

Greater Norwich Housing Market Assessment – Emerging Issues

Response of Shelter

(A) Comments on draft report

Shelter has the following comments on the Greater Norwich Housing Market Assessment Final Report (Working Draft).

Chapter 1 – Current Housing Markets

- 1) It should be made clear in paragraphs 1.4.17 to 1.4.19 that, as the final sentence on page 12 suggests, the average incomes refer to household incomes rather than individual incomes. Also, particularly if these figures are used to make conclusions relating to the need for affordable housing, Shelter believes it is more appropriate to refer to median incomes (which, unlike average/mean incomes, are not inflated by having a relatively small number of very wealthy people in an area).
- 2) Shelter questions the statement at the end of paragraph 1.5.7 that “There are no flats in the Long Stratton and Broads housing market areas.”
- 3) With regard to the opening sentence of paragraph 1.6.5, households are also turning to the socially rented sector and other tenures. Shelter therefore suggests that the opening sentence reads: “As property prices become less affordable households increasingly turn to other tenures which offer more affordable solutions.”
- 4) Shelter suggests at the end of paragraph 1.6.6 the following words be added: “There remain significant barriers to the private rented sector for low income households. These barriers include housing benefit shortfalls, the need for damage deposits and the selective acceptance of tenants by private landlords.”

Chapter 2 – Future Housing Markets

- 1) In the third line of paragraph 2.1.6 the third word should be “form”.
- 2) More importantly Shelter believes that at the end of paragraph 2.1.6 the words “or become homeless or live in over-crowded conditions” should be added.
- 3) With regard to paragraph 2.1.8, sufficient new housing is also needed for the obvious reason of providing suitable homes.
- 4) With regard to paragraph 2.2.18 Shelter suggests that after the third bullet point there be added the following: “Potentially resulting in over-crowded

households for financial reasons and because of what is available.” This is particularly an issue for BME and migrant worker communities.

- 5) Paragraph 2.2.18 should also flag up that unaffordability can also lead to homelessness.

Chapter 4 – Housing Requirement and Housing Supply

- 1) Shelter assumes that the figures quoted in this chapter, particularly relating to Housing Need, do not take account of the recent Government announcements for 3 million new homes by 2021.
- 2) Shelter are surprised by the conclusions of the ORS survey on housing need referred to in paragraphs 4.1.1 to 4.1.3 not least, but not only, because they appear to contradict the conclusions of the regional study carried out by Colin Buchanan and Partners on Affordable Housing in 2003. Are the local authorities satisfied as to the robustness of these figures?

Chapter 5 – Housing Requirements of Specific Household Groups

- 1) There are significant numbers of students in the Norwich area and Shelter therefore suggest that their requirements should also be specifically addressed in this Chapter.

(B) Comments on issues raised in letter of 30th July 2007

Shelter also has the following comments on some of the questions raised in the letter of 30th July 2007.

Chapter 1

Shelter question whether the private sector can adequately perform the role of supplying affordable housing. In particular, private sector housing can often raise issues of affordability, security of tenure, housing conditions and overcrowding.

Chapter 2

Shelter believes that there is a need to plan for the increasing number of young adult households in Norwich but not at the expense of meeting the need for family accommodation.

Chapter 5

Future trends. Shelter anticipates that more migrant workers will seek to settle in the Greater Norwich sub-region and in Norwich in particular, thereby leading to more overcrowding.

Response to increasing proportions of older people. Shelter believes that an answer lies in ensuring that the design of new properties takes into account the likelihood that owners will wish to remain in them longer than in the past. In other words, that they are built in a way which easily allows for their adaptation to meet the needs of owners as they grow old.

Use of Norfolk Supporting People budget for those in sheltered housing. Whilst obviously recognising the need for NSP to support those in sheltered housing, Shelter wishes to there to be some acknowledgement of the wishes of those who prefer to live in other accommodation and they receive support and assistance through measures such as the Disability Facilities Fund.

Affordability of bungalows. Shelter believes there should be some long term provision of affordable 2 bedroomed bungalows for social rent. Design of general housing units should also factor in possible adaptation requirements to allow older people in the future to remain in their homes.

Housing for those with learning difficulties. Shelter would prefer to see provision of specialist units such as those for people with learning difficulties delivered as part of general development sites so as not to segregate members of that community. Shelter would also urge providers seeking to address the need urgently to consider the long term suitability versus the urgency factor.

Shelter August 2007