



Suffolk Growth workshop: Delivering Homes in Suffolk

Workshop summary report: 21 May 2021

<https://www.suffolkgrowth.co.uk/>

Overview

Suffolk Growth Partnership (SGP) facilitated a workshop with officers from planning, economic development, housing, building control, transport & public health teams and wider stakeholders including Taylor Wimpey, Badger Building Ltd, Homes England and NALEP, to discuss the opportunities and challenges facing Suffolk in delivering the right homes, in the right place, at the right price.

This paper provides a summary of the workshop and presents a short-term action plan.

SGP and partners will take forward the action plan and report back on progress.

A full list of attendees can be found at the end of this report.

Presentations

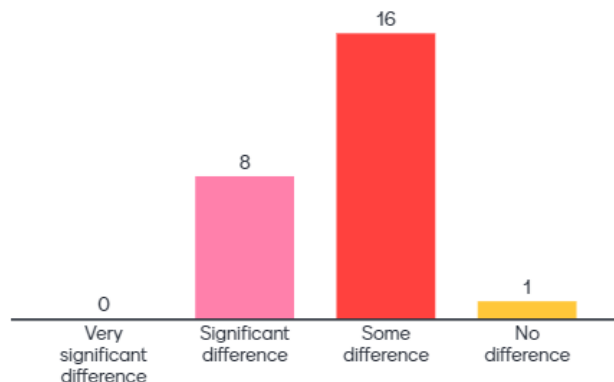
The workshop format was:

- Introduction and context including key statistics about Suffolk's land use, local plan coverage, current housing stock and annual delivery & and a summary of supply and demand issues.
- Introductory baseline survey questions via Mentimeter
- Presentations with Q&A:
 - The private sector view – delivering homes in Suffolk (Mark Chapman, Taylor Wimpey)
 - The view from Homes England (Nick Enge, James Mather and Carlton Roberts-James, Homes England)
- Breakout groups: four groups to discuss the challenges in delivering homes in Suffolk
- Re-run of Mentimeter survey
- Summary & next steps

Presentations from the workshop are available as a PDF and have been appended to this summary report.

Workshop baseline survey

We asked 3 survey questions at the outset of the workshop and the same again at the conclusion to gauge any change in focus and / or capture additional points made after discussion in the breakout groups – the questions and results are shown below.

Question	First round	Second round																				
<p>Would standardised planning conditions / policies in Suffolk make a difference to both the time scale & quality of housing delivery?</p> <p><i>*difference is taken to mean a positive result</i></p>	 <table><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Count</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Very significant difference</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>Significant difference</td><td>12</td></tr><tr><td>Some difference</td><td>17</td></tr><tr><td>No difference</td><td>2</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Count	Very significant difference	1	Significant difference	12	Some difference	17	No difference	2	<p><i>*very comparable results, some suggestion that other factors in the planning & development system may have more of an impact on delivery.</i></p>  <table><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Count</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Very significant difference</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>Significant difference</td><td>8</td></tr><tr><td>Some difference</td><td>16</td></tr><tr><td>No difference</td><td>1</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Count	Very significant difference	0	Significant difference	8	Some difference	16	No difference	1
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<p>What is the most important thing the public sector can do to improve housing affordability in Suffolk?</p> <p><i>(Note: given the consistency in response we have grouped into a number of headings)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase public sector delivery of homes<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Direct delivery of homes for sale & rent○ Work with local house builders to improve affordability volumes through reassessed viability○ Use public / local authority land for housing delivery / use brownfield sites for local authority housing• Housing development changes<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Smaller sites with more diversity○ Utilise innovation and non-standard delivery models – e.g. making energy efficiency schemes affordable• Strengthen policies including:	<p>Additional points made in the second run of this question include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on stalled sites & understand what is holding up delivery• Better understanding of our housing need to ensure future supply meets needs – can this be delivered on a county wide basis?• Boost diversity of house builders in the area• Build upwards instead of outwards in towns to save costs of land purchases																				

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have up-to-date local plans which support affordable housing ○ Create policies that reflect viability of sites – consideration of cumulative impact of policies ○ Reduce obligation requirements and reduce the need for S106 agreements ○ Ensure there is robust / defensible evidence for affordable housing in developments and build in design considerations / housing standards ● Networking & engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve engagement with developers and registered providers ○ Work with landowners to reinforce potential for legacy ○ Increase awareness and access to funding schemes that could improve delivery (e.g. work with Homes England) ● Wider economic growth to stimulate the creation of higher paying jobs / sectors – leading to increased demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong policies to achieve a mix of housing across development sites ● Only accept 10% profitability on viability ● Gift land to community land trusts or cooperative societies ● Lobby Government to nationalise the house building industry
How can we develop a consistent approach to strategic networking discussions to improve housing delivery?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Single, joined up discussions across Suffolk – utilise Suffolk Growth & Suffolk Design to formalise networking across the market ● Ensure all parties, both public and private sector, are included within discussions <u>from the very beginning</u> ● Consistent discussions between local authority officers across districts / boroughs ● Common IT systems across the LPA's ● Build better consensus across Suffolk LPA's and individual service areas ● Clear understanding of the type of homes Suffolk wants to deliver – <i>data and evidence required?</i> ● Develop an action focused workplan to deliver 	<p>Additional points made during the second run of this question include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote public and private partnerships with political buy-in ● Hold regular meetings between LPA's to join up policies, practices and evidence ● Share knowledge, expertise, and collaboration over issues in relation to the future homes standard to support delivery ● Treat urban and rural areas differently rather than a one size fits all approach ● Ensure all local authorities have the same standards ● Leadership and political buy-in across Suffolk



Summary from survey questions:

From the responses provided to the questions there are three key themes that emerge:

1. A strong evidence base that shows the type of housing Suffolk's population requires and is robust to ensure a full range of affordable housing requirements can be defended and built into all sites according to need. Within this sits the need to provide clear information and guidance on how funding and innovative delivery schemes can be accessed.
2. Requirement for 'joined-up' discussions between Suffolk local authorities and private sector in order to have open discussions, understand Suffolk's aspirations, learn from best practice and support one another to overcome current and future challenges and standardise practices. For example, through a facilitated formalised networking group with political and leadership buy-in.
3. Making better use of local authority / public sector land and brownfield sites to deliver local authority housing stock.

Breakout groups

Four breakout groups were held with participants assigned to one session. Each group had a facilitator and note-taker and was asked to consider one or two questions as set by the workshop organising team.

A summary of the key issues from the groups is given below.

Future Homes Standard	Town centre development: what does the future hold for housing development & our high streets?
<p><i>Group facilitated by Mark Chapman, Taylor Wimpey</i> <i>Overview of Future Homes Standard</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1 (31%) of Future Homes Standard – adds an additional £5,000 per home. • The standard might help mitigate against fuel poverty. Or is this going to be an additional cost for households? How will this impact lower earners? • What infrastructure are energy companies going to need to support the new standards? Are we working together to ensure they are aware of housing delivery plans and that they can meet the need? • All homes will be built to Building Regs, so no wriggle room. This may however result in negotiations on other areas of viability, e.g. 	<p><i>Group facilitated by Ed Gilder, Badger Building</i> <i>Question 1: town centre use & housing development – how have things changed?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town centres are now much more of a leisure use • Built environment – needs to be visually attractive and have culture and heritage • Shopping offers need to draw people in <p>How will housing impact our town centres?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low quality housing concerns raised – poor quality flats, lowered vibrancy of town centres • Leads to a different demographic that may not spend back into the local economy • May not meet 'beautiful housing' aspirations

affordable housing (at least in the short term). Medium and longer term, landowners and developers will have factored costs into land acquisitions and planning negotiations.

- Practicality of delivering FHS, contractors need to be trained to deliver to the required standards. Sharing knowledge and experience between contractors, developers and LPAs will be crucial.
- Market will react to the technology, and landowners will soon realise the costs don't justify the values they're looking for... but this will take time.

Question 1: Would you support your Local Authority leaders to lobby for improved National standards rather than applying standards locally?

- Local circumstances may warrant different standards.
- From a national housebuilder perspective, national standards are preferred as allows for efficient replication of house types across regions.

Question 2: As LPA's that have declared a climate emergency, are the costs associated to meeting the Future Homes Standard factored into your Local Plan viability and therefore landowners expectations of value?

- Depends on timing, Local Plans take a long time to prepare, and the evidence behind them also (e.g. viability reports). Given the relatively recent publication of Future Homes Standard, it may not have been taken account of through Viability Reports. That said, Local Plan Policies may aim for greater than Building Regs standards, which will have been factored into Viability Reports (albeit the percentage over Building Regs will no doubt differ by Policy).
- Would Future Homes Standard form part of the BCIS? Yes, but due to the recency of the proposals may not be robust data to inform BCIS.

- The core shopping experience needs to be zoned with zoned housing – clustering of uses, well planned (including leisure)
- Mixed use to provide vibrancy – how do we get developers to want to build in our town centres?
- Policing – it's easier to visit outside of towns due to safety concerns, lack of policing presence
- Changing use of town centres and 'greening-up' – experiences need linking. A 'whole experience'

Question 2: how we deliver housing in town centres:

- Funding is required – national government intervention
- Recognition that if you enhance the area, you enhance the land value
- Developers are not keen to build in town centres for fear of losing value
- Decline in car use – we need to see if there is a long term change in home working – if so, then need to build into long term strategies on transport.
- Consider need for pop-up workspaces and hot desking facilities in town centres
- Concern over what impact permitted development might have and whether this may mean LPA's lose control

How can Suffolk present a more cohesive ask to secure infrastructure that enables housing delivery?	Delivering design
<p><i>Group facilitated by Homes England</i></p> <p><i>Question 1: how do you get the joined up approach?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to consider sites with multiple landowners – difficult to get coordination over infrastructure requirements / contributions • Need to consider all types of infrastructure, e.g. EV charging / road & rail access / water demand & supply • How do we actively approach design layout from a community perspective including highways as well as individual development plot layouts • Great to have an Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) for a site but what is the incentive to deliver? • Recognise introduction of national policy can bring about overnight changes – e.g. <i>Gear Change</i> – how can we be best placed to respond to very sudden changes? • Need greater research into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does a lack of infrastructure actually prevent housing delivery? ○ What will be the new normal – e.g. WFH, increased demand for digital connectivity / flexible hot desk hubs at v. site level? ○ Where is the economic growth coming from? ○ Different things hold up different projects – so does one size actually fit all? • Need a shared strategy for growth across Suffolk – be ambitious and don't just follow the consents • Improve member training - how do we bring together politicians across the county? • Trial a development funded by LA's / JV's to drive all the new wants from the new ways of working through a public / private partnership 	<p><i>Group facilitated by Phil Isbell, Babergh & Mid Suffolk Districts</i></p> <p><i>Question 1: Do we achieve correct design on our own schemes?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead with exemplar design projects to enable market influence • Does exemplar design really influence the SME market? How can we ensure this does? • Modern living design changes need to be adhered to enable a future standard of house building • Use current policy bases or other SPD's to influence what the public really want? • Use the highlights within the NPPF and Suffolk design guide to promote and approve different design standards • Local plan sign offs as a delivery vehicle for new living standard aspirations • Change from what is being built now replicating what have always been built



Short term action plan

The following action plan has been drawn up based on the discussions at the workshop and within the breakout groups. Suffolk Growth will engage with partners on these actions and monitor delivery. A follow up report and further workshop will be arranged for May 2022.

Action	Lead organisation (s) to work with Suffolk Growth	Timeline / next steps
Networking and best practice group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a regular private and public sector Suffolk wide group that can discuss issues of concern, learn from best practice and develop co-working opportunities Build on the work of current Heads of Planning group, facilitated by Suffolk Growth Partnership, to lead LPA agenda points in advance of these group meetings and follow-up on actions after meeting dates Work to secure long term buy-in from local authority leaders 	Heads of Planning Major Sites Forum Private sector developers	First virtual meeting to be held within 3-4 months' time – quarterly meetings to be arranged?
Suffolk's data evidence base <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Suffolk local authorities and Suffolk Office of Data Analytics to develop a clear and strong evidence base about the housing needs of our current and future population and requirements for local affordable housing Work with Suffolk LPA's to track housing delivery in a more efficient way, reflecting housing delivery in real time. Develop a database of affordable housing funding schemes that is clear and up-to-date to form part of evidence base. Look at innovative ideas across the country. 	SODA and DPOG / DMOG Homes England	9 – 12 months
Support local authority colleagues to build strong internal relationships between planning and economic development teams to deliver resilient town centres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate discussions between Suffolk local authority planning and economic development teams to ensure we are reflecting on evidence / data to develop future town centre regeneration plans. Work with developers to understand what is holding them back from developing housing stock within town centres. 	Planning & economic development teams Suffolk developer group	6 – 12 months

Continuation of the Suffolk Design initiative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suffolk local authority Suffolk Design officer group to finalise draft Suffolk Design Management Process (SDMP) and guidance document. Work with local, regional and national developers to iron out any issues within the SDMP and ‘test’ on live sites 	Suffolk Design officer group Suffolk developer group	6 – 9 months
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Please visit our website for further information on the work of Suffolk Growth.

www.suffolkgrowth.co.uk

Thank you for attending, please refer any queries to: info@suffolkgrowth.co.uk

Suffolk Growth representatives

Name	Organisation
Karen Chapman	Suffolk Growth Partnership
Kay Bonning-Schmitt	Suffolk Growth Partnership

Attendees

Name	Organisation
Hazel Ellard	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
Philip Isbell	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
Tom Barker	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
Francine Esteves Tarn	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
Jo Hobbs	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
John Pateman-Gee	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
Kathy Nixon	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils



Name	Organisation
Paul Hughes	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
Ed Guilder	Badger Building LTD
Anthony Taylor	East Suffolk Council
Ben Woolnough	East Suffolk Council
Bridget Law	East Suffolk Council
Elliott Dawes	East Suffolk Council
Michael Charlton	East Suffolk Council
Ruth Bishop	East Suffolk Council
Ryan Taylor	East Suffolk Council
Stephanie Baxter	East Suffolk Council
Mark Harvey	East Suffolk Council & Ipswich Borough Council
Anna Roe	Ipswich Borough Council
Gavin Whitman	Ipswich Borough Council
Lisa Evans	Ipswich Borough Council
Michael Hammond	Ipswich Borough Council
Rebecca Sands	Ipswich Borough Council
Sarah Barker	Ipswich Borough Council
Carroll Reeve	Lavenham Parish Council
Colin Butler	Lowestoft Town Council
Michael Calder	Masterplanner, Director
Ellen Goodwin	New Anglia LEP
Carl Ashton	Suffolk County Council
Graeme Mateer	Suffolk County Council
Julia Cox	Suffolk County Council
Luke Barber	Suffolk County Council



Name	Organisation
Sam Harvey	Suffolk County Council
Mark Chapman	Taylor Wimpey
Alex Fraser	West Suffolk Council
Alex Pointer	West Suffolk Council
David Osborne	West Suffolk Council
Frank Cracknell	West Suffolk Council
Jackie Ward	West Suffolk Council
Julie Barrow	West Suffolk Council
Penny Mills	West Suffolk Council
Samantha Robertson	West Suffolk Council
Colin Wright	West Suffolk Council, Director of Barley Homes