

Babergh's Housing Strategy

2004 - 2009



Your District, Your Future

Building a better Babergh

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Please visit www.babergh.gov.uk where you will find background information as well as the latest information about progress on housing issues in Babergh.

Babergh's Housing Strategy 2004 – 2009

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FOREWORD BY SUE WIGGLESWORTH CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSING TASK GROUP

This strategy document details Babergh's plans to tackle the housing issues of the District over the next five years. It provides a summary of the main objectives, policies and programmes for Babergh's housing service.

Our housing service is based on the belief that:

- ❖ **We are here to serve our community.***
- ❖ **We are answerable to the Council taxpayer, our tenants and other stakeholders.***
- ❖ **We will provide value for money.***
- ❖ **We will protect the most vulnerable members of Babergh's community.***

The foundation of a sound housing strategy must be a clear knowledge and analysis of local housing issues. However, housing can never be considered in isolation, as it is one of many important elements of a local authority's Community Plan. Our Strategy, therefore, covers housing, planning, Community Care and work with private developers, Parish Councils and private landlords. Above all it is concerned with building up meaningful participation with our tenants and householders.

This new strategy will provide a clear and useful reference for everyone involved in meeting local housing needs.

We have tried hard to avoid technical language. The strategy is aimed at everyone with an interest in local housing issues and is intended to be a document with real meaning for people in housing need.

Babergh attaches great importance to involving all concerned with the provision and renewal of housing in the District. This will ensure that our strategy is adopted by everyone. For this reason the plans detailed here have been developed in consultation with tenants/residents groups, the Housing Corporation, Health, Housing Associations, the County Council, the private housing sector, house builders and the voluntary sector. In formulating these matters, we have had regard, as always, to the Government's national housing policies.

The key driver for delivering the service is the Council's Housing Panel, which is a member led group responsible for developing this Strategy in consultation with all stakeholders.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE HOUSING PANEL

Councillor Penny Clarke
Councillor Jenny Jenkins
Councillor Neil MacMaster
Margaret Nelson (Tenants' Forum Representative)
Councillor Wendy Sadler
Councillor Sue Wigglesworth – Chairman

SECTION 1 A PROFILE OF BABERGH

- 1.1 The District is a mainly rural community covering 59,000 hectares in the south of Suffolk, with Ipswich to the east and Colchester to the south. The Housing Strategy has used the population census figures for 2001. These show that over the last ten years the population in this district has increased by 4.8% to 83,500. (88% are owner occupied, 8% are rented from either the Council or private landlords and 4% are owned and managed by Housing Associations).
- 1.2 The district has a total of 76 parishes. Approximately 19,600 people live in the Sudbury/Great Cornard area. Hadleigh, with a population of just under 7,000, and Long Melford, with just over 3,300, are the other major towns. Black and ethnic minority communities make up 0.4% of the population. The Council has a landlord role and owns 3,800 council houses, with 60% of the tenants receiving help with their rent. A map of the Babergh District is shown on Appendix 5.
- 1.3 The analysis of the population over age ranges is set out below:

Age Range	% Population
0-19	24%
20-39	23%
40-59	29%
60-69	11%
70-84	11%
85+	2%
	100%

- 1.4 The Census shows that the most important change in our population in recent years is the number of people who are now over 60. In 1990 17,700 residents (22%) were over 60, but the 2001 census shows this had increased by 24%. The number of people over 85 years old is also expected to increase over the coming decade.
- 1.5 This Strategy has been prepared at a time of concern for housing need and demand in this part of England, fuelled by an inadequate supply of housing and house price inflation. This pressure causes "housing stress" and impedes economic growth in many parts of the region, including Babergh. Inward investment and expansion of existing businesses will be problematic in the longer term unless housing issues are tackled effectively.
- 1.6 The Government measures the economic strength of the District and its residents through the National Index of Multiple Deprivation. This uses six measures of deprivation to create an overall assessment for every ward in the country:

- Income
- Employment
- Health deprivation and disability
- Education, skills and training
- Housing
- Geographical access to services

- 1.7 Using this index for the District's 191 wards, a large part of the District is not economically deprived when compared with the national position (25 of the 30 wards in the District are above the mid-point in the national table). However, two wards – (Great Cornard North and Sudbury South) are in the top quarter of deprived areas both nationally and in Suffolk. Sudbury East and Sudbury North are also in the top quarter for deprivation for the County. Full details of the position regarding the economic health for each of the wards in Babergh is shown in Appendix 1.
- 1.8 The level of empty homes in the District's total housing provision is estimated to be 3% or 1,000 homes. The level of second home ownership within the district is 1.02%, which is 371 homes (based on Council Tax records).
- 1.9 The Sudbury and Great Cornard Priority Action Zone is one of the first three geographically specific zones within the Suffolk Pathfinder Strategy established as part of the Local Government Association's "New Commitment to Regeneration".

Developing and Monitoring the Housing Strategy

- 1.10 The development of a new Housing Strategy for Babergh started when the Council set up a Housing Panel comprising elected Members, tenant representation and Officers from Housing, Planning, Environmental Services, Finance and Technical Services. This Panel contacted all stakeholders at the beginning of 2003 with a summary of the main issues to be included in the new Strategy along with a request for any other issues which consultees wanted to see addressed. As a result tackling crime, the provision of more rural housing and supported housing needs became key issues. During the summer of 2003 the Panel developed an Issues Paper outlining the main elements to be developed into the final Housing Strategy. This Paper was widely distributed and generated feedback leading to the creation of a set of housing priorities, both for the Council's strategic role as well as in its capacity as a landlord. In order to ensure that these priorities reflected the needs and wishes of the local community a Consultation Day was set up when all the Council's key partners were invited. As a result a strategy that would drive the Housing Service for the next five years was finalised.
- 1.11 The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider the Housing Strategy every year and ensure that the Housing Panel deals with all necessary amendments or changes to the document. An annual Consultation Day will be held to ensure that the Strategy continues to be an effective and meaningful document for everyone with an interest and a stake in housing in the District. The Council's performance review and audit processes will also play a key role in reporting the progress the Housing Panel makes in delivering the Strategy's Action Plan over the next five years.

- 1.12 The Housing Strategy Action Plan includes a reference to the officer or Group responsible for processing each element. The monitoring process is designed to be as transparent and effective as possible. An annual report on the Housing Strategy progress will be published.

Examples of effective stakeholder involvement

- 1.13 The Council wishes to improve the standard of emergency accommodation that is offered to homeless people. A survey of the views of residents living at the Council's main Homeless Persons Reception Centre revealed very clearly that they did not want to share bathrooms and kitchens with other residents. This alerted Members to this issue and a multi-agency group led by Members, and including tenant representation, was established to devise alternative ways of assisting homeless households. Twelve months later the Council approved the group's report, which recommended radical changes to the homeless service, which mean, following the planned conversion work, that all homeless families living in temporary housing will be provided with self-contained facilities. This is now a key issue within the Housing Strategy.

1.14 The Council's regeneration programme is based on a resident empowerment formula, which resulted in Beacon Council status for Babergh's "Neighbourhood Renewal" work in 2002/2003. The broad thrust of this work is to ensure that local residents shape the improvement programme for their neighbourhood. Central to this is the establishment of a local multi-agency group with delegated powers to develop plans and schemes. A further example of this work is the Poplar Road shops and adjoining land in Great Cornard where the local Regeneration Group has developed ambitious new plans in partnership with Flagship Housing Association. This has led to a successful Social Housing Grant bid to the Housing Corporation and it is another good example of Babergh ensuring that the communities it serves form its Housing Strategy.

SECTION 2 THE HOUSING STRATEGY IN CONTEXT

2.1 The Housing Panel has identified a number of key aims and objectives, which the new Strategy is designed to deliver over the course of the next five years. These have been developed within the contextual framework set by the District's existing priorities as well as the regional and national housing policy framework. Babergh's Corporate Plan is detailed below -

Vision

2.2 The Council has a vision "that Babergh should be a district where strong and inclusive communities are built on active citizenship and where all citizens have the opportunity to develop to their full potential". To face the challenges of a rapidly changing society it must move forward to make this vision a reality.

Consultation

2.4 Over the last few years the Council has carried out regular consultation with its residents through "Babergh Matters", "Suffolk Speaks" and other means.

2.5 This has revealed that there are major concerns about:

- The shortage of affordable housing, particularly for young people.
- The district becoming a less safe place to live.
- The cleanliness of the district.
- The lack of facilities and opportunities for young people.
- The need to protect the environment.
- The need for health improvement.
- The provision of facilities and opportunities for older people.

2.6 The "Suffolk Speaks" consultation survey is conducted by the MORI Local Government Research Unit. This is conducted through the "Suffolk Speaks" Community Panel using a database of 3008 Suffolk residents who agreed to take part in on-going research. On the basis of the consultation exercises undertaken, and in order to support strong and inclusive communities in the district, the Council has developed the following objectives.

Babergh's Corporate Objectives

Social, Economic and Environmental Well Being

2.7 Creating and sustaining the conditions in which individuals and communities can thrive by contributing to partnerships that:

- Promote healthy living and reduce health inequalities
- Increase the supply of housing that local people can afford to rent or buy
- Maintain a safe and clean environment
- Minimise domestic waste production and maximise recycling of waste
- Give easy, convenient access to quality public services

Active Citizenship

2.8 Encourage and facilitate the active involvement of citizens in local democracy by actions that will:

- Improve and enhance effective communication between the Council, Babergh's citizens and the Council's partners.

Ambition and Opportunity

2.9 Raise individual and community ambitions and create the conditions of equality of opportunity in which those ambitions can be fulfilled, for example:

- Promote and support a climate of high ambition and equality of opportunity.
- Demonstrate how local opinion has been taken into account in the Council's decisions.
- Provide honest, transparent explanations for the decisions made.
- Encourage public involvement in decision making.
- Actively promote and support the involvement of young people in local decision making and activities.
- Give influence and power to communities wherever possible.
- Active participation in business and other partnerships that provide learning, developmental and employment opportunities.

2.10 For each of the priorities this document describes the issues, what we are already doing and our plans for the future. These are detailed in the Council's Corporate Plan; see appendix 7 for the contact points to obtain a copy.

2.11 This Housing Strategy therefore clearly supports and enhances the objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan, as given in Paragraph 2.7. In doing so we will be guided by the following principles:

- To support strong and inclusive communities.
- To raise individual and community ambitions and create the conditions of equality of opportunities in which those ambitions can be fulfilled.
- To encourage and facilitate the active involvement of citizens in local democracy.

Key national priorities related to Babergh's Housing Strategy

2.12 The Government's Communities Plan was published at the beginning of 2003 at the same time that Babergh's Housing Panel was starting to develop the Council's new Housing Strategy. The timing allowed the Council to develop its Housing Strategy within the clear and ambitious vision for housing as set out in the Communities Plan. The key national priorities that link to Babergh's Housing Strategy are set out below:

Housing Supply

- 2.13 This Strategy includes plans to allow for a dramatic increase in the pace of building of social housing for rent in the District. We also need to help first-time buyers access a local residential housing market that continues to spiral upwards. We have plans that will mean bed and breakfast for homeless families will become a thing of the past in Babergh. We intend to find out exactly what difficulties face Key Workers in the area. Rough Sleeping is not an issue for Babergh currently, although we will keep the position under review.

Decent Homes

- 2.14 We intend to ensure that every council property will meet the Government's Decent Homes standard by 2008 – two years before the 2010 deadline for local authorities.

Making the improvements happen for Social Housing

- 2.15 The Housing Stock Options Appraisal programme is scheduled to be completed by the beginning of 2005 and is designed to provide a clear way forward for the future of the council housing stock in Babergh. We are working closely with the Government's Community Housing Task Group to ensure that the process is fully inclusive and that all stakeholders have the opportunity to become involved.

Sustained Rural Communities

- 2.16 Babergh played a key role in 'Communities First-Suffolk'. This was a three-year project (led by Hastoe Housing Association) that undertook detailed research into approaches for working with rural communities in regeneration and sustainable development. Five communities across rural Suffolk were involved in the project – two of which were in Babergh. The conclusions reached concerning sustaining rural communities have informed the development of this Strategy. In particular, it recognised the importance of resident involvement if social and economic exclusion in rural areas is to be tackled effectively. Therefore much better provision of community development, support and direct access to resources must be provided for residents in rural communities by all the agencies and organisations involved. Housing must be seen as the starting point for regeneration and must link to wider rural regeneration issues. (See appendix 7 for the contact point to obtain a full copy of the project findings).

Low Demand and Abandonment

- 2.17 The collapsing housing markets in areas of the North and Midlands are not reflected in South Suffolk, where there are no abandonment problems and little or no low demand issues. In the main, empty homes in Babergh are either second homes or holiday homes used for lets in the summer months. The average annual void period for a council house in Babergh is under three weeks. We have an ambitious plan for tackling empty homes and encouraging people to become private landlords.

Better Planning for Housing

- 2.18 The joint planning and housing approach developed in this Strategy ensures the prevalence of planning conditions that enable the right homes to be produced for both sale and rent. Babergh has a duty to help people who cannot afford to suitably house themselves, whether by reason of income, age, or physical or mental disabilities. Environmental issues have been considered within this Strategy as part of this wider social context, and it is important that a balance is struck between the obligation to protect the environment and the obligation to provide affordable housing.

Local Environment

- 2.19 The Council's Housing Strategy and Business Plan makes the regeneration of run-down areas a priority. The ambition for the Council's housing stock in this connection is to build on the neighbourhood renewal work, which made Babergh a Beacon authority. A programme of regeneration schemes is being developed. This programme is driven by the need, not only to improve the homes people live in, but also to improve and regenerate the local environment. Neither can be successfully developed in isolation.

Tackling Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

- 2.20 The Council is working in partnership with a number of agencies to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on council estates. We have been successful in securing three ASBOs to date. We are a key player in the Babergh Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. We are currently exploring how the Council should implement the new powers it has under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. A corporate objective is to ensure that we maintain a safe environment. We are pro-active in tackling Domestic Violence and work closely with local support groups. We are also involved in establishing a protocol for dealing with Domestic Violence. An Estate Ranger scheme is in operation, with tackling crime and ASB high on its agenda.

Tenant Involvement and Participation

- 2.21 Tenants have formal representation on the main group that develops the Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan. Our ambition is to have every interested tenant involved in some capacity with the management of the housing stock. The Council is committed to tenant participation and was one of the first local authorities in Suffolk to establish a Tenants' Forum. An ambitious Tenant Participation Compact is in place. Currently, the Tenants' Forum has appointed their own Independent Tenants' Adviser to work with them on the stock options appraisal.

Diversity

- 2.22 An Equality and Diversity Steering Group has been established to lead on the development of equality policy and practice across the Council. The Council is committed to promoting equal opportunities and the elimination of all forms of discrimination, including disability, gender, race, religion/beliefs, age, sexual orientation, family circumstances or social background. All Council staff receive training on diversity issues.

The Council's ambitions are consistent across all services

2.23 The Council's Corporate Plan provides the contextual framework within which the Council's priorities are closely aligned. This is done by the Council's new approach to service planning, which ensures that there are firm and effective linkages between all the council's plans and strategies.

Demand patterns and future investment decisions

2.24 The Council has a very sound track record of estimating future demand for its housing stock and making sound investment decisions as a result. In recent times this work has resulted in the demolition of the Council's Airey houses, demolition and redevelopment for the Council's blockbuilt bungalows and major neighbourhood renewal programmes in identified problem areas. The conversion of hard to let one bedroom bungalows into two bedroom units is also underway, both by demolition in some instances and major conversion in others. This is ongoing and pro-active work across the council's housing stock. A major review of the council's sheltered housing stock has also started. The overall housing needs of the area are also currently being identified in a new survey.

Babergh's Housing Priorities

2.25 The main objectives of the new Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan are provided below. These have been directly informed by the Housing Strategy Consultation Programme (outlined in para. 1.10) as well as indirectly through 'Suffolk Speaks' and a wide range of other surveys and consultation exercises. The resulting objectives are divided between the Council's strategic housing priorities and the Council's priorities as a landlord.

BABERGH'S STRATEGIC HOUSING PRIORITIES

The top priorities are:

- Increasing the number of affordable homes
- Reducing homelessness levels and providing a service which helps reduce the stress of being homeless
- Helping vulnerable people live in housing which suits them with support services that improve their independence and quality of life
- Tackling anti-social behaviour

The Action Plan, designed to deliver these priorities, is detailed in Appendix 8

BABERGH'S LANDLORD HOUSING PRIORITIES

The top priorities are:

- To provide a tenant-led modernisation and housing management programme for the Council housing stock and bring all Council homes up to the 'Decent Homes' standard
- To develop estate regeneration projects, raising all Council stock and its immediate environment up to the level of the best of Babergh's housing and estates
- To ensure that the type of housing stock provided meets the needs of tenants and applicants.

The Action Plan, designed to deliver these priorities, is detailed in the HRA Business Plan, available on Babergh's website and on request from the Housing Office.

Funding Issues:

2.26 Decisions on how resources are allocated to housing are formulated corporately and considered by the Corporate Management Team and the Council's Strategy Committee (which includes all four political group leaders) reflecting the strong corporate commitment to ensuring capital resources are allocated and directed to delivering the desired outcomes. Resource allocation is reviewed annually and its effectiveness in delivering the Council's key priorities, targets and objectives is monitored by the Capital Strategy & Asset Management Officer Group. A copy of the Council's Capital Strategy is available on request. More details are also included in the HRA Business Plan.

2.27 The Council's key criteria prioritising capital investment are:

- Every capital project must meet the detailed aims of the Council and contribute to as many of these as possible
- To use joint working and partnership approaches with other public and private sector partners to improve services, identify partnership funding options and deliver crosscutting outcomes
- The additional revenue costs of new capital investment must be justified in terms of the service improvement(s) achieved and/or reductions in future revenue costs which should result.
- The investment must deliver real improvements in services and clear outcomes.

Driving up Standards

- 2.28 The Council uses a number of methods to monitor service quality and satisfaction surveys. The results of all major surveys are reported to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees. These regular reports highlight any variance in levels of service and identify those areas where further analysis and research should be carried out. The evaluation of the Council's many surveys and reviews drives the housing service forward and the implications for existing procedures and the need to redirect resources are a key element of that process. For instance, every resident leaving the Council's Homeless Persons Reception Centre is asked to complete a satisfaction form, and this feedback has been instrumental in helping the Council to shape that service. Other survey results go to the most appropriate body; for example the Council House Repair Service Satisfaction Survey results are reported to the Tenants' Forum.
- 2.29 Other major consultation methods, for example "Suffolk Speaks", are developing a system of regular evaluation of research by issuing a standard evaluation questionnaire to all partners. The objective behind this structure of evaluation and assessment of what our customers think of the services we provide is to drive up standards.

Babergh's Track Record

- 3.1 We have a proven track record of improvement, and have ambitious plans for further improvement arising from a number of fundamental Best Value reviews of housing and related services. A summary of these can be found on Babergh's website (www.babergh.gov.uk). Babergh's Best Value reviews have assisted the Council in setting out its priorities and plans for continuous improvement in the delivery of services. This involves challenging the ways in which services operate, and the outcomes of monitoring both service and funding arrangements. Best Value Review outcomes that impact on the Housing Strategy have been incorporated into this document.
- 3.2 Babergh can also demonstrate its success in delivering effective housing services. We have a good track record of enabling new and innovative solutions to be established to meet housing need in Babergh. Detailed examples of our work are provided in Appendix 3 but a summary is:
- The Housing Inspectorate rated Babergh's Best Value Review of Tenant Services as a "Two star service with excellent prospects for improvement".
 - Our 2000 – 2003 Housing Strategy ("Babergh – delivering its promises") – received an "above average" ranking from Go-East.
 - Babergh was awarded "Beacon" Council status for its work in Neighbourhood Renewal in 2002/03.
 - Babergh was lead authority in the successful Suffolk bid for "Beacon" Council status for 'Supporting People' in 2003/04.
 - An independent tenant satisfaction survey carried out by the National Housing Federation for the Council revealed that Babergh is "an exceptional landlord with a very high number of very satisfied tenants".
 - The Housing Quality Network analyses the performance of Local Authorities on Council Housing Management, where Babergh has consistently been in the top 25% quartile.

- Babergh's work in procuring improved recycling facilities from the private sector has resulted in a prestigious national award. Our submission on this initiative has resulted in a "highly commended" from the Local Government Chronicle's "Procurement Initiative of the Year" Award 2004.
- The Council has worked in partnership to develop the Regions' first digital television service to provide services through on-street kiosks. This service was launched on Sky TV through the UK On-line service. This has now advanced with the development of a single portal for all Suffolk Authorities.

SECTION 4 THE HOUSING NEEDS OF THE DISTRICT

4.1 We know what the housing needs of the District are by focusing on our Housing Needs Survey results through an analysis of housing conditions, housing markets, homelessness problems and the Housing Register. This range of information helps us to construct meaningful housing solutions in the Housing Strategy. In order to find out what the housing problems of the District are a number of additional surveys have also been carried out. It is important that these surveys are kept up-to-date and that new surveys are commissioned during the course of the five-year Housing Strategy.

The surveys, all of which have been completed and have been used to underpin the Housing Strategy, are listed below. The figures in brackets indicate the year that a new survey is scheduled.

- The condition of the Council housing stock (2008)
- The condition of the private housing stock (2007)
- The new housing which is needed now and in the future (2004)
- The satisfaction levels of our tenants (2006)

Recognising the problems

4.2 The last District wide Housing Needs Survey in Babergh was undertaken in 2000. This survey was a joint project, using one consultant, appointed to survey Babergh and the other surrounding local authorities of Mid Suffolk, Suffolk Coastal, Waveney and Forest Heath. The new Housing Strategy is based on those results but clearly, the Council continues to be concerned about the lack of affordable housing within the District. It also recognises that with increasing house prices a wider group of the local community is now unable to resolve its housing problems through the private housing market. These households now need to be considered for some form of affordable housing, such as shared ownership or low cost sale.

4.3 The Suffolk County Structure Plan (2001) sets out a housing requirement in Babergh of 6,900 homes a year, summarised as follows:

Structure Plan Housing Provision – 1996 – 2016	
Completions 1996-2002	1774
Commitments 2002 less 5%	3065
Small Windfall Brownfield 1990 – 2016	600
Large sites (10 units/>0.4ha)	1460
Total Housing Provision	6899

4.4 There are approximately 1600 households registered on the Council's Common Housing Register which have expressed an interest in being offered affordable housing, of which 1031 are considered to be in housing need in accordance with the Council's allocations policy.

4.5 Accordingly, the Council has commissioned a new Housing Needs Survey which will be completed in 2004. The information gained from this survey will be used to inform a number of housing and planning policies including:

- The further development of the Council's Housing Strategy, Housing Investment Programme and HRA Business Plan.
- The basis of Supplementary Planning Guidance to complement and support the affordable housing policies within the Council's emerging Local Plan.

4.6 The key findings of the 2000 Housing Needs Survey were:

- Whilst 90% of households were considered adequately housed, house size and poor condition have an adverse impact on older households, those with disabilities and those on low incomes.
- The affordability of homes is seen as a problem among those assessed as being “concealed” households.
- The scale of subsidised affordable need varies significantly across Suffolk and this has a general impact on the movement of households between Districts and a significant impact on Babergh, which adjoins Ipswich.
- There is a shortage of smaller one and two bedroom homes, for single people and childless couples.
- There is a need to provide accommodation for older people large enough to allow carers/family to stay with them to provide support.
- A clear need has been identified, through local housing need surveys conducted in partnership with Parish Councils, to build low-cost, affordable homes for local people in 15 wards within the District.
- Existing housing provision will not cope with the housing needs of older people in the period to 2011.
- More specialist housing is required with appropriate support, particularly for those with drug and alcohol problems, mental health problems and lifestyle difficulties.
- Newly forming / concealed households are projected to form at the rate of 365 per year producing a demand for small houses and flats.
- Access to owner occupation is beyond the reach of over half of the concealed households identified in the survey.
- The total affordable housing need in future years is estimated at 618 units per annum, although this will partially be met by the average re-lets of 300 units, giving a net demand of 318 units per annum.
- Faced with an increasing older population, there is a need to address current and future growth in elderly and frail older person's households, across all tenures. Life expectancy is now around 80 and soon 50% of the population will be over 50.

- In 1995, less than 9 million people in the UK were over 65 – by 2030 there will be 50% more (almost 14 million) and this trend is clearly reflected in Babergh.
 - Tenants are getting older, requiring increasing levels of support and care, and development of new or modified services. Providers need to consult their residents so that their changing concerns and aspirations can be built into the planning and delivery of sheltered services.
- 4.7 From the results of the survey, the Council recognises that new social housing is urgently required, and has made a commitment to ensure that its new five-year Social Housing programme is one of the main priorities for the Housing Strategy. The areas of the greatest housing need in Babergh are the main centres of population, which are Hadleigh, Great Cornard and Sudbury, and these remain the chief priorities for new social housing. However, the housing needs of the smaller, rural parishes, while small in comparison with the main towns, are still crucially important if Babergh is to deliver sustainable communities in the long-term. Babergh is an essentially rural district and has, over the last 13 years, encouraged the development of 15 social housing schemes in villages, aimed at meeting their specific housing needs. A further 11 schemes are therefore now in development.
- 4.8 All property types, (flats, bungalows and houses) are required for rent in Babergh at affordable levels. The main areas of demand are Sudbury, Great Cornard, Hadleigh, Long Melford and Glemsford. A strong demand also exists throughout other parts of the District in the larger villages, such as Bures, Bildeston and Boxford. The social housing needs of all Parishes within the District are assessed annually. Where a need is established contact is made with the Parish Council encouraging the development of a potential solution.
- 4.9 The Housing Needs Survey revealed a need for shared ownership houses within the District. Renting is not, therefore, the answer for all people with housing problems. For some people part rent and part buy is the answer. The main areas of need are in the larger settlements of Sudbury, Great Cornard and Hadleigh. A lesser need has been established in some of the larger villages such as Long Melford, Glemsford and Bildeston. Past experience has shown that smaller villages will only support shared ownership housing if the need has been carefully assessed through a local needs housing survey.
- 4.10 Babergh has a particularly good track record in delivering supported housing schemes. The Best Value Review of Housing Support, which was completed early in 2003, included the Community Care Service. It concluded that the service is working well and meeting its objectives. It is seen as enabling effective service delivery around new schemes and best practice in fulfilling Babergh's commitments in the joint planning structure.

Supported Housing

- 4.11 Developing "supported housing" remains a vital part of our Housing Strategy. The development of specialist housing for clients who are unable to live full and independent lives in the community ensures that needs can be met and support offered. This gives vulnerable people a much better chance of success and lessens the risk of tenancy breakdown. Our policy also recognises that for some groups, their ongoing support needs will reduce over time and we therefore aim to provide "move on" accommodation through our Housing Register allocations policy once we are satisfied that they will be able to cope in general needs housing. A five year programme aiming to deliver five new supported housing schemes is therefore included as part of this Housing Strategy and is detailed on page 32.

Private Sector Housing

- 4.12 The Private Sector House Condition Survey highlighted the physical condition of these properties (full details are provided on the Council's website www.babergh.gov.uk) and proposals to remedy some of the problems are outlined in Section 9 of this Housing Strategy. The important role that the private sector can play in providing a good standard of accommodation, with particular emphasis on affordable rented properties, is fully recognised by the Council. Hence an active policy of renovation and improvement has been pursued through the Private Sector Renewal Grant system in recent years, and it is proposed to continue this initiative.
- 4.13 Babergh completed its last Private Sector Housing Survey in 2002. The survey revealed that 1 in 10 privately owned houses in the Babergh area suffer from disrepair or damp. Almost 1,000 local owners took part in the survey of the district's 32,000 private homes, which revealed an improvement in the condition of private housing in the last decade. In the latest survey 10.8% of private houses were classified as defective, but the report warned that without prompt action more of these could become unfit to live in.
- 4.14 At the moment only 3.5% (1,146) houses in Babergh are deemed unfit to live in, almost a third of them being properties in the private rented sector.

Although this figure was well below the national average of 7.5%, the survey estimated that £9.75 million is needed immediately to improve them.

4.15 Babergh produced a new grant and loans policy in July 2002 introducing new ways to secure improvements to the Private Sector Housing Stock. The policy aims to utilise the substantial equity that many residents have in their homes by offering interest free loans to secure improvements and repairs. Eligibility for loans is still determined by a “Test of Financial Resources” to make the best use of limited funds. Grants to landlords are conditional upon longer letting periods and affordable rents. The policy is reviewed annually to accommodate changing needs and priorities.

4.16 Other features of private housing in Babergh:

- The cost of heating homes was found to be more expensive across the district than it is nationally. The average spending to heat a home to a reasonable level was £811 a year across Babergh, almost £120 higher than the national average, and the figure rose to £930 in some more rural parts.
- The survey also revealed that 41.3% of households in Babergh were living on incomes of less than £10,000 a year, and those most likely to be in defective housing and at risk of fuel poverty were pensioners and young people in private rented accommodation. There is a clear link between low income and homes in disrepair, especially in a district that has an ageing population. Older people and young people in rented accommodation are most at risk from inadequate housing in the private sector.
- Another problem was that many parts of the district had no gas supply – generally regarded as the cheapest form of heating – forcing people to rely on oil, solid fuel or electricity.

Tackling Empty Homes

4.17 Babergh currently has around 1000 unoccupied properties, which could be used to help meet the housing needs of the District. There are a number of second homes within the district, which also exacerbate housing availability and affordability. Last year there was a 21% increase in the numbers of people presenting to the Council as homeless and a 17% decrease in the availability of accommodation.

4.18 In addition to assisting those with housing needs, empty properties can be a blight on the community. They often attract vandals, arsonists and vermin, and become cover for antisocial behaviour, as well as affecting other neighbouring properties in terms of dampness etc. Empty homes also lead to an increase in a ‘fear of crime’ in a neighbourhood, as the potential is there for squatters to move in and the fear of drug dealers and addicts becomes prominent in the minds of the people living in that vicinity.

4.19 Many commercial properties are also vacant, derelict and under utilised. There may be many circumstances where it is possible to convert all or parts of these buildings to create additional homes to meet the needs of the community.

- 4.20 Babergh’s Empty Homes Strategy Action Plan advises and assists property owners on how to bring their properties back into use, generate income for themselves and increase the value of their assets. At the same time it will help to improve the appearance of the local environment, reduce crime and the fear of crime, regenerate run down areas and help to make Babergh a better place to live and work.
- 4.21 The Empty Homes Strategy forms an integral part of Babergh’s Housing Strategy, and links closely with its Homelessness Strategy, Houses in Multiple Occupation Strategy and Regulatory Reform Policies. It is a progressive strategy; starting with dealing with the known properties that we can bring back into use, and identifying as many of them as possible. Further work on why they become empty in the first place and then remain empty is planned.
- 4.22 The aim of the Empty Homes Strategy is to increase the availability of affordable dwellings in Babergh by reducing the number of empty homes and increasing the housing choice available, helping to reduce homelessness, improving environmental conditions and reducing nuisance to neighbouring occupied properties.

The Demand for Affordable Housing

- 4.23 The number of households registered for social housing within the District over the last three years far exceeds the number of people who have been helped. The demand for social housing is high as shown in the table below:

Number of applicants on the Housing Register and number who have been helped

Date	1998/1999	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003
Applications on Housing Register	1496	1424	1378	1338	1508
Allocations	310	296	272	204	319
Shortfall	1186	1128	1106	1134	1189

- 4.24 This strategy seeks to balance the competing needs of households from its Housing Register, those awaiting a transfer to more suitable accommodation and those who are homeless. The decline, in both the overall number of lettings opportunities and the slow down in the Social Housing programme in 2001/2002 for general needs accommodation, has meant the waiting time for permanent housing has increased, so people are waiting longer on the Housing Register.

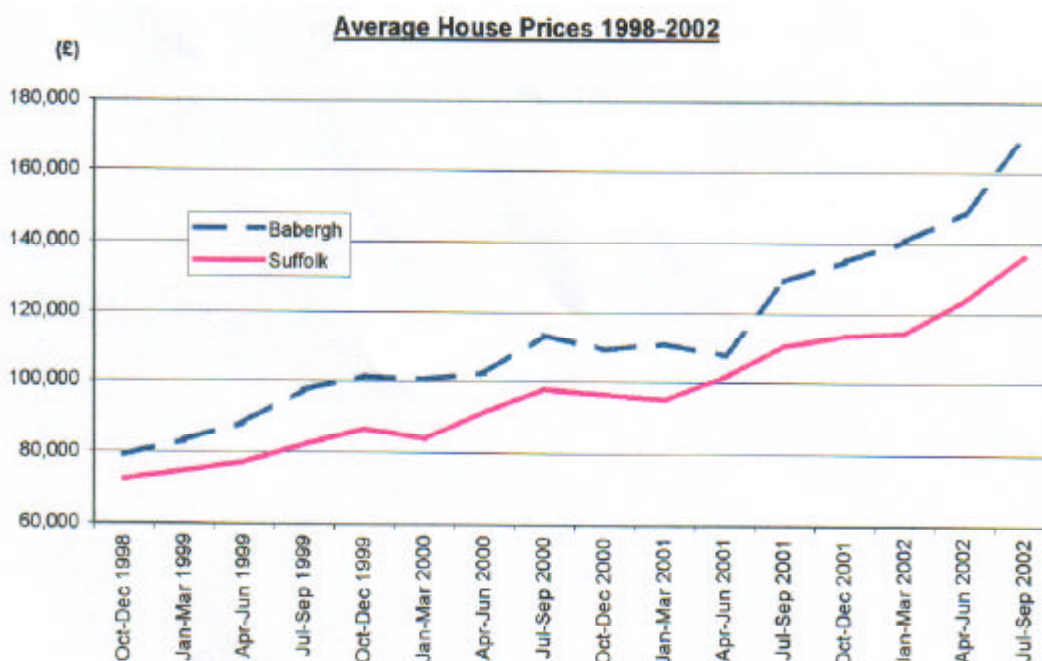
Local Housing Market

- 4.25 House prices give an indication of the affordability within an area, and are therefore relevant in helping to understand the often fragile nature of this sector for many households. House price inflation has an impact in many different ways. It has an effect on the migration of labour both in and out of the district. Residents who are first time buyers are often excluded from this part of the housing market, which places further pressure on the Council's housing resources. Low income households in the owner occupied sector remain most susceptible to homelessness caused by variations in interest rates.
- 4.26 The table below shows average house prices by property type and the overall percentage change:

	Detached	Semi-detached	Terraced	Flat/ Maisonette	Overall	% Increase since July – Sept 2001
Babergh District	244,000	127,000	109,000	63,000	170,000	31.5
Suffolk	201,000	113,000	92,000	84,000	140,000	23.6
East of England	231,000	118,000	118,000	99,000	160,000	19.5

Source: HM Land Registry – Summer 2002

- 4.27 In the year to September 2003 house prices in Babergh increased by over a third. This represents a much larger increase than Suffolk as a whole.



- 4.28 The previous chart shows that house prices in Babergh have been rising steadily over the last four years, with large increases occurring from Spring 2001 onwards.

Impact of Right to Buy Sales

- 4.29 The total number of properties purchased by tenants of the District under the Government's Right to Buy sales policy between 1980 to 2003 is in the region of 3,000. The result of selling council homes has had a profound impact on the availability of affordable homes.

For example:

- There are 6 wards within the district where every Council house has been sold.
- A further 11 wards have seen their total housing stock decrease by 50%.
- Ex-Council houses in some rural locations are now for sale with values as high as £175,000.

- 4.30 The impact of selling homes in a community such as Babergh is felt in many ways. It reduces the housing choice for people who would prefer to live in a particular community for employment, family or social reasons. It erodes the number of available rented housing options and in doing so increases the rental value of properties, nearly always beyond the payment capability of those who are homeless. It is known to have a tangible effect on the outward migration of particular groups, such as those who are single or who have special housing needs. The loss of young single people and couples is of particular concern for an area that is experiencing a growth in older people.

- 4.31 Babergh's desire to increase the number of affordable homes within the district forms a major element of our Housing Strategy and is a major objective in the Council's vision for the future.

Housing Older People

- 4.32 People are living much longer than they used to and this trend is going to continue. This has major implications for the Council when planning new housing for older people as well as implications for the existing housing the Council provides. The crucial question is what type of housing do older people want? The Council concluded that older people need the same type of housing they had when they were younger, but with some important differences. Older people are more likely than other groups to need help with personal care. However, the provision of higher levels of support does not automatically mean a loss of independence and the need for communal housing. If older people are to retain the optimum level of independence the right kind of housing is essential. This shift in need/demand is reflected through the latest assessment of our Housing Register and shows we need Very Sheltered Housing and non-sheltered 2-bed bungalows, but less ordinary Sheltered Housing, sometimes referred to as Part 2 accommodation.

Our Very Sheltered Housing Complex in Hadleigh

- 4.33 This has radical implications for the Council's sheltered housing schemes in the long term. We must deliver housing that ensures the maximum levels of independence together with maximum levels of care and support. This means Babergh must look very carefully at adapting and remodelling its existing older persons' accommodation, reducing the number of sheltered housing schemes and increasing the number of Very Sheltered Housing Schemes (VSH) and two-bedroom bungalows.
- 4.34 With these developing needs in mind, Babergh is undertaking a Sheltered Housing Review, looking at the way we deliver housing for older people generally. The review will consider the future of each of its Sheltered Housing Schemes with a particular focus on which ones should be upgraded to become a VSH scheme, which ones can remain as they currently are and which ones should no longer be 'sheltered'.
- 4.35 Babergh and Suffolk County Council are working in partnership to jointly provide Very Sheltered Housing (VSH) Schemes for frail older people in the District. This is accommodation where residents receive dedicated care services and housing management services. As a result of a Best Value Review of the provision of Babergh's VSH schemes, Babergh and Suffolk sought to procure these services from a single contractor. Following a competitive tendering exercise Orwell Housing Association now manages Babergh's VSH schemes, providing housing management and care services as part of one single management structure. The Council has also enabled the provision of a new Very Sheltered Scheme for the eastern part of the District, run by Housing 21.

Homelessness

- 4.36 The Homelessness Act 2002 required all Local Authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their area, and to formulate a homelessness strategy based on this review. This work has been completed in Babergh. We looked at the size and nature of the homelessness problem in the District; the various causes of homelessness; the work undertaken by our partners in both the statutory and voluntary sectors; how their services contributed to the prevention of homelessness, and the provision of accommodation and support for homeless clients.

4.37 Our Homelessness Strategy includes plans for:

- The prevention of homelessness by providing timely intervention, assistance and advice.
- Ensuring there is sufficient temporary accommodation available to people who are, or may become, homeless.
- Providing grants to landlords to provide new units of accommodation let within 10% of Housing Benefit levels in order to house people who could otherwise be homeless.
- Ensuring that sufficient support is available to people to help maintain their accommodation and to prevent them becoming homeless again.
- Securing the increased supply of decent and affordable accommodation to people who may be homeless.

More new homes needed

4.38 **The main causes of homelessness in Babergh over the last three years.**

Causes of Homelessness	2001	2002	2003
Parental eviction	13%	14%	22%
Other relative/friend eviction	9%	10%	11%
Relationship breakdown (violent)	12%	9%	3%
Relationship breakdown (non violent)	17%	11%	9%
Mortgage arrears	7%	5%	2%
Rent arrears (Social Housing Landlords)	0%	0%	2%
Rent Arrears (Private dwellings)	3%	1%	1%
Loss of private rented tenancy/tied Accommodation	29%	39%	42%
Leaving institution (Care)	0%	0%	1%
Other, incl. homeless in emergency, returned from abroad, sleeping rough or in hostel, etc.	10%	11%	7%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

4.39 The above table only provides part of the overall picture because it only focuses on people that we have a statutory obligation to house. These accounted for 35% of all homeless cases in 2002/2003. The other 65% were provided with advice about how best to secure their own housing solutions.

4.40 Changes currently being developed by the Council will mean that Babergh will move away from providing hostel places for homeless people and will work towards providing self-contained temporary units instead. This change of provision is to be phased in over a 5-year period and will mean an end to Babergh's existing Homeless Persons Reception Centre at Stour House in its present form. This establishment has served Babergh well for the last 20 years but no longer provides the level of facilities and service that is required.

4.41 Full copies of the Council's Homelessness Review and Strategy are available on request from the Housing Division at Babergh District Council. (See Appendix 7 for contact points).

Rural Housing Issues

Rural beauty can mask housing problems

- 4.42 The rural dimension, in particular the opportunity for investment to sustain smaller communities in many areas of Babergh, is a particularly important issue for this Council. So many of the smaller communities across the District are characterised by a shortage of affordable housing across a range of housing types, such as for small families or older people.
- 4.43 The Government's Communities Plan aims at creating "thriving and inclusive communities, urban and rural, across England". One of the stated priorities is "protecting the countryside and addressing the housing needs of rural communities".
- 4.44 Babergh is a member of "SPARSE", a special interest group working within the LGA. This group lobbies and presents cases on issues, which have a particular impact on rural authorities in England. Housing is part of that agenda and Babergh plays its part in supporting "SPARSE".
- 4.45 Under the Communities Plan rural issues are also specifically recognised through the commitment given to 'rural proofing'. Rural proofing means assessing the impact of prospective policies on rural areas. The intention is to help to foresee any potential negative impacts on rural housing so that the policies may be adapted to minimise the effect. The role of rural proofing within the Communities Plan itself, albeit to a short timescale, was given to the Countryside Agency. The Agency has a continuing role in rural proofing the regional housing strategies produced by the Regional Housing Boards. This engagement of the Countryside Agency gives emphasis to "thinking rural".
- 4.46 As with all programmes, delivery is vital. Experience of rural housing schemes suggests that bids can rarely be speculative. Limited sites, planning objections, the need to be certain of demand, all combine to ensure that bids have to be well developed prior to being submitted. Rural enablers have an important role to play in this work, recognised through the active support of the Countryside Agency.
- 4.47 The Government now intends to deliver their housing programme through a regional structure focusing on the dynamics of the housing market. This means that administrative boundaries have a much lesser relevance. This potentially acts in favour of rural housing.
- 4.48 It raises the profile of rural housing through greater understanding of the impact of the urban influence on rural housing, such as on affordability and the supply of housing in rural villages. Similarly understanding of the market highlights how the outflow to rural areas can influence urban decline.

- 4.49 This understanding of the dynamics of the regional agenda in housing markets is reinforced through the links to other regional strategies. Key linkages are to the Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidance. Each of these will highlight the rural dimension in their particular area. The linkages mean that the communality of issues can be readily identified.
- 4.50 Babergh is playing an increasingly active part in developing housing needs on a sub-regional basis.
- 4.51 Lack of affordable housing, shown by recent housing studies, is the chief problem across the sub-region fuelled by escalating house prices resulting from the general economic boom and migration from Essex and London into the district. Ipswich is designated a cluster area for accommodating asylum seekers to assist in the NASS dispersal programme. This is a rapidly changing scene with implications for the sub-region as a whole, as well as Babergh.
- 4.52 Traditionally the way for a rural housing scheme to get funds was either by direct financial support through the Local Authority (the now defunct Local Authority Social Housing Grant). Now, funding comes via bids with local authority support to the Housing Corporation (Social Housing Grant), or with direct LA financial support.
- 4.53 The new focus on housing markets allows some prioritisation of particular areas across the region for investment. The Government Communities Plan has, as one of its wider aims, to ensure social inclusiveness. A focus on rural housing is specifically identified, along with BME and supported housing, as one of the means of attaining social inclusiveness. Ring-fenced funding through the Housing Corporation for rural schemes supports this objective.

Key Worker Housing

- 4.54 The Council's new Housing Needs Survey, (recently completed), will help establish if there is a need for key worker housing and what form this should take in terms of type, size, tenure and location. Questions about income are included which will help the Council establish the scale of the need for key worker housing.
- 4.55 The results of the Housing Needs Survey will also provide guidance as to what could be defined as "affordable housing" both for rent and sale, based on a relationship between incomes and house prices in Babergh on a town/area basis.
- 4.56 Information about the potential for affordable low cost home ownership and shared ownership initiatives in the District will also be established. This will include annual data on the number and type of shared ownership and low cost sale dwellings required. Information on population flows in and out of the District, including reasons for moving or staying, is also to be provided on an annual basis as an on-going part of the housing needs analysis. Details about average incomes in the District will be collated at that stage. Babergh also uses the annual New Earnings Survey to collate income information. Due to its small population district level data is not always available for Babergh, so the county figure is used as a base. The data is gathered and interpreted on our behalf by the Suffolk Development Agency (www.suffolkobservatory.co.uk)
- 4.57 The Council is aware from consultation exercises that the affordability of housing in Suffolk is a growing concern for local residents and providers of services. We therefore wanted more information from the "Suffolk Speaks" survey. One of these questions concerned the importance people attached to the key worker issue. The results indicated that nearly half of the 1000 people who returned questionnaires wanted special treatment for key workers in Babergh.
- 4.58 Babergh is currently working with Orbit First Step, which is the Zone Agent for the Key Worker Living Scheme, Key Worker Home Ownership in Suffolk/Norfolk, to identify and assist potential applicants.
- 4.59 As the Zone Agent they will market housing schemes for key workers. This will include marketing a range of key worker schemes and directing eligible applicants to other schemes available for key workers within Norfolk and Suffolk.
- 4.60 The key workers that are eligible for assistance are:
- Teachers in schools, further education and sixth form colleges
 - Nurses and other NHS staff
 - Probation Service staff
 - Local authority staff, including social workers, occupational therapists and educational psychologists.

SECTION 5 KEY PLANNING ISSUES

- 5.1 Many parts of the East of England, and particularly Babergh (which is influenced by the growing London commuter area), are subject to severe housing pressures. There is a crisis of housing need and demand in the southern half of England, fuelled by an inadequate supply of housing and, partly linked to this, rampant house price inflation.
- 5.2 The Government is beginning to address some of these pressures through proposed changes to the planning system and additional resources for housing people who cannot afford to buy in the open market.
- 5.3 A lack of the right housing in the right places not only causes "housing stress", with all the social problems which can flow from that, but also impedes economic growth. New business generation and expansion of existing business will be problematic over the longer term unless housing issues are tackled concurrently. An adequate and appropriate housing stock is therefore critical to the future economic growth of the East of England.
- 5.4 The joint planning and housing approach developed in this Strategy ensures the prevalence of planning conditions that enable the right homes to be produced. We have co-ordinated the development of this new Housing Strategy and our recent Local Plan Alteration No.2, in order that they support each other to take account of national and regional strategies, and deliver local solutions to local needs. Housing Associations are a vital part of the solution. We have an excellent record of delivery of new build homes for rent and shared ownership, supported housing, regeneration of existing stock, improving private sector property and expertise in sustaining communities, social inclusion and housing management.
- 5.5 Our planning policies support the provision of an adequate housing stock, appropriate and affordable for all sections of the community. The aim is to support social progress and quality of life, improve economic growth prospects, and enhance the built environment.
- 5.6 Economic development is closely linked to housing. The availability of affordable housing plays a crucial role in sustaining economic development in an area. Businesses need employees, and also need to be able to pay them at a rate that keeps the business competitive. Recruitment and retention has become a serious issue for employers in both the public and private sectors at least partly because of housing shortages and high house prices.
- 5.7 By the term 'affordable housing' within the Local Plan we mean subsidised housing for rent or shared ownership offered by housing associations to people who cannot afford to house themselves through the private housing market. This tight definition of affordable housing is essential and is set out in our Local Plan. It is based on the types of schemes and homes provided by Registered Social Landlords, which broadly fall under the categories of subsidised rented accommodation and low cost home ownership (commonly known as shared ownership). This is very different to low cost market housing provided by developers.

- 5.8 It is imperative that a meaningful target for affordable provision is set. The current housing market conditions are likely to prevail for some years, with large parts of the population in Babergh priced out of buying a home and private renting also very expensive. Therefore an affordable housing target for the district of around 20-35% is set in our Local Plan, (based on the definition of affordable housing presented above). If the blanket term 'low cost market housing' continues to be used, then the affordable housing target will need to rise accordingly.
- 5.9 Housing Associations do much to ensure that the homes they build are sustainable for the long term. However, infrastructure is also fundamental to support the sustainability of housing and communities. People need to be able to travel reasonably easily to work, shops, social and leisure facilities, etc.
- 5.10 Whether it is feasible or sensible to build homes in some smaller rural communities can depend on the availability of public transport, shops and social support in the locality. This is particularly so in the case of supported housing, where the recruitment and retention of care staff in rural areas is a growing problem. Without public facilities, the isolation of households can reinforce social exclusion. The Council will use its planning policies set out in our Local Plan to achieve affordable housing in villages on new sites of 30 or more houses. It will also use the "exception" policies to provide local need housing.
- 5.11. The transport and non-residential development strategies of the Council will therefore have a significant impact on the housing and sustainability agendas. In this document the Panel have endeavoured to ensure that the Council's economic development strategy and housing strategy are 'joined up'.
- 5.12 All new proposals for homes for Babergh are expected to take environmental considerations extremely seriously. They must be at the forefront of moves towards more environmentally friendly building techniques and improved energy efficiency and renewable energy use in residential homes. All Housing Association homes will have to be produced in line with the Government's 'Rethinking Construction' agenda by 2004 and in some Government housing investment programmes the requirement for off-site manufacturing of homes is now 25%. Housing Associations produce affordable housing as far as possible in sustainable ways.

SECTION 6 KEY PARTNERSHIPS AND STRATEGIES

- 6.1 This Housing Strategy has been developed within the contextual, strategic framework set by the District's existing priorities as well as the regional and national housing framework.
- 6.2 Over recent years the Council has consulted the public on its purpose and corporate objectives. These have been strongly supported and endorsed by the public.
- 6.3 The aims of the Housing Service sit within the Council's overall vision, values and priorities. The Service also takes account of the wider corporate aims of our partners and stakeholders, and links to other initiatives within the Government's Agenda. Babergh's work with its partners in relation to crime/disorder and community development, e.g. the Community Energy Project, is a good example of this wider corporate approach.
- 6.4 We work in partnership with the Government, other Suffolk local authorities and with other public and private sector bodies to achieve our strategic objectives. Babergh's key partnerships and strategies have influenced the development of the Housing Strategy and are detailed below:

a) Suffolk Strategic Partnership (SSP)

The Suffolk Strategic Partnership seeks to bring together at a strategic level everyone with an interest in the wellbeing of Suffolk and its communities.

The SSP was formed in 2001 and drew on Suffolk's previous experience as a "Pathfinder" for the Government's new Commitment to Regeneration scheme.

A Community Strategy has been produced which highlights key areas for action, each with measurable targets for improvement. These targets include those that were contained in the successful countywide Public Service Agreement bid.

b) Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)

- Western Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership

The Western Suffolk LSP was established in 2001 and covers an area consisting of the boundaries of Forest Heath, St. Edmundsbury and the western part of Babergh.

The Partnership's vision is to "make life better" for residents of western Suffolk and the following key priorities have been identified:

Improve quality of life and a sense of community
Make life safer
Make life healthier
Make the environment cleaner and greener
Encourage business and create employment opportunities
Support life-long learning

- Babergh East Local Strategic Partnership

The Babergh East LSP was established in April 2002. Its border is coterminous with the Hadleigh and Sudbury policing sectors, and the Central Suffolk and Suffolk West PCTs.

The Partnership has a board, which meets approximately every three months, and a Working Group.

The Board has produced a draft Community Plan and accompanying action plans that set out challenges, actions and targets with timescales.

The aim of the Community Plan is to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the communities within the area covered by the Plan. It proposes to do this by addressing identified key issues, which are:

- Reducing crime and the fear of crime
- Health improvement
- Access to services and facilities
- Services for young people
- Promoting a thriving rural economy
- Protecting and enhancing the environment

The regeneration programme currently being delivered by Babergh is one of the mechanisms by which the LSP's vision is being delivered. Babergh was awarded Beacon Council status for its Neighbourhood Renewal work. The award winning formula, which Babergh developed, is being continued in the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme within the Housing Strategy.

c) Public Service Agreement (PSA)

The Council has joined the other Suffolk authorities, Health and Police and signed a 3-year PSA with the Government to drive forward agreed priorities.

d) Homelessness Strategy

Following the development of Babergh's "Homelessness Review and Strategy" a Member-led group (called the Homeless Accommodation Group) was established to explore new ways of assisting homeless people in the District. The proposals of this group have been fed into the Housing Strategy. The main thrust of this Group's report is that Babergh must change from providing hostel places for homeless people and instead provides self-contained but temporary units. This represents a fundamental change in the way our homeless service will be provided.

e) NHS Joint Investment Plans (JIP's)

Joint Investment plans provide mechanisms for effective partnerships between the Health Service and Local Authorities to plan and deliver new support services.

f) Crime and Disorder Strategies

The Babergh Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership has developed a Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy identifying a list of aims and targets for reducing crime and disorder and improving community safety. The local key aims are preventing and reducing:

- Criminal damage, violence and anti-social behaviour in Sudbury Town Centre;
- Criminal damage and arson in Hadleigh;
- Crime in the large retail outlets at the Copdock interchange.

The Partnership is also working with others across the county to prevent and reduce vehicle crime, domestic violence, substance misuse and racial harassment and also to reassure the public on the perception of crime.

Our work with the Probation Service in managing offenders and ex-offenders in the community plays a key preventative role that can reduce crime levels and the need for more expensive custodial sentences. Babergh contributes towards the funding of a Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel (MAPPP) Co-ordinator.

g) Tackling Anti-social Behaviour Strategy

We are fully committed to tackling anti-social behaviour within our communities. Our strategy has been developed with a range of partners and aims to influence behaviour by offering support and practical advice. Where this is not possible we will take legal action that may result in an anti-social behaviour order or a possession order. A Member-led "Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour" Group co-ordinates and develops this work.

h) Teenage Pregnancy Strategy

The government aims to reduce the risk of social exclusion for all teenage parents under 18 by ensuring there is an adequate supply of semi-independent housing with support for all those who cannot live with their family or partner. Much work has already been carried out to ensure we meet these aims and future service provisions and partnership will continue within the strategy. We have developed one of the first supported housing schemes for young, vulnerable parents in the county.

i) Suffolk Connexions

The Suffolk Connexions Service provides a co-ordinated approach to guiding and supporting 13-19 year olds as they move towards adulthood. The service works through a network of personal advisors who help these young people to gain access to services as and when they need them. We have already established a close working relationship with these advisers and aim to take part in a programme of education for young people on housing and homelessness issues.

j) Community Strategies and County Local Strategic Partnership

These partnerships (with both statutory and voluntary agencies) decide how best to deliver actions that improves the economic, social and environmental well-being of local communities. An opportunity exists within homelessness strategies to deliver a range of outcomes for marginalised groups that will help to integrate them fully into these communities.

k) Older Peoples Housing Strategy

Babergh shares the Government's commitment to improving older people's quality of life. Crucial to this is the development of new policies and initiatives, which will allow older people to maintain and regain their independence.

In this connection, Babergh will:

- a. Carry out adaptation and remodelling of existing council owned accommodation;
- b. Explore the provision of other housing options;
- c. Evaluate the housing support needs of older people in the Babergh District;
- d. Review the Council's Sheltered Housing Service.

l) Babergh's Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Strategy

Babergh has an estimated BME population of less than 1% of its population, but we have established that by ignoring this small percentage, social exclusion can become more pronounced as a result.

Local authorities, in their housing landlord role, have a positive part to play in promoting race equality. Recent developments in the field of race and housing include changes to the legal framework and changes to key regulations. Housing providers now have new responsibilities and new opportunities in this area. Accordingly, Babergh has produced a black and minority ethnic housing strategy to:

- Provide a framework for tackling racial discrimination and disadvantage;
- Demonstrate to black and minority ethnic groups, and to other organisations our commitment to race equality;
- Ensure that the needs and aspirations of black and minority ethnic people and communities form an integral part of its local housing strategy;
- Recognise the importance of assessing housing need by ethnic breakdown in all housing needs assessments.

By putting this strategy in place Babergh is ensuring that in its role as a landlord, a provider of services and an enabler, all its policies and actions promote race equality and equal opportunities for all in the community.

A new policy on Diversity is in development and is scheduled to be in place in 2005.

m) Joint Planning of Supported Housing Schemes

Babergh, along with all the other local housing authorities in Suffolk and the Commissioning Managers of both Social Care Services and Health, has worked very successfully to understand where the supported housing needs are required and how they can be met.

Under the direct co-ordination of the Suffolk Housing Programme Group, the aim has been to focus resources and also expertise within a number of client specific housing groups. Each group collects housing needs information and agrees housing and support priorities for the client group it represents. These priorities are then fed directly into a three-year rolling development programme.

The groups are led by officers from the seven housing authorities within Suffolk and focus on all housing and support issues of the following client groups:

- Mental Health
- Young People
- Marginalised (or excluded) People
- Physical Disabilities
- Substance misuse
- Older People
- Learning Disabilities

n) The Supporting People Programme

Supporting People is the new Government programme covering various types of housing related support. It offers vulnerable people the opportunity to live more independent lives in the community. Supporting People introduces a new system of planning, monitoring and funding of housing related support, that is flexible, cost effective and compliments existing care services.

Babergh (along with all the other Local Authorities in Suffolk) has worked to ensure the programme has been fully implemented. The appointment of a central Supporting People team has been crucial to its success. Further information on the Supporting People programme can be accessed via their website: www.supportingpeoplesuffolk.org.uk.

Babergh, along with the other local authorities in Suffolk, has gained Beacon Council status for its Supporting People work in Suffolk for 2004/05.

o) The Private Landlords Co-operation Scheme

The Council cannot meet the housing needs of the District by itself. We need to tap into all sources particularly the private landlord sector, and encourage more people to enter this sector, either by buying for rent or using a property that may currently be empty. Our approach is to remove the fears potential private landlords have that prevent them from letting a property. To achieve this, Babergh's 'Private Landlords Co-operation Scheme' has been launched for implementation over the life of this Housing Strategy.

p) Youth Strategy

Babergh has established a Youth Strategy, which will develop a range of initiatives aimed at tackling youth issues in the district.

q) Economic Growth

The transport strategy and non-residential development strategies in the Local Plan of the Council have a significant impact on the housing and sustainability agendas. The Council has endeavoured to ensure its economic development strategies and housing strategy are 'joined up'.

r) Tackling Domestic Violence

Working with other agencies to help tackle the growing problem of domestic violence is a clear objective within the new Housing Strategy. To facilitate this work a countywide Domestic Violence Forum has been set up along with a Domestic Violence Forum for Babergh. Joint training has been undertaken as part of an awareness programme.

s) Development of Cultural Services

Arts development and the engagement of people in creative activity is now widely recognised as a tool, not only to enrich people's lives, but also to address issues around exclusion, disaffection, attitudes to learning, healthy living and youth offending behaviour. Babergh has developed a number of successful partnership projects with major arts organisations in this respect and plans to do more.

t) Community Energy Project (CEP)

This local group has enabled some major capital projects to be delivered in the Sudbury and Great Cornard area of Babergh. It has had a considerable impact in supporting groups and agencies and continues to make real inroads into the problems of social exclusion and deprivation identified when the project was set up.

6.5 Other Partnerships

In addition to the Partnerships mentioned above, the Council has a wide range of partnerships with other local authorities and public and private sector organisations. It is looking to develop further partnership working where that is appropriate and to review and consolidate existing partnerships.

Arrangements with Town and Parish Councils are an important part of our partnership working. There are a variety of arrangements for involving Parish and Town Councils in service delivery, ranging from consultation to participation through a number of specific groups. Any proposals from Town or Parish Councils on the delivery of local services are actively considered and some examples of joint working are given below:

- Consultation on Planning issues
- Community facilities and conservation projects – funding of joint projects and facilities
- Public convenience – management transferred to Sudbury Town Council.

SECTION 7 REGIONAL HOUSING ISSUES

- 7.1 Local housing strategies are not developed in isolation, but within the wider context of national and regional policy and priorities. This regional co-ordination and development of policy is strengthened by the Government's intention to establish strong regional bodies, supporting their proposals for regional governance. These bring housing investment together into a 'Single Capital Pot' linking investment with planning, infrastructure and economic growth.
- 7.2 The Government set out, in "Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future", an action programme for tackling the imbalances between housing supply and demand and for improving the condition of the housing stock. The focus is on delivering the commitment made on decent homes by bringing all social housing up to the decent standard by 2010 and reducing the proportion of vulnerable households living in non-decent housing.
- 7.3 This programme includes a number of changes to policy framework and delivery mechanisms to support a step change in tackling housing problems, for example a significant revision of the way in which resources for housing investment are allocated.
- 7.4 Under the new arrangements the allocation of resources will increasingly focus on addressing regionally identified strategic housing priorities. This change will allow the allocation process to be more responsive to individual regional circumstances and to support more effective integration with related regional strategies/plans and investment programmes, particularly planning and economic development.
- 7.5 In line with the Government's Communities Plan, Regional Housing Boards have been established throughout the country. The Boards are required to develop regional housing strategies. The Regional Housing Board for the East of England has produced a Regional Housing Strategy for 2003 – 2006. Membership of this Board includes the Government Office, the Housing Corporation, the regional assembly, the RDA, English Partnerships and others, and representation from Babergh. The Boards have integrated their strategies with those for planning and economic development.
- 7.6 The Boards must also develop recommendations for the allocation of capital funding to councils and housing associations, within a framework of government targets, for example for key worker housing, and for meeting housing fitness targets.

The Greater Haven Gateway Sub-Region

- 7.7 Babergh has played its part in the development of the Regional Housing Strategy. Babergh's housing strategy has been designed, as far as possible, to dovetail into this wider agenda. A sub-regional grouping (the Greater Haven Gateway) in which Babergh is a player has also been created.

- 7.8 Currently the Greater Haven Gateway sub-region to which Babergh belongs is shared by Ipswich, Mid-Suffolk, Suffolk Coastal, Colchester, Braintree, Tendring and Maldon Councils.
- 7.9 The authorities within the sub-region are committed to continue working collaboratively to promote good practice and to foster joint working where this can better meet housing needs. Babergh and the other Councils in the sub-region have completed their Homelessness Reviews, Private Sector Renewal Strategies and have implemented the Suffolk Supporting People Strategy. These are not done in isolation. Good practice and effective networking help in producing better plans. The following are examples of highly developed joint working arrangements already in place – the Suffolk Housing Officers' Group (SHOG) and its sub groups; the Suffolk Planning Officers' Group (SPOG); the Suffolk Environmental Health Officers' Group; the Suffolk Housing Programme Group and its associated Task Groups, and the Supporting People Commissioning Body. Sub-regional working is still to be developed, but much is planned.
- 7.10 In line with Government policy the sub-region grouping shares the following priorities:
- end the placement of homeless families in long term bed and breakfast accommodation;
 - contribute to Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy action plan and targets;
 - implement the Race Equality Scheme;
 - comply with the CRE Code of Practice for Rented Housing;
 - achieve the Decent Homes Standard by 2010;
 - contribute to Health Improvement Plan targets.
- 7.11 The White Paper, "*Your region, your choice*", sets out proposed powers for elected regional assemblies, in the event of a successful referendum vote. There have been some significant developments since the White Paper was published. In particular the new planning structure has an impact on Babergh's new five year housing strategy.

SECTION 8 NEW SOCIAL HOUSING

Working with Housing Associations

- 8.1 The Council has a duty to promote and encourage the development of new social housing to meet the identified housing needs of the District. The Council fulfils this duty by providing information on housing need; supporting Registered Social Landlord's bids to the Housing Corporation for Social Housing Grant; making Council owned land available for housing development, and, (until its abolition in April 2003), making funds available in the form of Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG)

Working with Housing Associations to build New Homes

- 8.2 The ending of LASHG and rising development costs meant Babergh had to look to new ways of assisting RSLs to develop new social housing. The transfer of Council owned land at a sliding scale of discount to 100% is helping. Discounted land is made available in circumstances where it would allow a social housing scheme to be developed that otherwise would be unaffordable. Clearly, this is only applicable when the Council disposes of its own land but goes some way to compensating for the loss of grant aid.
- 8.3 The Council has clearly assessed the housing needs of the District and is working in an enabling capacity with Registered Social Landlords in order to meet that need. This is done by identifying suitable sites for development, and working with Parish and Town Councils and other stakeholders in the development of social housing.

- 8.4 A range of potential funding sources exists for social housing, which includes the following:
- Babergh currently invests £100,000 per annum into social housing schemes from its own resources.
 - Grant funded schemes developed in partnership between Babergh and partner RSLs.
 - Planning Gain dwellings, rented, shared ownership and low cost for sale, developed under planning policy PPG3 in partnership with private developers, RSLs and Babergh.
 - Commuted sums from planning gain sites where social housing is not provided on site.
 - Babergh provides its own land for social housing schemes at a discount of up to 100%.
 - Local Needs Village Housing developed in partnership with Parish Councils, RSLs and Babergh on Exceptions Sites.
 - Upgrades, conversion and regeneration of existing Council owned housing.
- 8.5 Babergh works in partnership with 15 Registered Social Landlords who own and manage social housing within the district. The objective of our partnership working is the development of social housing within the District. Babergh's role is to act as enabler, encouraging and supporting RSLs to develop both general needs and supported housing in order to meet the identified housing needs of the Babergh district.
- 8.6 Babergh's policy, in determining its RSL enabling role, is to invest for the creation and maintenance of safe and sustainable communities.
- 8.7 The last ten years have seen the provision of over 1,000 Housing Association homes within the Babergh district, including general and local need houses, bungalows and sheltered flats for the elderly and Supported Housing Schemes. These developments have complemented the District's housing stock and have provided the population of Babergh with an increasingly varied and flexible housing choice.

The Affordable Housing Programme 2004-2009

- 8.8 The objective behind the new Affordable Housing Programme is to deliver 700 new homes over the next 5 years. Proposals for the next 5 years are detailed on the following page
- 8.9 New planning gain and social housing schemes may also be incorporated into the programme as planning applications are made and local needs identified. All schemes are subject to planning permission, the securing of funding packages and consultation exercises

THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME

Location	Scheme	Dwelling Mix	RSL
2004-2005			
Shotley Peninsula	Regeneration of 21 Block Built Bungalows to create 36 bungalows in phases.	5 bungalows in first phase	Suffolk Housing Society
Hadleigh – Aldham Mill Hill	Houses for rent and shared ownership	Mixed units: 10 S/O 39 rent	Suffolk Heritage Housing Association
Sudbury and Great Cornard	Acquisition and works purchases for rent	8 x 2/3 bed houses	Suffolk Heritage Housing Association
Sudbury – Edgeworth Road	Houses for rent and shared ownership on PPG3 Planning Gain Site	3 x houses – Rent 4 x houses – S/O	Suffolk Heritage Housing Association
Hadleigh – Long Bessels	Flats for rent on PPG3 Planning Gain Site	4 x 2 Bed Flats	Suffolk Heritage Housing Association
Great Cornard	Bungalows for rent	2 x 2 Bed Bungalows	Suffolk Housing Society
Sudbury – Uplands Road	Redevelopment of 14 Council owned 1 bed bungalows	8 x2 bedroom bungalows	Suffolk Housing Society
Bildeston– Rotheram Road	Local Needs Housing for rent	9 x 2 bed bungalows 1 x 3 bed house 1 x 4 bed house	Orbit Housing Association
Holbrook	Local Needs Housing for rent	8 units for rent	Orwell Housing Association

Location	Scheme	Dwelling Mix	RSL
2004-2005			
Long Melford – Woollards Gardens	Homes for rent	1 x 3 BB 3 x 2 BH	Suffolk Housing Society
Layham	Mixed tenure housing and environmental improvement scheme	4 Bungalows Mixed tenure	Suffolk Heritage Housing Association
Polstead	Local Needs Housing for rent	12 units for rent	Suffolk Heritage Housing Association
Stutton	Local Needs Housing for rent.	To be agreed	Hastoe Housing Association
Sproughton	Local Needs Housing for rent		Hastoe Housing Association

2005-2006			
Great Cornard – Poplar Road	Houses for rent and shared ownership	About 25 units rent and S/O units	Suffolk Heritage Housing Association
Brantham	Local Needs Housing	9 units	Orwell Housing Association
Chelmondiston	Local Needs Housing	7 units	Hastoe Housing Association
Stanstead	Local Needs Housing	4 x 3 bed houses for rent	Suffolk Housing Society
Elmsett	Rented dwellings from Planning Gain	4 Houses for rent	RSL to be appointed

2006-2007			
Sudbury – Cats Lane	Rented bungalows from Planning Gain	9 x 2 BB 1 x 3 BB Mobility 1x 3 BB W/chair	RSL to be appointed
Sudbury – St Bartholomews Priory	Rented dwellings from Planning Gain	48 mixed units 15 S/O 34 rented	RSL to be appointed
Sudbury – Guilford Europe	Shared Ownership dwellings from Planning Gain	12 flats	RSL to be appointed
Lavenham	Planning Gain or Exceptions Site	Numbers not confirmed	Rural Housing Trust
Capel St Mary	Local Needs Housing	30 sheltered flats	Shaftesbury Housing Association

2007-2008			
Great Cornard – Bures Road	Rented and shared ownership dwellings from Planning Gain	107 mixed units 26 S/O 81 Rented	RSL to be appointed
Ipswich Fringe – Thorrington Hall	Rented and shared ownership dwellings from Planning Gain	53 units approx for rent and S/O	RSL to be appointed
Long Melford	Mixed scheme for rent, shared ownership and local needs	Numbers not known	Hastoe Housing Association
Glemsford	Rented housing	21	Hastoe Housing Association

2008-2009			
Sudbury – Priory Stadium	Rented dwellings from Planning Gain	Numbers not confirmed	RSL to be appointed
Sudbury – Harp Close Meadow	Rented dwellings from Planning Gain	Numbers not confirmed	RSL to be appointed
Sudbury – St Leonards Hospital	Rented dwellings from Planning Gain	5 x 2 B Houses	RSL to be appointed
Great Cornard – Bakers Mill	Rented and shared ownership dwellings from Planning Gain	Numbers not confirmed	RSL to be appointed
Shotley	Rented and shared ownership dwellings from Planning Gain.	Numbers and Scheme not confirmed	Draft proposal only
Long Melford – Beestons Bus Depot	Rented dwellings from Planning Gain	6 units	RSL to be appointed
Bures – Eves Orchard	Rented dwellings from Planning Gain	Numbers not confirmed	RSL to be appointed

A further planning gain provision will be delivered on the major Chilton development proposed for Sudbury, amounting to about 245 dwellings, between 2004 and 2014.

Supported Housing Schemes

- 8.10 A range of supported housing schemes has been developed through a countywide rolling programme in partnership with Suffolk County Council Social Care Services, Suffolk Health and the other Suffolk councils' housing teams.

8.11 Following consultation with our partners in supported housing provision a priority ranking of housing schemes has been developed as follows:

- People with mental health problems
- People with learning disabilities
- Vulnerable single people with behavioural problems
- Families with disabled children
- Older people wishing to access leasehold Very Sheltered Housing

Services for Older People

Housing schemes to meet the needs of those client groups have been included in Babergh's Social Housing Programme for Supported Housing.

Further work will be undertaken to prioritise and profile needs of other groups and to develop models of service delivery. These are as follows:

- Expansion of an existing scheme for isolated and vulnerable single people.
- Satellite or mini-Very Sheltered schemes;
- Extra Care Very Sheltered provision for dementia and/or functional mental ill-health;
- People with complex learning/physical disabilities;
- Young people with disabilities and high support needs;
- Young people with general support needs
- Ex-offenders;

- People with personality disorders

8.12 This Programme has been drafted by a county wide housing structure of individual Housing Task Groups set up to focus on client groups in accordance with the agreed development process for Supported Housing. It identifies the need for new supported housing services, and reflects the reality that supported housing services can take a number of years to develop.

8.13 Babergh is proposing that five new supported housing schemes be implemented over the next 5 years. The reasons for their priority are laid out below, with an outline of what is proposed. Other special housing need schemes are still in development.

(a) Mental Health Scheme

The need for a supported housing service for people with mental health difficulties in Babergh has been clearly identified by the Community Mental Health Team, and is also in the joint 3-year Rolling Programme for housing development across the County. A scheme would provide much-needed equity of access across the district for mental health service users.

(b) Learning Disabilities Scheme

A survey carried out in September 2002 revealed some 62 people in Suffolk with learning disabilities requesting the provision of a supported housing scheme. Since responses were received from across the county (including a significant number from Babergh and Ipswich), it is likely to need to be a cross-district scheme, with capital funding sought from several districts and in particular these two.

In view of this, the scheme will best be served both in terms of geographic need and resources by locating it in the Ipswich area. There is the possibility of a “planning gain” site on the Babergh outskirts, and discussions have been held with Ipswich Borough Council. Whichever location is selected, it is likely to meet a clearly established need for Babergh residents. A charitable organisation known as the L’Arche Community specialises in this type of housing scheme and has been identified by Babergh as the organisation best placed to develop such a scheme. L’Arche provides a particular type of supported housing which the Joseph Rowntree Trust has described as ‘intentional communities of attachment’. The people with learning disabilities actually live together with their carers, in the same way as a family might. L’Arche (French for ‘the Ark’) has gained considerable international repute, and aims to help people develop emotionally and spiritually as well as meeting their material needs. Some 120 L’Arche communities exist across 30 countries. A L’Arche community in Suffolk would be the first in East Anglia and the ninth in the UK.

(c) Very Vulnerable Single People Scheme

A supported housing scheme for very vulnerable single people is a new priority.

Work carried out by the cross-county 'Marginalised Persons' and the Young Persons' Housing Task Groups revealed a group of people in Sudbury with housing and support needs that were not being met. The reasons were either that they were outside the Social Care eligibility criteria for client group-specific services, or that they had failed in the service offered.

Many are presenting with complex needs or dual diagnosis (e.g. mental ill-health and substance misuse difficulties, perhaps also with mild learning disabilities and/or an offending history) and are likely to be in a cycle of unsettled accommodation. They may be deemed intentionally homeless or are at least at high risk of eviction and are likely to have exhausted all other available options for housing. Their behaviour is likely to challenge existing housing and support services. The group is likely to be mainly in their late teens or twenties, although there are some who are now in their thirties and forties.

There is an urgent need to provide a supported housing service for this group. Meeting it will tie in with the Council's Homelessness Strategy, and the Council's Corporate Objectives.

From past research for this group, it is clear that individual living units clustered together, with a dedicated staff team on site 24 hours a day, will be needed. This format will give service users both space and on-site support. The support team would focus on housing-related support, to improve their life skills and independent living skills. The support team would also ensure access to specialist support from other agencies for other issues such as drug misuse or mental health difficulties.

Babergh intends to use part of Stour House in Sudbury (an existing hostel, owned by Babergh) for this Scheme. This scheme is proposed as a response to an urgent need and would form part of Babergh's response to homelessness.

(d) Housing for Families with Disabled Children

Another emerging priority is the need for wheelchair bungalows for a small number of families with a child with severe physical disabilities and possibly additional complex needs. There is clear urgency around this group since the properties are needed at an appropriate time for the family and child. Social Care is already providing revenue funding for support for such families. Where a need for such accommodation is established the Council is negotiating with developers for suitable mobility and wheelchair standard bungalows to be included within planning gain sites, which currently include Hadleigh and the Sudbury/Great Cornard areas.

(e) Leasehold VSH Scheme for Older People

A need is emerging for a Leasehold Very Sheltered Housing Scheme. Owner-occupiers wishing to buy into such schemes have been identified as a growing market. Work is currently being undertaken across the county (including Babergh) to profile the needs more closely and to develop responses that meet local needs.

- 9.1 Council housing in Babergh provides homes for nearly 3,800 households. It is a long-term asset for the community, which must be well looked after. We have devised long-term investment plans for 30 years in order to maintain and improve these properties to a standard our tenants want. This is what the Business Plan for Council Housing is all about.

The Business Plan

The full Business Plan is a companion document to the Housing Strategy. A summary of what the Business Plan contains is set out below:

- The Council's plans, aims and objectives for council housing in the future.
- How tenants and others will contribute towards deciding what those plans are.
- How we will ensure that the service provides Best Value to tenants.
- How we will monitor and improve our performance and effectiveness.
- How specific investment and spending plans are envisaged for the next 5 years, (dependent on the amount of money that is available).
- How the Council will manage its housing assets and review and maintain them as part of an overall Asset Management Strategy.
- What levels of rent tenants are likely to pay in the future.
- How we will work with other organisations and partners to regenerate, improve and maintain the housing in which our tenants live. Not just in terms of the fabric of the houses and estate improvements, but also in dealing with access to jobs, training, public transport, tackling anti-social behaviour, social exclusion and crime.

Condition of Stock

- 9.2 A report on the condition of the Council's stock was received in the autumn of 2002 from specialist independent consultants Michael Dyson Associates Ltd. The survey has estimated the investment required in the stock over a 30-year period, ensuring that the decent homes standards are met. Results were as follows:

	Years 1-5	Years 6-10	Years 11-15	Years 16-20	Years 21-25	Years 26-30	Total
Catch-up repairs	1.176	0	0	0	0	0	1.176
Planned works	20.128	11.687	13.84	9.244	10.838	8.373	74.11
Decent Homes Improvements	0.74	0.444	0	0	0	0	1.184
Improvements (optional)	4.516	0	0	0	0	0	4.516
Cyclical, responsive & void	6.615	6.614	6.615	6.614	6.615	6.615	39.688
TOTAL	33.175	18.745	20.455	15.858	17.453	14.988	120.674

The report concluded that with current financing of the capital programme this Council could meet 86% of the desired stock investment in the first ten years, and fully meet the requirements in the long term.

9.3 Recent Revenue and Capital Spending and Funding

Revenue income and expenditure

Year	Income		Expenditure								Bal B/F	Bal C/F
	Total Income	Supvn and Mgt	Depreciation	Main-tenance	Cost Housing Benefits	Govmt Subsidy	Net Borrow /Invest Etc.	Contbn to capital invest	(Surplus) /Deficit During the Year			
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
2000/01	10,794	(2,713)	0	(1,583)	(266)	(4,648)	(776)	(882)	74	1,494	1,420	
2001/02	10,911	(2,952)	(2,097)	(1,817)	(276)	(2,820)	(822)	(192)	65	1,420	1,355	
2002/03	11,135	(3,129)	(2,109)	(1,765)	(209)	(3,065)	(676)	0	(182)	1,355	1,537	

Capital expenditure

Year	Catch Up Repairs	Planned Maintenance	Improvements	Total	HRA Responsive and cyclical repairs	Total
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
2000/01	115	1,535	1,469	3,119	1,583	4,702
2001/02	89	1,471	1,675	3,235	1,817	5,052
2002/03	48	1,685	840	2,573	1,774	4,347

Capital funding

Year	Credit Approvals	RTB/ Other receipts	Leasing	Major Repairs Allowance	Revenue Funding of Capital	Total Capital Expenditure	HRA Revenue Repairs	Total
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
2000/01	1,560	325	352	0	882	3,119	1,583	4,702
2001/02	487	7	442	2,097	192	3,235	1,817	5,052
2002/03	516	277	61	1,719	0	2,573	1,774	4,347

9.4 Capital funding sources

As can be seen from the above table, before the major repairs allowance was introduced the main sources of funding were Government credit approvals, right-to-buy receipts, leasing (for central heating systems), and contributions from revenue. The major repairs allowance introduced in 2001/2 then became the main source of capital funding.

The Council became debt-free in March 2003, and therefore the main sources will be the major repairs allowance and right-to-buy receipts, with small contributions from revenue if required.

Further details about the future funding estimates are contained in the HRA Business Plan (to be found mainly in Section 5.30) which is available on Babergh's website or from the Housing Office.

9.5 Effect of the abolition of LASHG

Since the Council became debt-free in March 2003, the Housing Corporation paid any outstanding grants directly to Housing Associations. Therefore there were no adverse effects on the Council. In order to assist future funding of projects involving Housing Associations, the Council has provided a general fund capital budget of £100,000 for the next three years.

Stock Options Appraisal

- 9.6 In 2002 Babergh commissioned consultants to undertake an appraisal of the options the Council had for its housing stock. We needed to ensure that our investment in the stock would be sufficient to bring every property up to the Government's 'Decent Homes' standard by 2010. The consultants examined the following four options that could all be used to pay for the improvements which were necessary.
- a) Use our own resources and those made available through the Single Capital Pot.
 - b) Set up an Arms Length Management Organisation
 - c) Pursue a Private Finance Initiative Scheme
 - d) Transfer the Council's housing stock to a housing association
- 9.7 We wanted to be able to choose the options that would suit local circumstances and our tenants' priorities as part of our strategy for all Council owned stock. At the same time we needed to be sure that every property would reach the new standard by the target date.
- 9.8 The Consultants recommended that Babergh should remain as a landlord. However, they recommended that this decision be kept under annual review. In order to do so the Council is working with HACAS Chapman Hendy again to review the position during 2004 and will be submitting the report to Government in order for it to be 'signed off' by July 2005. New arrangements have been introduced to ensure that tenants are fully engaged in the appraisal process.
- 9.9 The main features of the process set up to undertake the Stock Options Appraisal include:
- (a) The appointment of an Independent Tenants' Adviser
 - (b) The establishment of an Appraisal Steering Panel with representatives from Members, Tenants and staff.
 - (c) The opportunity for all tenants to be involved with the process.
 - (d) The establishment of a Tenant Focus Group on this issue.
 - (e) The establishment of a Leaseholders Forum.
 - (f) The development of a Babergh Standard to reflect the aspirations that tenants have for their homes beyond the basic 'Decent Homes' standard.
 - (g) The launch of the "Your Home Your Future" campaign.

Your Home, Your Future

**SECTION 10
APPENDICES**

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ECONOMIC HEALTH RANKINGS
BABERGH/NATIONAL COMPARISONS

(The lower the ranking, the greater the level of economic deprivation)

Babergh Ward	Ranking	
	Suffolk	National
Great Cornard North	14	1,753
Sudbury South	18	2,005
Sudbury East	27	2,907
Sudbury North	28	2,966
Long Melford	51	3,963
Elmsett	68	4,475
North Cosford	74	4,613
Bildeston	75	4,643
Brett Vale	80	4,799
Hadleigh	81	4,819
Brookvale	83	4,865
Berners	94	5,122
Lavenham	99	5,233
Shotley	101	5,295
Copdock	103	5,321
Chadacre	106	5,436
Bures St. Mary	111	5,522
Alton	115	5,591
Waldingfield	117	5,611
Glemsford	118	5,622
Leavenheath	124	5,752
Polstead/Layham	142	6,113
Nayland	148	6,160
West Samford	157	6,533
Dodnash	158	6,541
Boxford	167	6,913
Brantham	168	6,962
Great Cornard South	177	7,331
Holbrook	181	7,399
Capel and Wenham	183	7,477

**LINKAGES WITH
OTHER COUNCIL DOCUMENTS**

The Housing Strategy refers to and is supported by other documents that are listed below. For a copy of these documents, please contact:

Karen Carter, Admin Co-ordinator
Babergh District Council
Corks Lane
Hadleigh
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP7 6SJ
Email: karen.carter@babergh.gov.uk

Or access the Council's website on www.babergh.gov.uk

Related Documents:

The Council's Corporate Plan
Western Suffolk LSP Statement
Babergh East LSP Statement
Homelessness Review
Homelessness Strategy
Crime & Disorder Strategy
Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour Protocol for LAs and RSLs
Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy
Youth Strategy
Tackling Domestic Violence Housing Policy
Cultural Services Strategy
Regional Housing Statement
Sub-Regional Housing Statement
Tenant Participation Compact
Diversity Policy
Tenant Empowerment Strategy
Report on 'Communities First – Suffolk'
The Capital Strategy

Other information leaflets available:

A to Z Guide to Council Services in Babergh
Right to Buy – Frequently Asked Questions
Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit
Rental Deposit Guarantee Scheme
Recycling in Babergh's Housing Service: Private Rented Accommodation
Babergh's Bond
Babergh Matters
Contact Care
Disabled Facilities Grant

PAST ACHIEVEMENTS

1. The Council has a good track record of enabling new and innovative solutions to be established to meet housing need in Babergh. We work closely with a wide number of agencies to do this. Some examples of our work are provided below:

Floating Support

2. We work with the Colchester Quaker Housing Association (CQHA), to provide floating support workers who deliver intensive housing management in cases where Council tenancies may fail because of the vulnerability or need of the tenant. It covers work that is not currently being provided and represents a new service area.
3. The range of typical clients for the scheme are families or single people who: -
 - Are leaving local authority care.
 - Have drug and/or alcohol misuse problems.
 - Have mental health problems or learning difficulties.
 - Are ex-offenders or ex-prisoners.
 - Are fleeing violence.
 - Are homeless, moving on from temporary accommodation to permanent accommodation.
 - Have anti-social behaviour.
 - Have financial and/or other tenancy irregularities that will result in termination of their tenancy.
 - Are young single parent families.
4. The benefits of the scheme to tenants are: -
 - Support from the beginning of the tenancy for as long as it is needed.
 - To assist people to achieve independent living.
 - To assist tenants to maintain their tenancy.
 - To help tenants integrate into the local community and overcome social exclusion.
 - For those on full Housing Benefit there is no cost for the service.

- To assist in linking and directing tenants to the professional support services they need.
5. The benefits to the Council are: -
- Lower risk of evictions of vulnerable tenants.
 - Reduction in rent arrears.
 - Reduction of damage to property.
 - Tackling neighbourhood problems at an early stage, avoiding Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO).
 - Reduction in abandonment of tenancies.
 - Reduction in vulnerable tenants re-presenting as homeless.

A Common Housing Register for Babergh

6. The Council introduced a Common Housing Register for the Babergh District through its Housing Association Liaison Group, in which the Council and its partner Registered Social Landlords participate. It allows a common point of registration for all applicants wanting social housing in this district making the registration process simpler with the benefit that applicants are assured of being considered for all available vacancies in the district.
7. The introduction of a Common Housing Register was identified as a target in the Improvement Plan that arose from the Best Value Review of Tenant Services.
8. Central Government's emphasis on the strategic role of local authorities has placed a high importance on partnership working. In its consultation paper "Allocation of Housing Accommodation by Local Authorities" January 1996 the government established the principle that:

"Local authorities will, if they wish, be able to combine their statutory Housing Register, transfer and other lists into a single register of people seeking housing in the area. The provisions will enable authorities to participate in common housing registers with other landlords".

A new shopping and housing scheme in Great Cornard

9. The Poplar Road shopping area in Great Cornard was developed in 1971 as a local shopping centre for the new overspill estate built to house London families by the Greater London Council. The site is made up of a block of 8 shops and a bakery with 11 three-bedroom maisonettes above. To the rear of the shops is an open parking and delivery area, and to one side of the development is a large public car park. The Council owns the main block of shops, the maisonettes above and the surrounding land.

10. For some time problems have been experienced with the site. The shops have not always proved commercially viable resulting in frequent vacancies. There have been management problems associated with the maisonettes because they are family sized dwellings but have no ground floor access or garden space. The whole block experienced some disrepair. There is evidence of criminal behaviour taking place in the garage area to the rear of the block. The shopping complex generally attracts younger people who tend to 'hang around' for long periods, sometimes causing nuisance, often resulting in police involvement. The communal area serving the flats is regularly vandalised and the dumping of rubbish is often a problem.
11. In response, the Council established a local Regeneration Group, which has developed proposals designed to solve the problems. The plan is that Babergh will transfer all the land in question to Suffolk Heritage Housing Association who will demolish the existing buildings and build a new mixed scheme of shops, housing, a community facility and associated parking together with an open space. This plan is designed to resolve problems associated with the existing development, including serious anti-social behaviour issues through an enhanced environment, and new facilities with inbuilt "secured by design" features, together with improved community facilities and open space, and much needed housing. This will assist the Council in its new priorities regarding affordable housing and promoting sustainable communities.

Bungalows at Uplands Road Sudbury

12. The Council owns 14 small one-bedroom bungalows located at Uplands Road, Sudbury. Built in 1959 the properties are unmodernised, are suffering from subsidence problems and now require total refurbishment. Members resolved that what was urgently needed on the site was two bedroom bungalows. A joint on-site consultation by local Members and Housing Officers confirmed that the secure tenants of these properties supported the proposals.
13. The Council has resolved, therefore, that the best long-term solution is to transfer these properties to a Registered Social Landlord at nil cost. The RSL will demolish all 14 bungalows and develop nine new two-bedroom bungalows on the site with improved parking provision. This involves moving all the tenants with a promise of first option on one of the new replacement bungalows provided on the site.

Babergh's Block Built Bungalows

14. Babergh has 21 block built bungalows in its ownership. These are system-built properties some of which contain a great deal of asbestos and all of which have structural problems. It is now Council policy to transfer them to a Registered Social Landlord, Suffolk Housing Society, for redevelopment and re-letting as and when they become vacant.

15. The block built bungalows all stand on considerable plots of land so some housing gain is achievable on the redeveloped sites. The bulk of the current tenants have indicated a desire to stay in the properties as the majority of them have lived in these properties for many years. So there is no plan to encourage transfers and existing tenants are free to stay put for as long as they wish to. In the meantime, redevelopment is planned as part of a rolling long-term programme.

Meeting the Housing Needs of Younger People

16. We have developed a number of housing schemes jointly with Social Care Services and other partners, each designed to respond to particular identified needs, while fitting into our overall strategic plan to ensure equity of services across the district and the county. For each, Babergh has contributed capital and/or has supported bids by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to the Housing Corporation. Access to all these schemes is via an Allocation Panel whose membership comprises representatives of partner agencies in each scheme.

First we have two schemes for care leavers or homeless/vulnerable young people who are 16+:

- **The Manor Sudbury:** This is a shared house with four bed spaces with visiting support from NCH Action for Children. The landlord is Orbit Housing Society. Revenue funding comes via Supporting People.
 - **The Gatehouse, Hadleigh:** A similar scheme to the Manor, but with three bed spaces. NCH are still the care provider but the landlord is Suffolk Housing Society.
17. Both these schemes are designed to help young vulnerable people acquire or improve their lifeskills and so prepare them for moving on to a place of their own. We also have a scheme for single, vulnerable, homeless people which was originally for young people but which has now broadened its remit:
- **97 Ballingdon Street, Sudbury:** This is owned and operated by St Matthew Housing, whose remit is to provide housing and support for vulnerable people, many of whom are young. Ballingdon Street has 11 bedspaces, seven of which are as a shared house with a resident manager, and four are in shared 'move-on' flats, where the residents are more autonomous. St Matthews also operate a floating 'resettlement scheme' for people moving on from their houses.

18. Additionally, we have recently opened a scheme for vulnerable parents and their children:

- **Lindsey Court, Great Cornard:** This scheme was developed in response to three factors
 - a) The need to provide support for vulnerable groups
 - b) The high incidence of teenage pregnancy in Sudbury and Cornard (the second highest in Suffolk)
 - c) The requirement from central Government that teenage parents who are homeless should have access to 'semi-independent' supported housing rather than automatically being offered a secure Council tenancy that very often fails due to the young people's lack of relevant skills.

This scheme comprises eight, two bedroom dwellings with communal areas and a dedicated on-site support team funded through Supporting People and operated by Colchester Quaker Housing Association. Capital was provided by Orbit Housing Society through their Recycled Capital Grant Fund money. It is envisaged that the young parents will stay at the scheme for between 9 and 18 months before moving on. The age range is usually between 16 to 25 years.

JARGON AND OTHER DETAILS EXPLAINED

Budget

The Council's aims and policies in financial terms.

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH).

This is the national professional body for housing managers. Its members work predominantly in local authority housing departments and in housing associations.

Countryside Agency

The statutory body responsible for conserving and enhancing the countryside whilst promoting social equity and economic opportunity for people who live there.

Decent Homes Standard

Established by the Government in 2000 whereby housing should:

- Be above the statutory minimum standard (i.e. the fitness standard).
- Be in a reasonable state of repair.
- Provide reasonably modern facilities and services.
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

Department of Health and Social Care

Co-located with the Government Office to communicate and interpret Government policy on health and well-being, and inform and shape national policy.

East of England Regional Assembly

The Region's Voluntary Regional Chamber of Local Authorities and Stakeholder Organisations. It took over from the East of England Local Government Conference in April 2001 and since April 2003 is the "Regional Planning Body".

East of England Health and Social Inclusion Panel

Formed by the Regional Assembly to provide strategic leadership for inter-agency co-operation in addressing social exclusion and health inequalities in the East of England.

East of England Regional Housing and Sustainable Communities Panel

Formed by the Regional Assembly in 2003 to provide a forum for consideration of housing issues and housing aspects of the Sustainable Communities Plan and Regional Planning Guidance.

East of England Regional Housing Forum

The East of England's Forum for housing related agencies to share information and good practice and stimulate debate on housing with other regional agencies. Formed in 1999, with a wide-ranging membership that includes statutory, voluntary and commercial organisations.

East of England Rural Affairs Forum

Established under the auspices of the Regional Assembly in partnership with Go-East, EEDA, and the Countryside Agency to bring together local stakeholders to inform and monitor policy development in rural areas.

EECASS

A consortium of Local Authorities in the East of England working to support Asylum Seekers and Refugees. Supported within Regional Assembly framework.

English Partnerships

The national regeneration agency whose role has changed following the Sustainable Communities Plan. A joint unit has been established with the Housing Corporation to look at the potential for developing affordable housing on sites in their ownership in the East of England.

General Fund

The Council's main account, which pays for all services except Council Housing and the Council's trading services.

General Needs Index

Formulaic indicator of housing needs used in distribution of investment.

Government Office for the East of England (GO-East)

The Government Office brings together the varied regional activities of a range of Government departments. Part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, ensuring regional input into national policy-making.

Housing Corporation

Responsible for investing public money in Housing Associations, and protecting that investment by ensuring Associations are well managed and governed.

Housing Investment Programme (HIP)

Method of allocating permissions for investment from Government Office to Local Authorities.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

The account kept by the Council to cover the provision of Council Housing, including supervision, management, repairs and maintenance. There is a statutory requirement to keep this account separate from all other services.

Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix

Information about all dwelling stock in a Local Authority area. Compiled annually by Local Authorities.

National Housing Federation

The national trade body representing and supporting the interests of Housing Associations.

PPG 3 (Third Planning Policy Guidance)

This sets out the Government's policies on all aspects of planning, including housing. These policies should be taken into account by regional planning bodies and local planning authorities when they prepare their regional planning guidance and development plans.

PSA

Public Service Agreement – Local PSAs are a partnership between the Government and individual Local Authorities to improve key outcomes more quickly and/or at a higher level than would otherwise be the case.

Regional Planning Guidance

Guidance for the Spatial Strategy at Regional Level. A long-term strategy that incorporates links to other regional strategies.

Section 106

A type of planning agreement where approval for a scheme is granted to a development subject to a set of conditions.

These conditions may include planning gain: a deal in which the developer agrees to provide a certain amount of social housing or facilities either on the scheme in question or elsewhere.

Single Housing Investment Pot

Established by the Sustainable Communities Plan. It brings together the Approved Development Programme distributed by the Housing Corporation to Housing Associations to fund new social housing; and the Housing Investment Programme (HIP) allocated by Central Government to Local Authorities to fund repairs and maintenance on their own stock, private sector renewal and new social housing.

Spatial Strategy

A strategy to manage the future distribution of activities in the East of England.

Sustainable Communities Plan

Published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on 5th February 2003. It identifies growth areas for the South East and mechanisms to bring about a 'step-change' in delivery. A daughter document was produced for the East of England.

ADP	- Approved Development Programme
ASBO	- Anti-Social Behaviour Order
DFG	- Disabled Facilities Grant
HECA	- Home Energy Conservation Act
HMO	- House in Multiple Occupation
LA	- Local Authority
LSP	- Local Strategic Partnership
LSVT	- Large Scale Voluntary Transfer
PCT	- Primary Care Trust
PPG	- Planning Policy Guidance
RPG	- Regional Planning Guidance
RSL	- Registered Social Landlord
RTB	- Right to Buy
SHG	- Social Housing Grant

VISION FOR BABERGH

A district where strong and inclusive communities are built on active citizenship and where all citizens have the opportunity to develop to their full potential.

THE COUNCIL'S ROLE

- ✓ To provide responsible community leadership and influence in building, sustaining and helping to deliver a vision for the district that is shared by Babergh's citizens and the Council's partners
- ✓ To create, support and sustain the social, economic and environmental conditions in which the shared vision for the district is realistically achievable
- ✓ To encourage and contribute to partnerships that help to deliver that vision
- ✓ To make decisions that best reflect and balance the diverse needs of individuals and communities in the district
- ✓ To maintain a skilled, flexible and motivated workforce to deliver the services that citizens need
- ✓ To make it easy for all citizens to access those services as conveniently as possible

THE COUNCIL'S VALUES

The Council will base all of its actions on the following values:

- ✓ Recognition of individual, community and economic diversity within the district
- ✓ Treatment of all people with fairness, equality, dignity and respect
- ✓ Provision of maximum individual choice within a framework of responsible citizenship
- ✓ Open and accountable decision making
- ✓ Responsible stewardship of public money and resources on behalf of all Babergh's citizens

THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

In order to support **strong and inclusive communities** in the district, the Council will concentrate on the following priorities:

Social, Economic and Environmental Well Being

Creating and sustaining the conditions in which individuals and communities can thrive by contributing to partnerships that

- ✓ promote healthy living and reduce health inequalities
- ✓ increase the supply of housing that local people can afford to rent or buy
- ✓ maintain a safe and clean environment
- ✓ minimise domestic waste production and maximise recycling of waste
- ✓ give easy, convenient access to quality public services

Active Citizenship

Encouraging and facilitating the active involvement of citizens in local democracy by actions that will

- ✓ improve and enhance effective, two way communication between the Council, Babergh's citizens and the Council's partners
- ✓ demonstrate how local opinion has been taken into account in the Council's decisions
- ✓ provide honest, transparent explanations for the decisions made
- ✓ encourage public involvement in decision making
- ✓ actively promote and support the involvement of young people in local decision making and activities
- ✓ give influence and power to communities wherever possible

Ambition and Opportunity

Raising individual and community ambitions and creating the conditions of equality of opportunity in which those ambitions can be fulfilled by

- ✓ promoting and supporting a climate of high ambition and equality of opportunity
- ✓ active participation in business and other partnerships that provide learning, developmental and employment opportunities

March 2004

CONTACT DETAILS

Your views and comments on our plans are always very welcome and can be directed to Babergh in any of the following ways:

By post to:	Chris Foti Head of Housing Babergh District Council Council Offices Corks Lane Hadleigh IPSWICH IP7 6SJ
Telephone:	01473 822801
DX No:	85055 Babergh
Fax No:	01473 825742
E-mail:	chris.foti@babergh.gov.uk
Babergh's website	www.babergh.gov.uk

Contacting Council Officers

Housing Strategy	01473 825768
Tenant Participation	01473 825771
Supporting People	01473 825761
Homelessness	01473 825845
Technical Services	01473 825787
P R and Communications Policy Officer	01473 826634 01473 826649
Legal	01473 823712
Environmental Health	01473 825883
Planning Services	01473 825783
Committee Services	01473 825876
Council House Lettings	01473 825762
Council Housing Management	01473 825847
Supported Housing	01473 825761
Sheltered Housing	01473 825758

HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

<u>Link with Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Target Dates</u>	<u>Resources</u>	<u>Progress at August 2004</u>	<u>Accountable Officer/Group</u>
Affordable Housing	1. Implement a new 5-year Social Housing Programme to provide up to 700 new homes.	2004 - 2009	£100,000 p/year plus disposal of land at up to 100% discount	Officer seconded to role of Housing Enabling Manager to ensure Social Housing Programme is delivered.	The Housing Panel
Strong and Inclusive Communities	<u>2.</u> Promote initiatives directed at sustaining village and rural life and help meet the need for new affordable rural homes.	On-going	Planning, Environmental & Housing existing revenue resources	Housing Needs Survey underway	Corporate Director
Strong and Inclusive Communities	3. Redevelop and regenerate the Poplar Road shopping parade and adjoining area in Great Cornard.	2005	Provision of free land and revenue resources	Local group have agreed plans which are currently out to consultation	Poplar Road Regeneration Group

<u>Link with Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Target Dates</u>	<u>Resources</u>	<u>Progress at August 2004</u>	<u>Accountable Officer/Group</u>
Safe & Clean Environment Access to Services	4. Consider further service improvements that may be achieved by partnership working	On-going	To be determined	Investigations into a Joint Venture Partnership for `customer access` have started. Committee approval to enter into partnership agreements for kitchen renewals, door replacements and loft insulation.	Head of Organisational Development Housing Panel
Strong and inclusive community	5. Clearly identify the housing needs and problems of the area and carry out an updated Housing Needs Survey.	2004	£25,000	Housing Needs survey completed in July 2004	Housing Enabling Manager
Affordable housing	6. Develop further the integrated housing system to improve data capture on new archetypes and decent homes	March 2005	Capital budget for IT software £15,000	Investigations currently underway into software for external data gathering	Head of Revenues

<u>Link with Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Target Dates</u>	<u>Resources</u>	<u>Progress at August 2004</u>	<u>Accountable Officer/Group</u>
Affordable housing	7. Achieve Decent Homes Standard	By 2008/09	Capital budget of £4.2m	On target	Head of Technical Services
Affordable housing	8. Establish Decent Homes Standard Plus and develop programme to deliver it.	By 2015	To be determined	Questionnaires sent out to every tenant to set new standard - currently being evaluated	Housing Panel
Affordable housing	9. Maximise the use of the Council's planning powers to ensure the provision of affordable housing.	2004 - 2009	Existing revenue resources	Emerging Local Plan policy proposes 20 to 35% affordable housing on new developments over 15 units. 33% under 3,000 pop.	Head of Planning Policy
Affordable housing	10. Redevelop the council-owned land and bungalows at Uplands Road, Sudbury to provide new bungalows for rent.	April 2005	Free land	Bungalows and land to be transferred to Suffolk Housing Society at nil cost.	Housing Enabling Officer
Safe & clean environment	11. Provide Community alarms to vulnerable people in the community. Install 170 every year	On-going	Existing revenue resources	On target	Contact Care Officer

<u>Link with Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Target Dates</u>	<u>Resources</u>	<u>Progress at August 2004</u>	<u>Accountable Officer/Group</u>
Strong and inclusive community	12. Implement the Council's Homelessness Strategy - to include the conversion of the Council's Homeless Persons Reception Centres into self-contained family flats and vulnerable single person scheme	2006	Capital budget £889,000 for phase 1	Project Plan agreed and initial work started - project being monitored by Member-led Group	Head of Housing
Safe and clean environment	13. Stop using long-term bed & breakfast units for homeless families.	April 2004	None	Achieved	Housing Support Manager
Affordable housing	14. Implement the Council's Supported Housing Programme.	2004-2009	Combination of capital grant, free land, SHG and Revenue Resources	Programme on target	Head of Housing
Strong and inclusive community	15. Develop an Older Persons Housing Strategy.	2005	Existing revenue resources	Review of sheltered housing underway	Head of Housing
Strong and inclusive community	16. Implement fully the Race Equality Scheme including the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice for Rented Housing.	Ongoing	Existing revenue resources	On target	Head of Housing
Affordable housing	17. Explore the need for leasehold Very Sheltered Housing schemes for Older People.	December 2004	To be determined	County group established to consider a cross county scheme	Housing Enabling Manager

<u>Link with Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Target Dates</u>	<u>Resources</u>	<u>Progress at August 2004</u>	<u>Accountable Officer/Group</u>
Safe and clean environment	18. Support good practice procedures in relation to Domestic Violence in liaison with other agencies.	2005	Existing revenue resources	New protocol agreed with local Domestic Violence Group. Staff training on DV issues completed	Tenant Services Manager
Strong and inclusive community	19. Implement the council housing regeneration programme	2004-2009	Capital funding of £1.2m identified for key projects	On target	Head of Technical Services
Safe and clean environment	20. Tackle anti-social behaviour by developing, with partners, a corporate and co-ordinated policy and contribute to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy plan targets.	August 2004 onwards	£30,000 p.a.	Anti-Social Behaviour Network Officer appointed	Head of Leisure & Community Services
Safe and clean environment	21. Embrace the new powers the Government has included in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act effectively and develop the role of the member led "Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour Group".	December 2004	To be determined	Member led Group established - report in development	The Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour Group
Strong and inclusive community	22. Commission a Tenant Satisfaction Survey.	March 2004	£10,000	Completed	Tenant Services Manager
Active Citizenship	23. Promote tenant participation in all council housing services.	Ongoing	£25,000 p.a.	New Tenants Forum elections held and new Group established	Tenant Services Manager

<u>Link with Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Target Dates</u>	<u>Resources</u>	<u>Progress at August 2004</u>	<u>Accountable Officer/Group</u>
Active Citizenship	24. Involve tenants and other stakeholders in a fully developed analysis of the stock options available to the Council in line with Government guidance	December 2004	£50,000	On target	Stock Options Appraisal Steering Group
Access to services	25. Implement property specific rent rebate subsidy limitation	March 2005	Capital IT budget	Change to be implemented via a BDC Access database or an IBS System enhancement	Head of Revenues
Access to services	<u>26.</u> Ensure the Housing Service is fully supported by E-Government systems and processes.	Ongoing	E-Government grant of £500k expected over next 2 year or the JVC development	On target	E-Government Steering Group
Safe and clean environment	<u>27.</u> Review the Estate Ranger Pilot Scheme in order to fully monitor the effectiveness of this new approach to estate management	Pilot to end in Oct 2005	£25,000 p.a. if continued	Pilot Scheme extended for further year to allow for fuller evaluation	Head of Housing
Affordable housing	28. Replace any Council-owned block built bungalows, when vacant, with new units following transfer to a Housing Association.	Ongoing	Combination of free land SHG and Revenue resources	First two blockbuilt bungalows have been transferred	Housing Enabling Manager

<u>Link with Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Target Dates</u>	<u>Resources</u>	<u>Progress at August 2004</u>	<u>Accountable Officer/Group</u>
Health improvements	29. Carry out a major review of the Council's sheltered housing schemes, identifying improvements where needed and deciding the future of certain schemes.	Ongoing	Existing housing revenue resources	Member led Group established to carry out Review, which is underway.	Housing Panel
Healthy living	30. Ensure that all Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the District are of good quality and, where appropriate, to encourage new ones.	Schedule to be agreed	Overall budget of £235,000	On target	Head of Environmental Services
Healthy living	31. Provide financial assistance for the conversion of privately owned under-utilised accommodation, empty homes and flats above shops for affordable rented housing and to encourage more people to become landlords.	Ongoing	Overall budget of £235,000	Several properties inspected and schedules produced	Head of Environmental Services
Healthy living	32. Seek more equitable funding to secure the long-term future of Babergh's Care and Repair Home Improvement Agency, and extend range of services in accordance with Supporting People goals	Ongoing	Overall budget of £235,000	Draft partnership agreement drawn up and performance standards agreed	Head of Environmental Services
Healthy living	33. Promote energy efficient housing and secure access to affordable warmth for vulnerable people using Babergh grants and loans and maximising the take-up of grants from other sources.	Ongoing	£30,000 p.a.	Partnerships in place with 2 insulation companies delivering 120 properties to date.	Head of Environmental Services
Healthy living	34. Provide Disabled Facilities Grants to adapt the homes of residents with disabilities	Ongoing	£260,000 p.a.	On target	Head of Environmental Services

<u>Link with Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Target Dates</u>	<u>Resources</u>	<u>Progress at August 2004</u>	<u>Accountable Officer/Group</u>
Healthy living	35. Commission a Private Sector House Condition Survey	2007	£60,000	On target	Head of Environmental Services
Healthy living	36. Continue to adapt council properties to make them suitable for use by disabled tenants	Programme underway	£606,000 over next 3 years	On target	Repairs Manager
Healthy living	37. Commission a new Council House Condition Survey	2008	£40,000	On target	Head of Technical Services
Affordable housing	38. Implement the Empty Homes Strategy Action Plan	2004 - 2009	Ongoing commitments and others to be determined	On target	Head of Environmental Services
Access to services	39. Formal review of the Housing Strategy, HRA Business Plan and Homelessness Strategy	April 2005	Existing Revenue resources	Council has agreed that Member led Housing Panel will undertake review process	Housing Panel

What people have said about Babergh's Housing Strategy in the past:

"Congratulations on producing such an excellent draft Housing Strategy documents are often such dry and uninviting papers. In contrast Babergh's shows imagination and clarity which makes for very interesting reading."

Tenant Participation Advisory Service

"As usual the Strategy recognises the achievements of successful joint planning with others."

Suffolk Health

"The document reads very well. It is clear, concise and encourages the reader to complete the task. It covers all pertinent areas and has some interesting solutions to problems."

Suffolk County Council

"I feel I must compliment you on both the presentation and the content."

Sanctuary Housing Association

"There are many aspects that recommend the document which I am sure will be of great benefit to the inhabitants of Babergh, with much proposed for disadvantaged people."

Mid Suffolk Rethink on Disability

"I found your document extremely good, well presented, crystal clear and easy to read."

St Edmundsbury Borough Council