

Living

Purpose

To ensure that new residential development meets the needs of existing and incoming populations and is encouraged in locations close to community facilities.

Rationale and Evidence

National Policy

National housing policies are contained primarily in Paragraphs 59 to 76 of the National Planning Policy Framework, with further guidance in Planning Practice Guidance.

Paragraph 69 of NPPF enables neighbourhood plans to make small or medium site allocations for housing. Strategic sites have been allocated in the Local Plan. It is not the intention of the Neighbourhood Plan to allocate additional housing sites, but the plan does identify other opportunities for residential development.

Local Policies

The Waveney Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and Objectively Assessed Need (OAHN) Study (April 2016) concluded that its OAN between 2011 and 2036 would be 381 dwellings per annum (dpa). Amounting to a 41 dpa uplift on the most recent household projections from CLG, taking account of the results of the Offshore Wind employment scenario.

The figure eventually adopted by the Local Plan equates to 374 dwellings per annum, of which annually, 208 need to be affordable to meet local need. 56% of this new growth is to be directed to the Lowestoft area. In terms of the form that housing should take, the Local Plan states at Paragraph 2.37:

“Waveney has an ageing population and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2017) identified a significant need for new sheltered and extra care housing and new care homes.”

Planning Rationale

Much of the identified need is met by the Strategic site allocations in the Local Plan. However, this neighbourhood plan encourages additional housing provision, primarily by enabling development in and around the Town Centre, including conversion of upper floors above retail units. The conversion of upper levels above larger units and the collective impact of smaller conversions, together with suitable new-build, will add significantly to the provision of residential units, whilst also contributing to town centre regeneration.

The Community Survey to residents contained questions on what is good, what is bad and what would you change on the subject of life in Lowestoft. The responses informed the structure of the neighbourhood plan and actually noted that the cost of housing in Lowestoft is one of its positive attributes.

The Local Plan notes “Life expectancy is lower in some of the central wards of Lowestoft than the rest of the [former Waveney] District, and death rates are higher”, which may imply that the housing stock has some influence.

In July 2019, Lowestoft Town Council declared a climate emergency. The subjects raised included Standards for sustainable development and insulation in properties. Most recently, March 2020, engagement has been undertaken with landowners of sites designated for development in Waveney Local Plan, looking at securing green space within development and residential mix for housing development.

The policies are designed to enable housing development in and around the town centre, as a sustainable location which supports town centre regeneration. In addition, policies address housing standards and also affordability requirements, recognising the relatively low property prices and that the challenges in Lowestoft are related to viability, design quality and ongoing running costs.

The Former Lowestoft Hospital site is recognised in the Local Plan as being suitable for housing development. The following policies include sustainable development principles for this site.

LH1: Residential Development

- 1. In addition to the sites allocated in the Local Plan, new residential development will be supported and in other sustainable locations, including:**
 - a) Sites in the Town Centre, in locations set out in Policy ETC1;
 - b) ***. Hospital site, identified in the Local Plan, subject to meeting the requirements of Policy LH2 of this Neighbourhood Plan;
 - c) Conversion and adaptation of upper levels above shop and commercial units;
 - d) Development of infill sites within existing residential areas;
 - e) Redevelopment of existing residential buildings.

Interpretation and Guidance

The policy identifies sustainable locations where housing schemes will be supported, subject to meeting other policy requirements. The importance of repopulating retail areas is recognised by enabling residential development of sites around the main retail streets, or of upper storeys, above retail units. It does not enable residential development of ground floor units in main retail streets.

Infill and redevelopment proposals will require careful consideration against other policies, such as those relating to design and character.

Potential for incompatibility between housing and commercial uses would arise primarily from noise and disturbance through late hours of operation. Existing commercial uses could be compromised by new residential development where there would be a significant likelihood of complaints being made by residents, following occupation. Planning conditions relating to hours of operation may provide the necessary safeguards in some circumstances.

LH2: Former Lowestoft Hospital Site

- 1. Development of the Former Lowestoft Hospital site must comply with the following development principles:**
 - a. The historic ranges from 1882, 1927 and the earliest 20th century should be retained and be sensitively refurbished, to preserve or enhance their architectural or historic interest;
 - b. Unsympathetic alterations and extensions should be reversed and/or demolished;
 - c. The layout, height and massing of new buildings should complement the historic building complex, creating spaces enclosed and defined by continuous building ranges;

- d. **The palette of materials used for the new buildings should include those used in the historic building ranges, though these may be combined with green materials and construction to create superior environmental performance.**
- e. **Spaces within the development should include planting using native species to create amenity for residents and to support biodiversity.**

Interpretation and Guidance

The policy complements Policy WLP2.8 in the Local Plan, setting out development principles for the retention and refurbishment of the historic building complex.

The policy requires new buildings should respond to the townscape characteristics of the complex, but should not be interpreted as requiring or implying stylistic imitation. Indeed, the design of buildings and spaces should respond to the current global context of climate change.

Policy LH3: Residential Mix and Standards

1. **The mix residential development must reflect the latest evidence of local need and must include housing suitable for the elderly.**
2. **Residential development must provide screened storage space for refuse bins and recycling bins. For housing, this must be provided within the curtilage of every property.**
3. **Where there is an affordable housing requirement, it must be provided as an integral part of the scheme and be tenure blind.**
4. **Where a reduction of the proportion of affordable housing is proposed on grounds of viability, this will be supported only where the development adds to the mix, quality and choice of residential accommodation in the area, meeting the following requirements:**
 - a) **The scheme incorporates exceptional design quality and exceeds national space standards;**
 - b) **100% of accommodation meets identified shortfalls in provision within Lowestoft, based on the latest evidence of local need;**
 - c) **The scheme incorporates superior environmental performance, significantly bettering minimum building regulations requirements, thereby achieving lower running costs.**

Interpretation and Guidance

The policy should be applied with regard to 'Technical Housing Standards nationally described space standard' (March 2015) or any equivalent standard superseding that document.

The requirement for affordable housing to be tenure blind means that it is indiscernible from the market housing. The policy requires affordable housing to be within the site, and not be addressed through a financial contribution for housing on a remote site.

The policy enables a degree of flexibility in affordable housing provision, but only where specific tests are met. This is to enable specialist housing and to address viability challenges. It also recognises that affordability is not just about the purchase or rental cost of housing, but also low running costs.

Please note, Policy TM1 enables car-free development within the Town Centre.

Draft of Master Document