

SECTION 4.1 HOUSING

1. Context
2. Housing land requirement
3. Allocation of land for new housing development
 - a) Norwich Area
 - b) Rural Area
 - c) Overall distribution of site specific housing allocations
 - d) Strategic Land Reserve
4. Housing development within settlements
5. Housing development outside the development boundaries
 - a) Agricultural and forestry dwellings
 - b) Dwellings for other rural enterprises
 - c) Conversion of rural building
 - d) Replacement dwellings
6. Affordable housing
7. Extensions to existing dwellings in the countryside
8. The needs of people with mobility difficulties
9. Conversion/sub-division of large properties
10. Residential use of upper floors
11. Loss of residential accommodation
12. Improvements to existing housing stock
 - a) Extensions to existing dwellings
 - b) Annexes
13. Mobile homes
14. Bases for gypsies and travelling showpeople

SECTION 4.1 HOUSING

1. Context

The District has experienced major growth over the last thirty years and it is recognised that new housing will continue to be required in the District as a result of the provision made in the Norfolk Structure Plan.

The Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) for East Anglia assumes that substantial population growth in the region will continue. The RPG provides for an average house building rate across Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire of 10,250 dwellings per annum from 1986 to 2006. This rate reflects both demographic trends and the expectation of a slower rate of household formation towards the end of the period. The objective of the RPG is to provide for this growth in ways which are environmentally acceptable and in line with the general development strategy of the region. Norfolk's share of the projected housing requirement from 1986 to 2006 is 69,000 dwellings; this figure is used in the Norfolk Structure Plan.

The housing strategy in the Structure Plan is to provide for the housing needs of Norfolk people and for essential inward migration, whilst ensuring that demand is only met in locations where there are no overriding environmental or infrastructure considerations. The Structure Plan makes provision for 10,700 dwellings in the District from mid-1988 to mid-2006. The District falls within two Policy Areas in the Structure Plan - the Norwich Area and the Rural Area. There are separate housing provision figures for each area. Major residential development is to take place in the Norwich Area and at selected locations along identified strategic routes (the A11, A47 and A140). The remainder will take place in smaller towns and villages.

2. Housing land requirement

Table 2.1 sets out the way in which the Council has translated the housing requirement for 10,700 dwellings during the period mid 1988 - mid 2006 into the amount of land identified in the form of site-specific allocations during the Plan period, taking into account commitments up to 1 January 2000. The provision is distributed between the Norwich Policy Area and the remainder of the District in accordance with para 3.27 of the Secretary of State's Notice of Approval of the Norfolk County Structure Plan Review (1993).

TABLE 2.1 (Base Date 1 January 2000)
SOUTH NORFOLK LOCAL PLAN
HOUSING LAND REQUIREMENT

	NORWICH AREA	RURAL AREA	DISTRICT TOTAL
(A) Structure Plan Requirement mid 1988- mid 2006 (completed dwellings)	6,600	4,100	10,700
(B) ¹ Dwellings completed mid 1988 - end 1999	3,085	2,777	5,862
(C) Local Plan requirement January 2000 to July 2006 (row (A) - row (B))	3,515	1,323	4,838
(D) ² Existing permissions as at end 1999 minus estimated 10% allowance for 'non-implementation'	1,511 - 10% (151) = 1,360	624 - 10% (62) = 562	2,135 - 10% (213) = 1,922
(E) ³ Windfall assumption minus 20% allowance for 'non-implementation'	276 (exclude last 6 months of Plan period)	451 (exclude last 12 months of Plan period)	727
(F) Dwelling requirement (row (C) - rows (D) + (E))	1,879	310	2,189
(G) Land requirement (at assumed densities of 27 dph in Rural Area and 30 dph in Norwich Area)	62.6ha	11.3ha	73.9ha

¹ Taken from annual completions for the period, minus replacement dwellings, restricted occupancy, loft conversions/extensions/annexes & holiday lets.

² Taken from 1999 RLA study, minus 10%. This figure includes permissions started in 1999 due to the transition from using starts to completions.

³ SNLP figures checked to eliminate all identifiable elements of double counting.

Policy HOU 1: Housing land requirement

Provision is made for about 2190 dwellings to be completed within the Plan Area between January 2000 and July 2006. To this end, some 74 ha of land is made the subject of site-specific allocations for housing development in Part Two of the Plan, of which about 63 ha will be in the Norwich Area and about 11 ha in the Rural Area.

3. Allocation of land for new housing development

The distribution of housing development between the Norwich Area and the Rural Area is set out in policy HOU 1 and derives from the apportionment considered appropriate when the 1993 Structure Plan was approved (para 3.27 of the Notice of Approval refers). Within the Norwich and Rural Areas the distribution is based on the differences in status between the various categories of settlement discerned from the relevant Structure Plan policies and the Explanatory Memorandum. The distribution also takes into account the need to provide for development in sufficient quantity to make a positive contribution towards sustaining and developing the identified local communities.

A limited number of suitable locations have been selected within which site specific allocations are made to meet the housing land requirement identified in policy HOU 1. The overall distribution and amount of housing land allocated in this way has been determined according to a range of considerations:

a) Norwich Area

In the Norwich Policy Area, until mid-2001, 1993 Norfolk Structure Plan policy N.16 requires that major new housing development will be:

- To the south of the built up area of the City (south of former A47).
- To south west of the City, within the southern by-pass and outside the river valleys.
- As extensions to larger towns and villages to the south of the City.

The adopted 1999 Norfolk Structure Plan, policy N.13 applies to the post-2001 period. In the context of South Norfolk, this requires the selection of development locations having regard to the following order of preference:

- On the edge of the built-up area, where they are capable of being well served by public transport, cycling and pedestrian links to existing and proposed employment areas, and to shopping and community facilities.
- In settlements close to the built-up area with good existing facilities and public transport access.

The adopted Structure Plan (1999) thus focuses on a smaller range of suitable development locations, to be selected having particular regard to proximity to Norwich, the availability of good public transport provision and community facilities, and the potential to reduce growth in the length and number of motorised journeys.

Development locations have been carried forward from the Norwich Area Local Plan (NALP) where these accord with Structure Plan (1993) and do not give rise to conflict with Structure Plan (1999) objectives. Further development locations have been selected in the order of priority established by Structure Plan (1999), and thus exclude some of the South Norfolk settlements specifically identified in the Written Statement to the Structure Plan (1993).

In the Norwich Area, the bulk of provision is in locations on the edge of Norwich, and in settlements with good communications to the City. A more limited amount is distributed to other large villages where good facilities either exist or can be provided, and which are best placed to benefit from measures to reduce growth in the length and number of motorised journeys.

b) Rural Area

In the Rural Area, policy H.2 of the 1993 Structure Plan covers the whole of the Local Plan period. This requires that major provision for housing development be in selected locations along strategic routes (A47 and A140), including Diss. The adopted Norfolk Structure Plan (1999) is of some relevance in this regard, in that para 3.10 of the Written Statement cautions that development on strategic routes encourages car-based trips and longer distance commuting. Policy H.3 of the 1993 Structure Plan allows for development in certain towns, including Harleston and Loddon/Chedgrave, while policies H.4 and H.5 allow for limited provision in villages.

With these considerations in mind, locations in the Rural Area, suitably spread across the District, have been selected in order to focus development where housing, employment, shopping and other community facilities can be planned close together, efficiently and economically. All are located where development is, or is capable of being, served by a range of means of transport, and is readily accessible to and from other existing settlements. The larger villages have been chosen so that any resulting improvements in public transport, community facilities, shops, services and employment benefit the greatest number of people, and so that the use of the "corridors of movement" for short local journeys will not be encouraged. Small villages that respond only to 1993 Structure Plan policy H.4 have therefore been excluded.

In the Rural Area, 4.8ha of provision is made at Diss, in recognition of the importance of ease of access from surrounding villages and to both the A140 strategic route and Norwich; this is in accordance with 1993 Structure Plan policy H.2. Additional provision has been made in other towns, including 5ha at Harleston, taking into account their role as employment centres, as well as other environmental and infrastructure considerations, in accordance with policy H.3. No 'small' sites, less than 0.4ha or capable of accommodating less than 10 dwellings, have been identified as they are considered too small for individual identification in the Local Plan. Such schemes must be advanced through the development control process, to be considered under policies HOU 4, 5, 6 and 7.

c) Overall distribution of site specific housing allocations

Based on the above breakdown of provision and the overall distribution of development in policy ENV 7, Part Two of the Plan identifies the particular allocations according to more site specific criteria. Criteria include access considerations, opportunities to maximise the use of previously developed land, and impact on the form, character and setting of the particular settlement concerned. In this way, policy HOU 2 and the Part Two policies complement each other by giving clear effect to Structure Plan policies and the Strategic Principles of the Local Plan. Regular monitoring of the progress made on each of the site specific allocations will be undertaken so that any impending shortfall in housing land provision can be identified and addressed through the Local Plan process. Policy HOU 3 is of particular relevance in this regard.

The Part Two policies clearly set out the requirements for the development of the allocated housing sites distributed by policy HOU 2.

Policy HOU 2: Overall distribution of site specific housing land allocations
The distribution of site specific housing land allocations in Part Two of the Plan has been made within the following overall framework:

NORWICH AREA		RURAL AREA	
1. Close to Norwich		1. Selected locations adjacent to strategic routes	
Costessey	25.15 ha	Diss	4.80 ha
Cringleford	13.00 ha		
Trowse with Newton	4.20 ha		
Subtotals	42.35 ha		4.80 ha
2. In settlements with good communications to the city		2. Selected towns which function as local employment centres	
Easton	2.70 ha	Harleston	5.00 ha
Little Melton	0.24 ha	Chedgrave	1.00 ha
Long Stratton/ Tharston	2.25 ha		
Poringland	12.00 ha		
Wymondham	6.41 ha		
Subtotals	23.60 ha		6.00 ha
Totals	65.95 ha		10.80 ha

Note: These figures are approximate (some are rounded) and as some of the sites allocated are at lower than average densities (such as the Trowse allocation), the total site areas shown above do not tally exactly with the relevant figures in Table 2.1. The density assumptions used in SNLP are set out in Table 2.1 earlier in this chapter. The 0.24 ha at Little Melton has been completed and consequently the allocations were deleted from the Little Melton Inset Map as part of the Proposed Modifications (May 2001).

d) Strategic Land Reserve

The Plan proposes an advance land commitment, or 'Strategic Land Reserve' (SLR), of housing land to serve 2 main purposes:

- To ensure that planned major housing provision is provided with the necessary infrastructure at an appropriate stage in the development process; and
- To provide a reserve of housing land to enable a prompt Plan-led response to the regular monitoring of existing and anticipated housing completions and thus guard against significant under-supply.

The Plan proposes 3 major housing land allocations in the Norwich area, in Costessey, Cringleford and Poringland, which are referred to in more detail in Part Two policies COS 1, CRI 1 and POR 1 respectively. These sites are allocated in full in the Plan but their development will be subject to planning obligations restricting only a certain amount of development to take place within the Plan period (to mid-2006). The remainder will form the SLR, to be developed in the next Plan period, with the exception of the Costessey site which, due to its size, will have to be phased across several Plan periods. The means of achieving this phasing will be through planning obligations specifying the amount of land to be released by certain dates.

In relation to the Costessey allocation in particular, the size of the SLR in the 2006 - 2011 plan period is likely to be approximately 12 ha, in order to keep the total housing commitment in that plan period to about 1000 units. However SNLP cannot prejudge the policies of the review of the Plan (2006 - 2011), and the contribution made by the Costessey allocation to the housing requirement of the next plan will be determined by that plan alone.

Policy HOU 3: Strategic Land Reserve

Development of the following sites will not be permitted to commence before mid 2006 unless monitoring of the rate of housing development and land availability in the Norwich Area indicates that earlier development is necessary to ensure that the policy HOU 1 housing requirement will be met:

- i) Costessey, north of River Tud: 32.5 ha in total;
- ii) Cringleford, north of A11: 12.0 ha;
- iii) Poringland, west of The Street: 12.0 ha.

4. Housing development within settlements

Based on the proposed Development Limits and Village Boundaries identified in policy ENV 7 and current and anticipated land use patterns within them, an allowance has been made for the number of windfall permissions likely to be given over the Plan period, shown in Row E of Table 2.1. Such permissions usually come forward on small sites and infill plots within the development boundaries. However, development also occurs as a result of the redevelopment of larger sites, often in commercial use. No attempt has been made to identify windfall sites because they can be in a variety of other uses and only brought forward if the owner decides to change the use. Using such sites means that the need to take 'greenfield' sites can be reduced. In the majority of cases windfall sites relate well to the built form of settlements and are likely to be within easy access to existing services and facilities. Experience indicates that a variety of such sites will come forward during the Plan period.

The Council's framework guiding the distribution of windfall housing within towns and villages is set out below in 4 separate policies HOU 4, 5, 6 and 7. These policies reflect the Council's general distributional strategy as expressed in policy ENV 7, and the relevant Structure Plan policies (as explained below). In general terms, this framework focuses new housing primarily on settlements with either existing or proposed local employment provision, in locations that are capable of being served by a range of means of transport and, secondly, on smaller settlements with a more modest range of services.

Policy HOU 4 is designed to cover the main strategic locations for housing development identified in 1993 Structure Plan policy H.2 and 1999 Structure Plan policy N.13. In the Norwich Area, these are locations close to Norwich (within the Southern Bypass) and selected large villages, mainly to the south and south west of the City. In the Rural Area, the prime location is Diss. Policy HOU 5 reflects 1993 Structure Plan policy H.3 for other main towns in the Rural Area. Policies HOU 6 and HOU 7 reflect 1993 Structure Plan policies H.4 and H.5 respectively and effectively distinguish between large and small villages on the basis of their capacity to accommodate sustainable patterns of growth. These policies also reflect local aspirations to sustain rural communities, but acknowledge the 1999 Structure Plan strategy to promote greater self-containment rather than increased commuting. Development outside the settlements covered by policies HOU 4, 5, 6 and 7, such as development in hamlets, infilling and extension of isolated ribbons of development and fragmentary development, is in general covered by policy ENV 8.

Settlements with Development Limits and Village Boundaries are listed in policy ENV 7 and have Inset Maps in Part Two of this Plan. These maps define where policies HOU 4, 5, 6 and 7 operate. The Inset Maps identify important frontages where windfall development will either have to be carefully sited or re-sited in accordance with policy IMP 4. Wherever possible, visually important open spaces within or adjacent to the built-up area, the development of which would be detrimental to the character of settlements, have been excluded from Development Limits and Village Boundaries; these are shown on the Inset Maps and covered by policy IMP 3. The delineation of Development Limits and Village Boundaries is not an attempt to define towns or villages in their social or administrative context.

The phrase "would not prejudice the use of land for other purposes" in policies HOU 4 and 5 is designed to avoid housing being proposed on sites reserved for town centre uses, such as employment, retailing and community facilities.

Policy HOU 4: Residential development within the defined Development Limits of the Norwich Policy Area settlements, and at selected locations along strategic routes

Residential development will be permitted within the defined Development Limit of the following settlements, provided such development would not prejudice the supply of land for other purposes:

Colney, Costessey, Cringleford, Diss, Easton, Hetherset, Long Stratton, Mulbarton, Newton Flotman, Poringland, Trowse, and Wymondham.

Policy HOU 5: Residential development within the defined Development Limits of specified towns

Residential development will be permitted within the defined Development Limits of the towns of Harleston and Loddon/Chedgrave provided that:

- i) No demonstrable imbalance would result between housing and employment provision in the town concerned; and**
- ii) The supply of land for other purposes would not be prejudiced.**

Policy HOU 6: Development within the defined Development Limits of specified large villages

Residential development will be permitted within the defined Development Limits of Barford, Barnham Broom, Brooke, Dickleburgh, Ditchingham, Earsham, Hales, Hempnall, Hingham, Pulham Market/Pulham St Mary, Scole, Thurton/Ashby St Mary, and Wicklewood, provided that:

- i) It is limited to small scale developments of not more than 10 dwellings; and**
- ii) Singly or cumulatively, the development would be in keeping with the form and character of the village and its setting.**

Policy HOU 7: Development within defined boundaries of small villages

Residential development within the defined Village Boundaries of settlements shown on the Proposals Map will only be permitted provided that:

- i) It is limited to individual dwellings or amounts to a small group of not more than 5 dwellings; and**
- ii) Singly or cumulatively, the proposed development would be in keeping with the form and character of the village and its setting.**

5. Housing development outside the development boundaries

Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 7 "Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development" (February 1997) advises that new house building in the open countryside should be strictly controlled and that isolated new houses in the countryside require special justification.

Apart from the widely accepted need to protect the visual appearance of the countryside and to protect agricultural interests, it can also be expensive to provide services for isolated houses. Generally new development will be confined to within Development Limits and Village Boundaries in existing settlements unless it is required:

1. To house agricultural or forestry workers as detailed in policy HOU 8;
2. In connection with organised rural recreation or for an existing residential institution, in accordance with policy HOU 9;
3. To retain a rural building in the countryside in accordance with policy HOU 10;
4. As a replacement dwelling satisfying the criteria in policy HOU 11; or
5. To provide 'low cost' housing meeting the provisions of policy HOU 13.

a) Agricultural and forestry dwellings

Planning applications for agricultural and forestry dwellings will be rigorously considered in the light of the advice in Annex 1 to PPG 7.

Policy HOU 8: Agricultural and forestry dwellings

Agricultural and forestry dwellings will only be permitted in the open countryside if:

- i) Required in connection with an agricultural or forestry enterprise; and**
- ii) There is an existing functional need for a full time worker to live on the site; and**
- iii) No other dwelling is suitable or available for occupation by the worker concerned.**

In addition:

- iv) The size of dwelling permitted will be determined by the requirements of the enterprise rather than the owner or occupier and, in order that control may be exercised over future enlargement, permitted development rights may be withdrawn by planning condition.**
- v) An agricultural or forestry occupancy condition will be imposed, and will only be removed if it can be clearly demonstrated that the controls have outlived their usefulness in the area as a whole.**
- vi) Where the need for a dwelling relates to a newly established or proposed agricultural enterprise, permission will only be granted for a caravan, a wooden structure which can be easily dismantled, or other temporary accommodation, for 2 or 3 years in order to enable the applicant to fully establish the financial viability of, and his commitment to, the agricultural enterprise.**
- vii) Where the agricultural need for a new dwelling arises from an agriculture on a small acreage of land, or where farm land and a farm dwelling (which formerly served the land) have recently been sold off separately from each other, a Section 106 planning obligation will be sought to tie the new dwelling, and the land on which the agricultural need arises, to each other.**

b) Dwellings for other rural enterprises

Policy HOU 9 below deals with two other uses which may be justifiable in the countryside. "Organised rural recreation" uses are those that are established rural enterprises, appropriately located, and not harmful to rural amenity. The definition of residential institutions is set out in detail in the glossary.

Policy HOU 9: Dwellings for other rural enterprises

Dwellings other than for agricultural and forestry purposes will only be permitted in the open countryside if:

- i) Required in connection with organised rural recreation or for an existing residential institution; and**
- ii) The enterprise is both lawful and is one which has been established for at least three years, has been profitable for at least one of them, is currently financially sound, and has a clear prospect of remaining so; and**
- iii) There is an existing functional need for a full time worker to live on the site; and**
- iv) No other existing dwelling, or existing building suitable for adaptation for residential use, is suitable or available for occupation by the worker concerned either on the site or in the locality; and**
- v) The new dwelling would be sited among or alongside other buildings on the site.**

In addition:

- vi) The size of dwelling permitted will be limited to not more than about 120 sq.m and, in order that control may be exercised over future enlargement, permitted development rights may be withdrawn by planning condition.**
- vii) A condition will be imposed, tying the occupancy of the new dwelling to persons employed in the rural enterprise concerned.**

c) Conversion of rural buildings

PPG 7 advises that conversions of rural buildings for employment purposes have an important role in meeting the needs for commercial and industrial development in rural areas. PPG 7 also states that business conversion of rural buildings can yield economic benefits, while residential conversion has a minimal economic impact and can also be more detrimental to the fabric and character of historic buildings. Therefore the Council would prefer to see uses which are in accordance with this guidance, as covered by policies EMP 3 and TOU 7. Such commercial and other uses will usually provide the best means of retaining redundant agricultural buildings with minimum loss of character. There are numerous rural buildings in the District which will have architectural or historic interest, these (particularly those typified by a single large internal space) together with modern buildings of lightweight construction are unlikely to be suitable candidates for residential conversion. However if landowners consider it appropriate to pursue residential uses, policy HOU 10 provides a number of considerations that should be addressed.

Where permission is granted, the District Council may in appropriate circumstances attach a condition to that permission withdrawing permitted development rights for the converted building and its curtilage and similarly impose a limitation excluding from the permission the rights to stand a caravan or portable cabin within the curtilage. Additionally, in the case of conversion of farm building(s), the Council will normally require to be satisfied that the granting of permission is not likely to result in the need for provision of replacement buildings on the agricultural unit or holding.

Guidelines for the conversion of redundant agricultural buildings which expand on this policy, and notes on the processing of such applications, can be obtained from the District Council. Please note that where proposals may have an adverse effect on protected or rare species such as bats and barn owls reference should be made to policy ENV 15.

Policy HOU 10: Adaptation and re-use of existing rural buildings for residential purposes

Proposals for the adaptation and re-use of rural buildings for residential purposes will be permitted if:

- i) The existing structure is both permanent and substantial; and**
- ii) The proposal would not harm the character of the countryside either in terms of the works to the building itself or those associated with the formation and use of a residential curtilage; and**
- iii) The fabric and character of the original existing building will be preserved or enhanced; and**
- iv) The proposal would not result in the loss of a farm building suitable for continued agricultural use and which, if residential conversion is permitted, would be likely to result in the construction of a similar replacement agricultural building.**

Where permission is granted, the Council may impose planning conditions to avoid subsequent alterations and extensions being carried out as 'permitted development', and to prevent temporary structures and caravans being stationed on the site.

d) Replacement dwellings

Although isolated new houses in the countryside require special justification, replacing dwellings in the countryside may not cause demonstrable harm where they are of a similar size and character to the dwellings to be replaced, and, as appropriate, represent an improvement to the existing dwelling.

The policy below has the following objectives:

- To minimise any adverse impact of the proposal on the character of the site and its local surroundings.
- To maintain a stock of smaller rural dwellings.

Clause iii) of the policy concentrates on the 'local' impact of the new dwelling, but it is also relevant to the aim of maintaining a stock of smaller dwellings. If the prevailing 'grain' of the locality is characterised by smaller dwellings this would be a consideration in resisting large replacement dwellings.

As a broad indication of the degree of increase that the Council would find acceptable, a maximum of 50% is a useful guideline. In considering this figure the external cubic capacity would be used. Normal outbuildings and garages would be excluded. 'Permitted development' rights are still applicable, except where specifically removed because of local factors. It is also relevant to consider policy HOU 14 which deals with extensions to dwellings in the countryside. Here again the impact of the proposal on the dwelling and the surroundings fall to be considered.

Proposals to replace traditional vernacular dwellings which contribute to the character of the rural setting of the area will need particularly careful attention to the form and design of their replacement. For a definition of traditional vernacular dwellings reference should be made to sections 1, 2 and 3 of the South Norfolk Design Guide, available from the Council's Planning Services.

Policy HOU 11: Replacement dwellings

Planning permission will be granted for the replacement of existing dwellings in the countryside provided that the existing dwelling enjoys a lawful permanent residential use and is capable of residential occupation without major or complete reconstruction; and

- i) There would be no increase in the number of dwellings on the site; and**
- ii) The replacement dwelling is located in the same position on the site as the existing dwelling, or in a position which is less obtrusive; and**
- iii) The scale, bulk, massing, design and landscape impact of the proposed dwelling respect the scale and character of the existing site and its surroundings, and in all these respects represents an improvement on the existing dwelling.**

6. Affordable housing

The terms "affordable housing" or "affordable homes" are used in this document to encompass both low cost market and subsidised housing (irrespective of tenure, ownership - whether exclusive or shared - or financial arrangements) that will be available to people who cannot afford to occupy houses generally available on the open market.

As a result of rising house prices over recent years, particularly when compared to the increases in average earnings, the District Council has become increasingly aware of the need to provide affordable housing for local people on relatively modest incomes. DETR Circular 6/98 acknowledges that the community's need for affordable housing is a material planning consideration, and the following policies are intended to assist in meeting the identified needs for affordable housing.

A Housing Needs Survey for South Norfolk was undertaken in 2001 by Fordham Research. The survey indicated a need for 534 affordable units per year, or 83% of the anticipated annual build rate at the time. Based on their considerable experience in the field, Fordham Research recommended that the Council set a District wide target of 40% affordable housing on sites above the threshold sizes set out in policy HOU 12. However, given the lack of public subsidy for affordable housing in South Norfolk, the Council felt it appropriate to adopt a more realistic and achievable target of seeking a minimum of 25% affordable units on sites above the threshold sizes. South Norfolk Council adopted this policy in September 2002. Further explanation and information can be found in the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Affordable Housing and Housing Mix published by, and available from, South Norfolk Council. It is anticipated that the Housing Needs Survey will be updated on a regular basis and that the target of a minimum of 25% may change over time. Other agencies and the Council's other strategies will also be working to address the issue of providing more affordable housing.

In pre-application discussions, developers will be advised whether additional local surveys and/or appropriate research will need to be carried out when individual planning applications are made.

It is also possible that affordable housing may come forward from:

- 'Exceptions' housing allowed in line with HOU 13;
- Bringing vacant stock back into use (for example space above shops); or
- Converting large houses into smaller units in line with policy HOU 16.

However these sources will not be sufficient to meet the level of demand revealed in the Housing Needs Survey.

Policy HOU 12 has therefore been formulated in the light of this background position.

Policy HOU 12: Affordable housing

Negotiations will take place with developers to secure the inclusion of an element of affordable housing on sites proposed for residential development which:

- i) In settlements of 3000 people or more, are for 25 or more dwellings or where the site is of 1.0 ha or more.**
- ii) In other settlements, with populations of less than 3000 people, are for 10 or more dwellings or where the site is of 0.4 ha or more.**

In cases where the Council and the developer both consider that it would not be appropriate to provide this affordable housing on the development site the Council may, exceptionally, consider a financial or other contribution towards affordable housing that would not otherwise be provided, on a different site.

Policy HOU 13 deals with sites outside the defined Development Limits and Village Boundaries identified in policy ENV 7. The following factors will be taken into account when considering applications which are for affordable housing.

- There must be a demonstrable local need for affordable housing.
- These local needs cannot readily be met in any other way.
- The 'exceptions' sites will be for affordable, local need housing only.
- 'Exception' sites will be additional to the provision in the plan for affordable housing under policy HOU 12.
- To ensure the continued availability of the houses at an 'affordable' level, the existence of a registered social landlord (RSL), or the willingness of the developer to accept conditions or a legal agreement controlling the future occupation of the dwellings.

Policy HOU 13: Local needs housing

Exceptionally, the Local Planning Authority will be prepared to permit residential development which can be demonstrated to meet a particular local need that cannot be accommodated in any other way. In or adjoining villages where there are adequate facilities (for example, schools, shops and public transport), residential schemes for rental or sale on an equity sharing basis whose occupation can be controlled in the long term may be permitted.

To be considered favourably, the local need for housing shall first have been established by means of a local needs survey and the proposal must be demonstrated to be economically viable and to be capable of proper management and long term control through a housing association or other similarly constituted social housing agency as might be set up by, for example, a Parish Council.

Proposals to construct dwellings offering a discounted initial purchase price only or cross subsidy scheme (part open market, part low cost) will not normally be considered within this policy.

7. Extensions to existing dwellings in the countryside

Special care needs to be taken with applications for extensions to existing dwellings in the countryside. While householders should be allowed some scope to adapt or extend their properties to cope with changing circumstances, there are strong arguments for seeking to limit the impact of extensions in the countryside. Council policy and Government guidance generally takes a restrictive approach to development outside Development Limits and Villages Boundaries.

Very large extensions, or poorly designed and located ones, can have a detrimental effect, both individually and collectively, on the character and amenity of the countryside and its landscape. A restrictive approach will have the added benefit of helping to protect South Norfolk's unlisted vernacular building stock: small simple vernacular cottages are especially prone to both minor and major alterations and extensions in the course of 'gentrification', yet they contribute considerably to the District's rural character. It will also help maintain a range of dwelling sizes in the countryside, particularly the smaller relatively low cost dwellings which are acknowledged to be in limited supply.

Guidelines for the extension of dwellings, both inside and outside Development Limits and Village Boundaries can be found in the Council's Design Guide: 'Extensions and Alterations to Houses', available from Planning Services.

Policy HOU 14: Extensions to dwellings in the open countryside

Proposals for the extension of existing dwellings in the countryside will be permitted provided that:

- i) The existing dwelling enjoys a lawful permanent residential use and is capable of residential occupation without major or complete reconstruction; and
- ii) The size, bulk, massing and design of the proposed extension would be subordinate to the existing dwelling; and
- iii) The proposal would respect the landscape setting of the existing house and its grounds.

8. The needs of people with mobility difficulties

The Council is concerned that people with disabilities have the opportunity to visit or purchase housing which they can access and use without undue inconvenience. Policy HOU 15 seeks to encourage developers to design and provide such dwellings.

Careful consideration should be given to the sensitive location of 'mobility units'. They should avoid any sloping areas of sites, be on parts of the site nearest to services, but should also be dispersed within the site

The 10 dwelling threshold in the policy reflects the recognised size limit for small sites (also used in policy HOU 12 on affordable housing), below which it would not be appropriate to seek contributions for such housing.

~~Policy HOU 15: Mobility standard housing~~

~~Negotiations will take place with developers to secure the inclusion of an element of housing suitable for those with mobility difficulties on all new housing schemes where:~~

- ~~i) There is clear evidence of local need; and~~
- ~~ii) The scheme is for 10 or more dwellings; and~~
- ~~iii) The site concerned is within easy walking distance of shops and public transport, and is in an area of level ground.~~

Attention: Please note that Local Plan policy HOU 15 has been discontinued since 28th September 2007 as part of the 'saved policy' process. Applicants should now instead refer to Part M of the Building Regulations, and Circular 01/2006 (Design and access statements).

9. Conversion/sub-division of large properties

South Norfolk contains some large houses of a size which may be uneconomic and unsuitable for the needs of modern families. A solution may be to divide such houses into two or more units, or to convert them to institutional uses, such as hotels and old peoples homes. Unfortunately this will not always be possible as some large houses are located on restricted

sites that can only accommodate one dwelling. Factors such as highway safety, car parking and the physical effect of conversion on the appearance of the building and its environment have to be considered. Subject to these considerations the principle of sub-dividing/converting large houses is acceptable.

Overall sub-division helps to retain and, in some cases, provides a better use of existing accommodation helping to provide a variety of dwelling types suitable for various sections of the community. A use for institutional purposes will mean the house is still in a form of residential use.

Policy HOU 16: Conversion/subdivision of large properties

The sub-division of existing large houses into two or more dwellings or conversions to institutional uses will be permitted provided that:

- i) The site is of sufficient size to accommodate the parking and amenity requirements of the proposed number of units**
- ii) The surrounding area/landscape and residential amenity is not adversely affected**
- iii) The structure, appearance and character of a building of architectural or historic value is not adversely affected.**

10. Residential use of upper floors

The upper floors of shopping and commercial premises are often under utilised. Residential use of such floorspace should be encouraged to maximise the use of existing buildings and therefore both reduce the need to develop greenfield sites and ensure the sound maintenance of such buildings in the longer term (see also policy SHO 7 for conversion to residential and commercial uses). Such uses could assist in the maintenance of Listed Buildings and non-listed buildings in Conservation Areas provided any conversion work is of a sympathetic nature and of good design (see policies IMP 13 and IMP 17). Conversion to residential use would help to provide a wider variety of dwelling types available for various sections of the community.

Policy HOU 17: Residential use of upper floors

The District Council will consider favourably proposals for the conversion of redundant or under utilised floorspace above retail and commercial premises to residential use provided that:

- i) Satisfactory access and car parking can be provided**
- ii) The character or appearance of the building, especially in the case of Listed Buildings or non-listed buildings in Conservation Areas, is not adversely affected**
- iii) A satisfactory level of amenity can be provided for future occupiers.**

11. Loss of residential accommodation

One of the aims of the Local Plan is to cater for the future housing needs of the area, hence the allocations made for new housing development. The Plan also seeks to reduce to a minimum the loss of existing houses.

There may be occasions where changes to the surrounding area have adversely affected the residential amenities of nearby housing. It may therefore be appropriate to allow the loss of residential properties in these cases. In many residential areas a change of use of part of a residential curtilage may be acceptable, provided that the new use does not form the primary use of the plot, i.e. it is ancillary to the residential use, and the number of residential properties is not reduced.

The Local Plan contains a large number of allocations for new developments. When considering the detailed implementation of those proposals it may be appropriate to seek to remove a residential use in order to meet an overall objective of the Plan.

Policy HOU 18 seeks to preserve residential accommodation in the Plan Area wherever possible, but it is accepted within the Central Business Areas of the main settlements, these areas should be reserved for non-residential uses in the interests of the business community; see policies SHO 4 and SHO 5.

Policy HOU 18: Loss of residential accommodation

Proposals involving the loss of residential accommodation will not be permitted outside defined business areas (see Proposals Map Insets 19B, 31A, 32B, 34B, 35, 44B and 62B) unless:

- i) The continuation of residential use would be undesirable because of environmental factors: or**
- ii) Change of use is the only way of ensuring the retention or rehabilitation of a building of historic or architectural interest; or**
- iii) There would be no diminution in the number of dwellings on the site; or**
- iv) The loss is required to meet other objectives of the Plan.**

12. Improvements to existing housing stock

One of the main objectives of this Plan is the provision of land for new housing. However, a substantial stock of dwellings already exists and at any one time a proportion of the stock is likely to need improvement or repair. The District Council offers advice to help with such works.

a) Extensions to existing dwellings

Where extensions are proposed to existing dwellings it is important that these should not adversely affect to a material degree adjacent properties and should be in accordance with policy IMP 9. Proposals should be in keeping in scale and massing with the existing dwelling as well as with the street scene and should be in accordance with policy IMP 1 concerning the design of all new development. In order to ensure that extensions comply with these criteria, the District Council has proposed the following policies which apply to all applications for extensions. Where the application site is in the open countryside, reference should also be made to policy HOU 14.

Policy HOU 19: Extensions to existing dwellings

The District Council will consider favourably proposals for the extension of existing dwellings provided that:

- i) Access and car parking arrangements to the dwelling are not adversely affected
- ii) The character and appearance of the dwelling is not adversely affected to a material degree
- iii) The privacy and amenities of any adjoining occupiers is not adversely affected.

Policy HOU 20: Extensions to existing dwellings, overlooking

The District Council will attach a condition to planning permissions for extensions and other dwelling alterations removing permitted development rights to insert new or alter existing windows where this would be detrimental to the residential amenities of adjoining occupiers by reason of overlooking.

b) Annexes

The increasing proportion of elderly people in the population and changing policies on institutional care are likely to create a continuing demand for annexes. These enable close supervision of the occupants whilst allowing a degree of independence. Different standards in terms of amenity space, parking standards and privacy will apply to annexes compared with those for independent new dwellings. For these reasons and to avoid pressure for it to become a separate dwelling the annexe should be designed to be used as part of the main dwelling when no longer required as a separate unit.

Where an annexe cannot be accommodated in an extension, due to the design or layout of the main house, a separate annexe in a converted outbuilding may be acceptable. Again, the District Council will seek to ensure that the annexe is capable of being used only as ancillary accommodation to the main dwelling. In order that the annexe is not sold or let as a separate unit of accommodation, a condition will be attached to the permission of any such proposal preventing its sale or lease separately from the main dwelling.

Policy HOU 21: Annexes

Proposals for the conversion of outbuildings to form self contained residential annexes may be permitted where the annexe is designed to be ancillary to the main house and can be used as part of the original dwelling when the specific need for the annexe ceases to exist. The District Council will impose conditions on any planning permission to ensure that the annexe remains ancillary to the original dwelling.

13. Mobile homes

It is acknowledged that mobile homes can contribute to the housing provision in the District. However, the Plan makes provision for affordable housing through policies HOU 12 and HOU 13. The District Council considers that proposals for mobile homes, including residential caravans, for use as permanent accommodation should be assessed in the same way as permanent housing. Whilst in principle proposals for mobile homes on traditional housing sites may be acceptable, because of their form and design they can have a significant effect on the form and character of an area. Furthermore, mobile homes used as permanent homes have the same requirements for access, services and facilities as permanent housing and should therefore be subject to the same settlement, locational and servicing policies.

Policy HOU 22: Mobile homes

Applications for mobile homes, including residential caravans will be considered as if they were for permanent housing, and will therefore be subject to the policies which apply to normal housing proposals.

14. Sites for gypsies and travelling showpeople

Sites for travelling showpeople, whilst they are travelling for business, are automatically granted permission by the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order (1995). Where this is not the case, as for winter quarters for travelling showpeople and for any gypsy site, permission will be required. The following policy is intended to deal with such uses.

Regular 6 monthly counts are undertaken for the DETR which provide an indication of pressure in an area, which can clearly be monitored. The scale of the task associated with accommodating gypsies and travelling show people in South Norfolk is modest, but is often difficult to tackle in individual occurrences. Appropriate discussions take place with representative bodies, including the County Travellers Liaison Officer, in connection with both individual applications and consultation as part of the Local Plan process. This latter consultation has not raised issues of a quantitative nature. The Council considers it a proportional response to the local situation to continue to include a criteria based policy in this Plan. The following policy is intended to outline clearly the land use considerations that apply. As noted above applications can be difficult to tackle, it is therefore important that all aspects of the case are taken into account. In this regard other material considerations (which may include the personal circumstances of the applicant) may be considered in coming to a balanced decision.

It is intended that the policy will deal with permanent, transitory or temporary sites. It is acknowledged that applicants may well seek to gain permission for residential use and to carry out a business from the same site. In assessing applications it may be appropriate to apply conditions to control aspects such as landscaping or open storage.

~~Policy HOU 23: Sites for gypsies and travelling showpeople~~

~~Proposals for sites for gypsies and winter quarters for travelling show people will be permitted as an exception to normal policies restricting development to within defined development boundaries provided that:~~

- ~~i) There would be minimal adverse impact on the amenities of nearby residents~~
- ~~ii) There would be minimal adverse impact on the visual amenities of the area particularly on the Areas of High Landscape Quality^{*}~~
- ~~iii) They are well related to the primary road network~~
- ~~iv) They are convenient for schools and other community facilities~~
- ~~v) There would be no significant adverse impact on areas of acknowledged nature conservation value~~

(^{} The term Areas of High Landscape Quality remains due to a technicality but has been replaced by alternative local landscape designations protected by policies ENV 2, 3, 5 and 6)*

Attention: Please note that Local Plan policy **HOU 23** has been **discontinued** since 28th September 2007 as part of the 'saved policy' process. Applicants should now instead refer to Circular 01/2006 (ODPM) – Planning for Gypsy & Traveller caravan sites.