly at these locations.

8.11

PPG13 indicates that Structure Plan housing policies should allocate the maximum amount of housing to existing larger urban areas (market towns and above) where they are or can easily be accessible to facilities and to a range of transport provision. The Norwich Policy Area and the towns of King’s Lynn, Great Yarmouth, Thetford and Dereham are the most appropriate locations for major housing provision in this context. They have or are capable of offering the best employment opportunities, public transport services and facilities generally to service the needs of the population. Promoting sustainable development involves balancing jobs and homes and selecting locations for housing which reduce the need to travel. If the long term distribution of land uses is to be changed to reduce reliance on the private car, then in the context of whole settlement strategies, a significant proportion of the new housing provision must be in these locations. In addition, larger allocations will facilitate the provision of services and infrastructure by the developer.

8.12 Policy H.4

Housing provision will be made at Diss, Downham Market, Fakenham and North Walsham which will support their function as rural centres.

8.13

The towns of Downham Market, Fakenham, North Walsham and Diss possess a range of services and facilities. Focusing new housing at these locations will provide relatively local access to such services for the benefit of the rural population generally, without having an undue impact on particularly sensitive environments. It will also enhance the self-sufficiency of these settlements. Such housing provision will need to be determined in the context of a strategy for the whole settlement but it is envisaged that these locations are likely to have a significant proportion of any new allocations after the settlements listed in Policy H.3.

8.14 Policy H.5

In the towns of Attleborough, Aylsham, Cromer, Harleston, Holt, Hunstanton, Lodden, Sheringham, Stalham, Swaffham, Watton and Wells further provision for housing may only be made where this improves the balance with jobs and services locally and the development would be in keeping with the form and character of the settlement and its setting. Exceptionally, such provision may also be made in large villages where these criteria are met and which have been identified in Local Plans.

8.15

Where possible, new housing provision in rural areas should be in locations which provide opportunities for people to work in the area, use local facilities, reduce the need to travel and support services. A dispersed pattern of development will not achieve this. Many of these settlements already have a substantial commitment to new housing and in many instances it may be appropriate to limit additional housing to the existing commitments and appropriate redevelopment within the existing built-up area.
8.16

Employment land may be available in these settlements but it is often the case that many residents travel to larger centres for work, services and other facilities. Further housing provision is likely to lead only to more such trips. This balance between jobs, services and people in each town will need to be investigated further as part of a whole settlement strategy. New housing allocations should not be proposed where this would only lead to more car-commuting to larger centres.

8.17

If large villages are to be identified this will be undertaken through the local plan process. It is expected that such villages should have at least all of the following:

- significant existing employment opportunities;
- a selection of shops, including a post office;
- adequate public transport services;
- existing or planned capacity in utility services or roads;
- a primary school; and
- a community facility (e.g. village hall, public house, sports club).

8.18  Policy H.6

Sites for new housing allocations will be selected with regard to the following order of preference for suitable locations:

(i) the centre of the settlement;
(ii) elsewhere in the settlement where they are well served, or have the potential to be well served, by public transport or are within walking or cycling distance of the centre;
(iii) on the edge of the settlement, where the development does not infringe other policies in the Plan and where they are capable of being well served by public transport, cycling and pedestrian links, to existing and proposed employment areas and shopping and community facilities.

Phasing policies will be included in local Plans in order to give priority to the release of land in accordance with the above order of preference.

8.19

In determining the strategy for the whole settlement it is important to try to locate the main housing allocations where they are most likely to offer a choice of means of travel. The centres of towns offer the best opportunity but there is a need to ensure that this does not prejudice the main service provider role of the centre.
8.20

Norfolk Local Authorities will seek to maximise development on brownfield sites where their development would be consistent with sustainable development principles. The level of development on brownfield sites is expected to be at least equal to that required to be consistent with a regional target to be included in regional planning guidance. Monitoring will take place (including use of data produced for the National Land Use Database) to help ensure that sites which are suitable for housing development in the context of the sequential approach are developed in a phased manner and this should help reduce the need for development of greenfield sites.

8.21 Policy H.7

In villages not satisfying the criteria of Policy H.5, as defined in Local Plans, housing development will be limited to individual dwellings or small groups of houses which enhance the form and character of the village and its setting. Any significant incremental expansion of villages should be avoided.

8.22

Between 1990 and 1995, 37 per cent of all house completions in the County were in villages. However, past experience has shown that such development is unlikely to have any impact on retaining village services. Between 1971 and 1991 the number of houses in Norfolk’s villages increased by 35 per cent and the population by 22 per cent. Over the same period village services (shops, schools, public houses etc) declined. The previous Government’s Rural White Paper ‘A Nation Committed to a Living Countryside’ (1995) encourages balanced, living communities, but this will not be achieved if housing development takes place without the provision of jobs and services. The Norfolk evidence also contradicts the statement in PPG7 ‘The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development’ which indicates that new housing may help to sustain villages by providing the basis for maintaining local services.

8.23

PPG13 indicates that any significant incremental expansion of housing in villages should be avoided where this is likely to result largely in car commuting to urban centres. In a rural County such as Norfolk, a significant proportion of house completions can take place by means of a large number of small developments. It is important that when District Councils prepare policies for villages they ensure that incremental expansion is controlled. In this context it is important that the Approved Structure Plan policy towards development in villages should be maintained. Only individual dwellings or small groups of houses are appropriate where they are shown to enhance the form, character and setting of the village. For general guidance a development of five dwellings or less can be regarded as a small group. However, it will be for District Councils to interpret the policies according to local circumstances.
8.24 Policy H.8

In the countryside housing development will not take place unless:

(i) it is shown to be needed in connection with agriculture, forestry, organised recreation or tourist facilities or the expansion of existing institutions;

(ii) it could not reasonably be provided within a settlement; and

(iii) there are no significant environmental or access concerns.

8.25

New housebuilding in the open countryside should be strictly controlled. However, in certain clearly defined instances it may be appropriate to allow housing connected with defined rural activities. This should only occur when it can be shown to be unreasonable for it to be located within the built-up area of a settlement and the proposal is acceptable in environmental and access terms.

8.26 Policy H.9

Where there are local jobs and services or adequate public transport is available, affordable housing for those in need may be provided by:

(i) seeking a proportion of affordable housing in larger schemes; and

(ii) exceptionally, granting planning permission for affordable housing on the edge of or within villages on land not otherwise identified for development.

Such provision should be available to successive occupiers who require affordable housing.

8.27

Affordable housing is housing for those unable to compete in the general housing market. As housing authorities and as planning authorities that determine planning applications for housing, District Councils have the lead role in addressing this issue. The type and level of need of affordable housing will be identified from District Council housing strategies and targets will be identified in Local Plans. However, it is difficult to quantify accurately the need for affordable housing. The level will vary during the Plan period as factors such as mortgage rates, the level of household income and unemployment rates fluctuate. Except for sites which come forward under (ii), above, provision for affordable housing is included in the total level of provision for each District in Policy H.1. District Councils should take account of government guidance on the provision of affordable housing; for instance, that relating to site and settlement style thresholds contained in DETR circular 6/98 ‘Planning and Affordable Housing’. No separate threshold is intended by reference to larger schemes in Policy H.9(i).

8.28

The contribution the planning system can make to meeting this problem is very limited, requiring initiatives by other parties, including land owners and developers. The two mechanisms available seek to provide a subsidy either from housing available on the open market on the same site or from the lower land costs associated with the release of land which otherwise would not have been made available for development. As the occupants of affordable housing are likely to be in lower income groups they will tend to have lower levels of car ownership. It is therefore important that affordable housing should only be provided where there are local jobs and services available or an adequate public transport service to the nearest town.
8.29  **Policy H.10**

Provision for gypsy sites should be made in Local Plans in locations within a reasonable distance of local services and facilities, subject to environmental and access considerations.

8.30

DoE Circular 1/94 'Gypsy Sites and Planning' requires structure plans to set out broad strategic policies and provide a general framework for gypsy site provision. Local plans will provide detailed policies and should, wherever possible, identify locations suitable for gypsy sites. Consideration should be given to:

- permanent gypsy sites to meet anticipated need;
- transit sites for travellers, travelling through or resorting to the area; and
- tolerated emergency stopping places.

8.31

All sites for gypsies or travellers should be capable of providing appropriate facilities, according to the type of site.