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COMMITTEE:	BABERGH CABINET
DATE:	TUESDAY, 5 JULY 2022 9.30 AM
VENUE:	ELISABETH FRINK ROOM, ENDEAVOUR HOUSE, 8 RUSSELL ROAD, IPSWICH

Members		
<u>Independent Conservatives</u> Jan Osborne John Ward (Chair) Mary McLaren	<u>Independent</u> Clive Arthey Elisabeth Malvisi Alastair McCraw	<u>Liberal Democrat</u> David Busby <u>Green Party</u> Jane Gould

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REVISED AGENDA

PART 1

MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PRESS AND PUBLIC PRESENT

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Please note the most up to date version can be found via the website:

[Forthcoming Decisions List » Babergh](#)

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Date and Time of next meeting

Please note that the next meeting is scheduled for Friday, 8 July 2022 at 1.00 pm.

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https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSWf_0D13zmegAf5Qv_aZSg

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Agenda Item 3

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **BABERGH CABINET** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Wednesday, 8 June 2022

PRESENT:

Councillor: John Ward (Chair)

Councillors: Jan Osborne
David Busby
Alastair McCraw
John Hinton

Clive Arthey
Jane Gould
Mary McLaren

In attendance:

Councillors: John Hinton – Chair of Overview and Scrutiny
Simon Barrett
Peter Beer
Michael Holt
Siân Dawson

Officers: Chief Executive
Senior Governance Support Officer
Assistant Director - Assets and Investments
Assistant Director – Planning and Building Control
Assistant Director - Environment and Commercial Partnerships
Assistant Director - Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer
Corporate Manager - Communities (VM)
Corporate Manager – The Councils’ Companies (HB)
Senior Governance Support Officer (HH)

Apologies:

Councillors: Elisabeth Malvisi

1 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

Councillor Busby declared a non-registrable interest in item 10 as a Board Member of Babergh Growth (Ltd,) which he had received a Dispensation for from the Monitoring Officer.

2 BCA/22/1 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 APRIL 2022

It was RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th April 2022 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

3 TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COUNCIL'S PETITION SCHEME

There were no petitions received.

4 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

There were no questions received from Councillors.

5 MATTERS REFERRED BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OR JOINT AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEES

There were no matters referred by the Overview and Scrutiny or Joint Audit and Standards Committees.

6 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

There were no comments on the Forthcoming Decisions List.

7 BCA/22/2 RESPONSE TO NATIONAL GRID NON-STATUTORY CONSULTATION ON THE EAST ANGLIA GREEN OVERHEAD LINE PROJECT

The Chair, Councillor Ward invited the Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor Arthey to introduce the report.

7.1 Councillor Arthey provided a brief summary of the item and proposed the recommendations in the report, and this was seconded by Councillor Busby.

7.2 Councillor Ward advised Cabinet that he had invited Ward Members to present their responses to the Consultation at the meeting. He then read a response received from Councillor Carpendale:

Response received from Councillor Sue Carpendale

Please would you add my following comments to those that will be presented to Cabinet on this matter. I'm unable to be present. I can't offer you any expertise, but my comments reflect my own views and those of residents in my ward. I know that some of these residents will be making their own, very substantial and well-argued objections direct to the consultation. I am completely supportive of their objections. Thanks.

I attended the consultation event and exhibition at Holton St Mary on 17th May 2022, and requested further information, including a set of maps. The event was busy, with many people present. As one might have expected, I didn't hear one positive comment.

The proposed corridor for these massive 50m pylons passes along the edge of my ward. Needless to say, nearby residents are horrified and alarmed by the prospect. However, the proximity of these pylons is not just an issue for people living close by.

The maps illustrating the 180km pylon corridor from Norfolk to Essex demonstrate the appalling intrusion into the area, both visually and in terms of land use and disturbance. I do not believe that undergrounding a short section through the AONB is either sufficient or acceptable, given the impact on the environment, including wildlife and natural habitat.

I am wholly supportive of the lobby gaining traction, at levels from our regional MPs at Westminster through to local residents, that a supply network of this magnitude should be routed sub-sea and river in its entirety. If France can ship power to the UK across the channel, the technology clearly exists.

Furthermore, in view of the number of power cuts suffered as a result of weather-related events, and in a time of climate change when there is a likelihood of more frequent and severe weather events, it surely does not make sense to erect such an important, long term and strategically significant power supply in a manner which will not guarantee continuity of operation.

This proposal is a monstrous imposition on rural East Anglia and dismissive of alternative supply-route technologies.

7.3 The Chair, Councillor Ward invited Councillor Hinton to present his response to Cabinet:

7.4 Councillor Hinton thanked the Chair and continued:

This proposal is, as Councillor Carpendale has pointed out in her written submission, extremely intrusive across a wide swathe of countryside from Norfolk all the way down through into Essex. It chomps through parts of my Ward, and across Stour Vale, and will be extremely intrusive, more intrusive than the power network already in place.

We know that these networks are vulnerable to weather conditions, we saw a few years ago a lightning strike on a gas power station in Bedfordshire that blacked out the whole of northern east Anglia and Ipswich hospital, for the simple reason that it then tripped out a wind farm. So even having wind farms off the coast, is not a reliable source when there is a storm around or anything like that.

Putting energy that's generated off the coast under sea is a logical way to proceed, there are already proposals within this for part of it to be put under the sea around Tilbury. So why on earth can't the whole thing be put under sea up from the start of the operation up in off the north Norfolk coast.

We know that in the possible near future, there is going to be a third nuclear reactor at Sizewell, that will presumably mean they're going to have to put up some more pylons to take the power from Sizewell to where its actually needed. And that will mean further intrusion upon the countryside of Suffolk and North Essex.

We know also that within the plans, I hasten to say, the strategic thinking that the Government has got in place. But it doesn't seem to have an awful lot of strategic thinking in place, as far as power generation is concerned. That the new mini nuclear reactors, if they ever get off the ground, that they're going to be placed near to where the electricity is going to be consumed.

And that will reduce on transmission cost and transmission losses, so putting something underground or under sea now, will give positive benefits in the long term for the whole of East Anglia. Which at the moment is turning into an enormous great pylon farm. So, I support very much the objections of the Council to the overgrounding of the pylon erection of these proposals.

7.5 The Chair proposed that an amendment was made to recommendation 2 to include *'and the Leader of the Council'*.

7.6 This was put to the proposer Councillor Arthey and the seconder Councillor Busby, who both agreed to the amendment.

7.7 Councillor Ward further asked that a new paragraph be inserted into the Council's response to the Consultation on page 16 in the report, between the current 4th and 5th paragraphs in the section titled 'Principle of Development':

The Councils are concerned that National Grid decided, prior to this consultation, to choose a land route for ATNC rather than a viable undersea route, SCD2. There is a lack of transparency about how and why the recommendation for SCD2 was changed to 'Stop' in NOA 2020/21 after it had initially been assessed as viable. This decision should not have been made without public consultation.

7.8 Referencing page 20, Councillor Ward also suggested that the best alternative location for the northern end cable sealing end compound would be at the Notley Enterprise Park on Raydon Road.

7.9 Councillor Arthey stated that Members should be mindful that they were trying to find a solution to a proposal they did not support.

7.10 Councillors McCraw and Councillor Osborne agreed with Councillor Arthey and that the response to the Consultation should state the concerns of residents and should be set out in stronger points and be robust.

7.11 Councillor Busby and Councillor McLaren raised concerns about the impact of the overground pylons on the Areas of Natural Beauty (AoNB) and the effect this would have on tourism.

7.12 In response to Councillor McCraw's question regarding the response being a non-statutory response to the Consultation by National Grid, the Assistant Director – Planning and Building Control responded that if National Grid decided to take the planning application forward the next stage of the process would be a statutory Consultation.

7.13 Members agreed that subsea cabling was preferable, as overhead cabling damaged the scenery and was a blight on the landscape. Pylons would also affect the value of house prices and cause anguish to residents.

It was RESOLVED

- 1.1 To respond to the consultation.
- 1.2 That the Assistant Director for Planning and Building Control, in collaboration with the Cabinet Members for Planning and the Leader of the Council consider any proposed amendments to the suggested response and be authorised to make amendments before submitting a response to the Government.

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure the comments of the councils are set out for consideration by National Grid in the further stages of the project.

8 BCA/22/3 COST OF LIVING REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

- 8.1 The Chair, Councillor Ward invited the Cabinet Member for Communities Councillor McLaren to introduce the report.
- 8.2 Councillor McLaren provided an overview of the report and proposed the recommendations, as detailed in the report.
- 8.3 Councillor McCraw seconded the recommendations.
- 8.4 The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Osborne welcomed the report but asked that assurance was given that there would be no duplication of work, and that reports on monitoring progress would be brought to Cabinet on a regular basis.
- 8.5 The Cabinet Member for Communities assured Members that duplications would not occur and that quarterly reports would be presented to Cabinet.
- 8.6 Councillor Ward informed Cabinet that the East Public Sector Leaders Group had provided £1m funding for Suffolk Advice and Support Services, Local Welfare Support service and Food Banks.
- 8.7 Councillor Busby referenced food banks and enquired if the Council had a list of food banks published on its website.
- 8.8 The Corporate Manager – Communities detailed how work was being undertaken to support food banks across the District and the conversations being undertaken between officers and food bank providers.
- 8.9 Councillor Gould queried how the Council would be monitoring progress measures for food banks, many of which were operating on a grass root basis. She also asked that information about allotments were made available on the Council's website.
- 8.10 Councillor McLaren responded that the action plan and the report was the first stage of this Action Plan, and the next stage would be to set out how to monitor

progress.

- 8.11 Councillor Ward stated that the Action Plan was very comprehensive with regards to alleviating the cost of living crisis both in the short and long term.
- 8.12 Councillor McCraw declared that the action plan built on existing programmes and projects already in place. The Local Citizens Advice (LCA) in Sudbury and Ipswich coordinated local food banks. He continued that the additional officer to support work between the Council and the LCA was funded by the levelling up grants from Central Government.
- 8.13 A question from other members attending the meeting regarding any assistance the Council could provide in relation to food banks to any new groups starting up was to be responded to outside of the meeting by the Cabinet Member.

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 **Agree the 5 Point Plan attached at Appendix One.**
- 1.2 **Delegate to the Assistant Director for Communities & Wellbeing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities to keep this Plan under review and to update this in response to emerging need.**

REASON FOR DECISION

Provides assurance and confidence, ensuring that well established systems intra-connect to respond to the emerging needs of people through effective co-ordination and service delivery. The plan includes a range of measures that focus on providing advice and support, maintaining people's good health, building on the investments the Council has already made since the launch of the respective Communities and Wellbeing strategies and bringing forward an initial suite of interventions that will help improve the system long term, including the appointment of a Cost-of-Living Co-ordinator.

9 BCA/22/4 BABERGH FORMER HQ DEVELOPMENT SITE

- 9.1 The Chair, Councillor Ward introduced the report on behalf of Councillor Busby.
- 9.2 Councillor Ward proposed the recommendations, as detailed in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Osborne.
- 9.3 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting the Assistant Director – Assets and Investments, clarified that there had always been a Phase One and Phase Two in the development of the sites. The refurbishment of the existing building continued to be Phase One and the new build formed part of Phase Two. There had been some change to the flood zones. Phase 2 had been sub divided into Phase 2a and Phase 2b. A viability study and further assessment would be undertaken before going

forward with Phase Two. Appraisals had also taken into account the work intended for the site as this was a challenging site. With regards to the financial implications for Phase One, it had never been the aim to deliver this part of the scheme for profit and the projections were for the project to break even. However, the increase and availability of building materials should be taken into consideration. The existing development plans for Phase 2A was expected to deliver a profit to the Council. She reminded Members that the report being presented today was to bring Phase One of the development forward.

- 9.4 The Chair confirmed that the increase in the debt threshold was to enable the delivery of Phase One. The part of the development would either bring a modest profit or break even.

Note: The meeting was adjourned between 3:19 pm and 3:25 pm.

- 9.5 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting Councillor Busby stated that the Council followed the latest and most up to date advice received for the Former HQ Site.
- 9.6 In response to further questions from other Members attending the meeting the Monitoring Officer informed Members that the decision was not ultra-vires, but an executive decision, and Cabinet was not limited to the amount of funding it could agree, as long as it was within the agreed budget which was set annually by Full Council. The Section 151 Officer had confirmed that the funding was within the agreed budget and therefore Cabinet could make this decision.
- 9.7 The Chair stated that the Grounds of Urgency for the decision had been approved to ensure that an agreement could be progressed to prevent an increase in cost for the development of the site. The deadline was Friday 17 June 2022.
- 9.8 Members debated the options in the report and agreed that Option 2 was consistent with the decision made by Full Council in 2018. The objectives remained the same for Babergh Growth Company, which was to minimise the losses to Babergh Council and if possible, gain a profit. However, the cost of material and work had increased in the past 3 years since the project began and there were challenges which had to be addressed on the site, including the listed buildings.

It was RESOLVED: -

That Cabinet:

- 1.3 **Approves the increase in peak funding threshold for Babergh Growth Ltd to £7m for use to deliver the redevelopment of the former HQ site in Hadleigh.**
- 1.4 **Authorises the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and the Leader, to negotiate and vary the necessary legal**

agreements between Babergh District Council and Babergh Growth Ltd to enable the delivery of housing on the former HQ site within Hadleigh.

REASON FOR DECISION

To enable and support the delivery of housing within the district and support the economic prosperity of Hadleigh as a key market town.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 3:42 pm.

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Chair

Agenda Item 8

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMITTEE: Cabinet	REPORT NUMBER: BCa/22/6
FROM: Councillor David Busby, Cabinet Member for Finance	DATE OF MEETING: 5 July 2022
OFFICER: Melissa Evans, Assistant Director, Corporate Resources	KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB347

GENERAL FUND FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2021/22

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report summarises the 2021/22 financial outturn for the General Fund Revenue and Capital Programme. The Revenue outturn position is an overall surplus of £1.382m as detailed in Appendix A and the Capital Programme for the year is underspent by £16.924m as shown in Appendix B.
- 1.2 This is subject to the external auditors' report on the Statement of Accounts for the year, which will be presented to the Joint Audit and Standards Committee once the audit is complete.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The recommended option is set out in the Recommendations. There are no other available options.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the 2021/22 General Fund financial outturn of £1.382m surplus as set out in this report be noted.
- 3.2 That the revenue carry-forward requests totalling £420k be noted.
- 3.3 That the following transfers be approved;
 - a) Surplus of £394k be transferred to the Strategic Priorities Reserve
 - b) £500k be transferred to a new Inflationary Pressure Reserve
 - c) £345k to be transferred to the Planning Legal Reserve
 - d) £143k to be transferred to the Waste Reserve
- 3.4 That the total capital carry-forward of £17.306m be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure that Members are kept informed of the outturn position for both General Fund Revenue and Capital and to approve earmarked reserve transfers.

4. KEY INFORMATION

Executive Summary

- 4.1 The General Fund outturn position for 2021/22 is an underspend against the budget set in February 2021 of £1.382m. The underspend is as a result of a combination of factors detailed in Appendix A. This includes staff vacancies against a backdrop of nationwide recruitment issues, less impact on planning income from the COVID pandemic than expected and delays to planned work, now due to take place in 2022/23.
- 4.2 Managing the range of initiatives instigated by the Government, aimed at helping businesses and individuals through the pandemic in key areas such as housing, communities, economic development, and the Shared Revenues Partnership, supported by back-office services such as finance, commissioning and procurement has continued to impact the Councils capacity to drive forward other planned initiatives within the Strategic Priorities.
- 4.3 However, the underspend position enables the Council to allocate an additional £394k to deliver the Council's strategic priorities via the Strategic Priorities Reserve.
- 4.4 Inflation is currently high, with the rate for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) at 9% for the year to April 2022. This is expected to have an impact on costs in 2022/23 and create a pressure against the 2022/23 budget which was approved in February 2022. It is therefore proposed that £500k is transferred to a new Inflationary Pressures Reserve to mitigate against these pressures in 2022/23. The impact of inflation on the Council's finances will be closely monitored.
- 4.5 It is also proposed to allocate an additional £345k to the Planning Legal Management Reserve and £143k to the Waste Reserve to smooth fluctuating costs in future years.
- 4.6 The capital programme was also impacted by the pandemic, with schemes being suspended for a period during the initial lockdown, influencing the level of expenditure for the year. The final position was spending of £3.87m against a programme of £20.79m. With contractual commitments and carry forward requests of £17.55m, the overall variance is a saving of £625k. This saving is primarily as a result of securing alternative funding relates to expenditure on for the public sector de-carbonisation projects (£400k funded from external grants), the installation of CCTV cameras in Hadleigh and Sudbury (£154k funded from CIL) and additional grants given for open spaces (£62k funded from S106 monies).

Covid Context

- 4.7 The finances of the Council were less severely impacted during 2021/22 than in 2020/21. There was a continuing reduction in income for garden waste, trade waste and car parking and additional costs for areas including public health, rough sleeping and administering grants to businesses. Section 5 below provides further detail, but due to an improving position and additional administration funding being provided by the Government at the end of the year, the Council was able to place an additional £464k into the COVID19 earmarked reserve to finance further recovery activity in 2022/23.
- 4.8 In February 2021 Babergh District Council approved the General Fund Budget 2021/22 and Four-Year Outlook. The budget was prepared during one of the most

challenging and uncertain times due to the impacts of COVID19 on the Council's finances, staff, residents, and local economy. Income streams were reviewed when setting the budget and revised where appropriate and any COVID19 related costs were assumed to be funded from the COVID19 reserve.

Comprehensive Spending Review

- 4.9 The Government's three-year Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) was planned to conclude in July 2020, however, on 24th March 2020 the Chancellor announced that the CSR would be delayed 'to enable the Government to remain focussed on responding to the public health and economic emergency'. On 21st October 2020, the Chancellor announced the decision to provide a one-year Spending Review (SR) to prioritise the response to COVID19 and focus on supporting jobs. Details of this SR20 were published on 25th November 2020.
- 4.10 The spending review for 2022/23 was announced on 27th October 2021 and covers the three years 2022/23 to 2024/25. The Chancellor announced £1.5bn growth in grant funding for 2022/23 with no further increases in 2023/24 or 2024/25. Provisional funding allocations for 2022/23 were announced in December 2021 and were for one year only.

Business rates review and revaluation

- 4.11 The Fair Funding Review, Business Rates Review and business rates reset have been delayed. The Chancellor's Budget on 27th October announced several measures around the business rates system, including reducing the burden for some sectors from April 2022, introducing new reliefs to support property improvements and green investment and de-carbonisation of properties from April 2023 and confirmation that revaluations would take place every 3 years from 2023. To support stability leading up to the next revaluation, it was announced that transitional relief would be extended for a further year.

Government support schemes

- 4.12 The Council continued to administer the business restart and back to business grants as well as self-isolation payments in 2021/22, with just over £9m being paid out to support businesses and residents. These schemes are now closed.

Financial Impact for the Council

- 4.13 COVID19 continued to have an impact on the Council's finances during 2021/22.
- 4.14 A COVID19 reserve balance of £1.171m was available at the start of the year to mitigate the financial impacts and support recovery in 2021/22 along with a further £856k of COVID funding received in 2021/22.
- 4.15 The main areas where support was required during 2021/22 are additional costs for public health, rough sleeping, and business support. Additional costs relating to COVID19 totalled £152k.
- 4.16 The Council continued to see a loss of income for garden and trade waste, car parking and income from court fees relating to Council Tax, totalling £240k.
- 4.17 The overall impact is a balance of £1.635m in the COVID Reserve at 31st March 2022.

4.18 Work is underway on utilising the remaining balance in the COVID19 reserve on support and recovery initiatives where it's needed the most.

Business Rates and Council Tax Impact

4.19 Despite the COVID19 situation, business rates and council tax income for 2021/22 was on budget. This is due to the basis on which the budget is currently prepared, with the business rate and council tax demand from the Collection Fund being guaranteed in-year and the provision of section 31 grants to cover business rate retail holidays and reductions announced by Government.

4.20 Section 31 grants for retail discounts totalling £2.164m were received in 2021/22 and will be carried forward in the Business Rates and Council Tax reserve to match the corresponding losses on the Collection Fund that will be realised over the next 3 years.

4.21 Due to court actions being suspended during the COVID19 pandemic, income from the recovery of legal costs was £98k lower than budgeted.

5. 2021/22 OUTTURN POSITION

5.1 The report covers:

- The General Fund Revenue Budget
- The General Fund Capital Programme.

5.2 Budget monitoring is a key tool and indicator on the delivery of the Council's plans and priorities for the year. There will, of course, always be reasons why there are variances such as:

- Economic conditions and those services that are affected by demand
- Uncertainties relating to funding or other changes that were not known at the time the budget was approved.

5.3 Taking each area in turn, the position on key aspects of the 2021/22 budget is summarised below:

General Fund Revenue Account

5.4 In relation to funding:

(a) Council Tax (£5.8m): at the end of March, the collection rate was 98.08%, compared with 97.65% for the same period the previous year. Collection rates have been impacted by COVID19, but due to the way that the Collection Fund operates, the financial impact will be in 2022/23.

(b) Government Grants: baseline business rates of £1.6m and New Homes Bonus (NHB) of £835k were forecast in the 2021/22 budget. NHB is fixed but the actual amount of business rates varies, with an outturn favourable variance of £83k. This resulted from a favourable variance on the Suffolk pooling income and additional income from renewable energy schemes offset by an adverse levy position.

- (c) Business Rates: at the end of March, the collection rate was 96.80% compared with 96.86% for the same period the previous year. As with council tax, collection rates have been impacted by COVID19, in both 2020/21 and beyond. Any impact in 2021/22 will be mitigated to some degree by the additional government support as outlined in section 5.9 of this report.

5.5 Details of the financial position at the end of the year are outlined in the table below.

Service Area	Budget	Total Actual	Variance to Budget (favourable) / adverse	Variance as % of Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Corporate Resources	1,782	1,995	213	12%
Economic Development and Regeneration	357	204	(153)	-43%
Environment and Commercial Partnerships	3,919	3,551	(368)	-9%
Housing	548	441	(107)	-20%
Law and Governance	903	878	(25)	-3%
Senior Leadership Team	653	657	4	1%
Assets and Investments	389	401	12	3%
Communities & Wellbeing	685	401	(283)	-41%
Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement	2,047	1,569	(478)	-23%
Planning & Building Control	1,215	619	(596)	-49%
Net expenditure on services ***	12,498	10,717	(1,781)	86%
Recharge to HRA	(1,243)	(1,357)	(113)	9%
Recharge to Capital	(4)	(4)	0	0%
Capital financing costs	(1,079)	(1,180)	(101)	9%
Transfers to (from) reserves not included in above*	(4,479)	(4,479)	0	0%
Carry forwards	0	420	420	
Total budget requirement	5,693	4,118	(1,575)	-4%
Council Tax	(5,813)	(5,807)	7	0%
Collection fund (Surplus)	64	64	0	0%
Business Rates less Tariff	(1,555)	(1,249)	306	-20%
Business Rates - Pooling Benefit	(312)	(452)	(140)	45%
20/21 distribution of deficit	4,763	4,763	0	0%
Rural Services Delivery Grant	(238)	(238)	0	0%
S31 Grant	(1,486)	(1,484)	2	0%
New Homes Bonus	(835)	(835)	0	0%
Lower Tier Services Grant and Council Tax Support Grant	(281)	(263)	18	
Total funding	(5,693)	(5,500)	193	3%
Total variance	0	(1,382)	(1,382)	
Proposed movements to reserves:				
Strategic Priorities Reserve			394	
Inflationary Pressures Reserve			500	
Planning Legal Reserve			345	
Waste Reserve			143	
			1,382	

***Reserve Movements Included in Service Lines:	(181)	182
Transfers to (from) reserves as above:	(4,479)	(4,479)
	<u>(4,660)</u>	<u>(4,297)</u>

5.6 A tolerance level of £20k has been used to identify those variances where further narrative is provided. Appendix A shows the main items that are included in the overall variance of £1.382m.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 5.7 CIL income received by the Council in the year 2021/22 is £5.086m. Following any necessary expenditure and adjustments for the 5% administration charge, there is a requirement to transfer any surplus to the Capital Grants Unapplied Account for spend on infrastructure in accordance with the Regulation 123 list in 2022/23 and beyond.

Earmarked Reserves

- 5.8 Earmarked reserve balances were £12.569m as at 1 April 2021. Earmarked reserves are for a particular purpose or known requirements that affect more than one financial year. The Council can increase its earmarked reserves when underspends occur, income has exceeded costs or where grant monies or other sources of funding are received for specific purposes. The Council has made contributions both to and from earmarked reserves as set out in the table below.

Transfers to/from reserves

Reserve	Balance 31/03/2021 £'000	Budget To/From	Budget Balance 31/03/21	Movement 2021/22	Proposed To / (From)	Balance 31/03/22 £'000
Business Rates & Council Tax	6,106	(4,464)	1,642	(4,464)		1,642
Business Rates Retention Pilot (BRRP)	862	(81)	781	(50)		812
Carry Forwards	571	(571)	-	(571)		-
Climate Change and Biodiversity	200	143	343	131		331
Community Housing Fund	178	(26)	153	(38)		140
Commuted Maintenance Payments	820	-	820	117		937
COVID 19	1,171	414	1,586	464		1,635
Elections Equipment	35	-	35	-		35
Elections Fund	40	20	60	30		70
Government Grants	164	5	169	95		259
Homelessness	159	25	184	118		277
Joint Local Plan	100	-	100	(52)		48
Neighbourhood Planning Grants	49	46	94	(1)		48
Planning (Legal)	323	-	323	-	345	668
Planning Enforcement	93	-	93	-		93
Rough Sleepers	26	-	26	62		88
Strategic Planning	40	-	40	(53)		(12)
Strategic Priorities	1,147	(100)	1,047	(102)	394	1,439
Temporary Accommodation	145	(14)	131	93		238
Waste	87	-	87	-	143	230
Well-being	253	(56)	197	(77)		176
Inflationary Pressures Reserve	-	-	-	-	500	500
Total	12,569	(4,659)	7,910	(4,297)	1,382	9,654

- 5.9 Approval of carry forwards from 21/22 into 22/23 has been delegated to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance. Carry forward requests totalling £420k for specific funding for projects continuing in 2022/23, summarised in the table below, have been approved by the Section 151 Officer and are included in the overall outturn position.

Area	Amount £000's
Communities & Wellbeing	208
Corporate Resources	40
Economic Development & Regeneration	68
Env & Comm P'ships (GF Rev)	27
Law & Governance (GF Rev)	8
Plg & Bdg Control (GF Rev)	69
Grand Total	420

Capital

- 5.10 Use of capital and one-off funds is critical and needs to be linked into our future delivery plans.
- 5.11 With complex capital schemes it is difficult to accurately assess the level of payments that will be made during the financial year. The Council continues to embark on new projects where it is difficult to accurately predict how payments will fall. Councillors should therefore focus on whether overall outcomes are being achieved because of the capital investment rather than variances against the plan for a particular year.
- 5.12 Capital expenditure for 2021/22 totals £3.868m, against a revised programme (including carry forwards) of £20.792m, as set out in Appendix B.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22 - Position as at 31 March 2022	£'000
Revised Capital Programme	20,792
Actual Expenditure	3,868
Contractual Commitments (Paragraph 5.14)	243
Carry forward requests (Paragraph 5.15)	17,306
Total Expenditure and carry forward requests	21,417
Net capital programme (favourable) / adverse variance	625

- 5.13 The main variances that contribute to the £625k adverse position are set out below:
- A favourable variance was due to the successful efficiencies made to deliver underspend on the solar carports project for of £55k less than budget.
 - Additional expenditure was incurred leading to a £599k adverse variance against the budget. This is due to additional funding being secured from external grants of £400k and from CIL/S106 monies of £199k.
 - Adverse variances totalling £81k were for the cost of refurbishing a refuse vehicle (£15k), to extend its life and additional recycling bins due to housing growth and

the take up of the garden waste collection service (£66k). The bins will have generated additional revenue income for the Council.

- 5.14 Contractual commitments are detailed in the table below. These funds were committed in 2021/22 and will be spent in 2022/23. The resources to fund these commitments will also be transferred to 2022/23.

Contractual Commitments	£'000
Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant	187
Vehicle and Plant Renewals	30
Empty Homes Grant	26
Total Contractual Commitments	243

- 5.15 The following items are schemes where no contractual commitment yet exists, but they represent either plans or aspirations for investment, for which carry forward to the 2022/23 capital programme is requested, again with the requisite capital resources to fund this. It is proposed that these capital resources are carried forward into 2022/23 and reviewed as part of the Corporate Plan to assess whether the original requirements still exist, how they contribute to the strategic priorities and hence whether the resources can be redirected or removed.

Carry Forward Requests	£'000
Regeneration Fund	6,305
Strategic Investment Fund	2,906
Regeneration Fund - Former Council Offices	2,841
Belle Vue	1,927
Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant	750
Kingfisher Leisure Centre - Repairs and Renewals	641
Hadleigh Pool and Leisure - Repairs and Renewals	403
Grants for Affordable Housing	400
Hadleigh Pool and Leisure - New Pool and Refurbishment	258
Empty Homes Grant	215
Play Equipment	199
Borehamgate	170
Total Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement	115
Vehicle and Plant Renewals	114
Community Development Grants	80
Planned Maintenance / Enhancements - Corporate Buildings	26
Planned Maintenance / Enhancements - Car Parks	13
Renovation/Home Repair Grant(formerly Discretionary Housing Grants)	(10)
A1071 Roadside Commercial Workspace Development	(46)
Total General Fund Carry forwards	17,306

6. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 6.1 Ensuring that the Council makes best use of its resources is what underpins the ability to achieve the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan. Specific links are to financially sustainable Councils, managing our corporate and housing assets effectively, and property investment to generate income.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 These are detailed in the report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no specific legal implications.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Significant Risk No. 13 – We may be unable to respond in a timely and effective way to financial demands and Corporate Risk No. 5E05 – if the Finance Strategy is not in place with a balanced position over the medium term the Councils will not be able to deliver the core objectives and service delivery may be at risk of not being delivered. Other key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
If the forecast savings and efficiencies are not delivered, then it will have a detrimental impact on the resources available to deliver services and the strategic priorities	3 - Probable	2 - Noticeable	Monitored throughout the year by Finance Teams, Corporate Managers, Assistant Directors and the Senior Leadership Team
If economic conditions and other external factors like COVID19 are worse than budgeted for it could have an adverse effect on the Councils 2021/22 and medium-term financial position	3 - Probable	2 - Noticeable	Focus is on monitoring key income and expenditure streams – but Government changes and economic conditions continue to affect costs and income for a number of services. COVID19 reserve used to offset these costs and maintain sufficient minimum reserve level to withstand the impact.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 Consultations have taken place with Assistant Directors, Corporate Managers and other Budget Managers as appropriate

11. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

11.1 An equality analysis has not been completed because there is no action to be taken on service delivery as a result of this report.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are a number of areas that as a result of COVID19 have had a positive effect on the Council's environmental impact as well as the financial position. They include for example, reduced travel, less printing and reduced utility costs.
- 12.2 Assistant Directors, Corporate Managers and other Budget Managers continue to consider the environmental impact of their budgets and take the opportunity to reduce their carbon footprint as opportunities arise.
- 12.3 In subsequent years to support the Council's commitment to be Carbon Neutral by 2030, several initiatives have and are being undertaken from a combination of the Council's own resources and those secured from external sources. Some of these are set out below.
- 12.4 A solar multi-function carport to generate electricity is being installed at Kingfisher Leisure Centre, Sudbury. The CO₂ savings are 4.4 times the volume of the Royal Albert Hall and it will generate enough power to supply 24 average homes in Sudbury.
- 12.5 The Council's leisure centres have been successfully transferred to certified low carbon tariffs for electricity use.
- 12.6 We have also installed a new pool water cleaning system at Kingfisher Leisure Centre which is expected to reduce annual CO₂ emissions by between 6.4 and 8.6 tonnes per annum and reduce combined gas and electricity consumption by 1.1% - 1.5%.
- 12.7 £398k of funding has been secured from the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund for carbon-saving measures at council leisure centres and Wenham Depot, including solar panels and air source heat pumps.

13. APPENDICES

Title	Location
Detailed Variances (Revenue)	APPENDIX A
Detailed Variances (Capital)	APPENDIX B

14. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

23 February 2021 General Fund Budget 2021/22 and Four-Year Outlook – BC/20/24

6 September 2021 General Fund Financial Monitoring 2021/22 - Quarter 1 - BCa/21/18

6 December 2021 General Fund Financial Monitoring 2021/22 - Quarter 2 - BCa/21/29

7 March 2022 General Fund Financial Monitoring 2021/22 - Quarter 3 - BCa/21/41

REVENUE DETAILED VARIANCES

Explanation of Major Variances	Revised Full Year Budget (000's)	Sum of Actuals (000's)	Variance to Budget (000's)	Comment
Assets & Investments	389	401	12	
Strategic Property	303	352	49	
Other Variances			49	
The Councils' Companies	87	50	(37)	
BMS Invest	87	50	(37)	Staff vacancies and underspend on legal expenses
Communities & Wellbeing	685	401	(283)	
Communities	685	401	(283)	
Suffolk Community Restart Fund	0	(64)	(64)	Spend offset by income, any unspent to be carried forward
Community Development	382	285	(96)	Staff vacancies resulting from delays in implementation of new structure throughout 21/22. £60k Business Rate Retention Pilot reserve funding not required.
Policy & Strategy Health & Wellbeing	69	16	(53)	For wellbeing projects including delayed consortium agreement for Active Suffolk. To be carried forward to 22/23
Community Safety-General	38	12	(26)	Committed, any underspend to be carried forward
Other Variances			(45)	

REVENUE DETAILED VARIANCES

Explanation of Major Variances	Revised Full Year Budget (000's)	Sum of Actuals (000's)	Variance to Budget (000's)	Comment
Corporate Resources	1,782	1,995	213	
Finance, Commissioning & Procurement	1,326	1,541	215	
Financial Resources	547	525	(22)	Consultancy fees overspent by £5k on payment cards and G4S which have been steadily increasing year on year. £3k recruitment spend for Senior post. In year vacancies and contractual staff changes.
Treasury Management	22	43	21	Overspend due to fees for one off investments
Pay Inflation and Increment Costs	(414)	0	414	Adjustment to reflect centrally budgeted salary savings realised within service areas.
GF Non-Specific Grant Income	(375)	(511)	(136)	Grants related to Council Tax & new burdens
Other Variances			(62)	
HR & Organisational Development	456	454	(1)	
Customers, Digital Transformation & Improvement	2,047	1,569	(478)	
Communications	175	154	(21)	
Communications	175	154	(21)	£19k underspend on staff costs and £6k underspend on printing costs, offset by social media management costs (addressed in 22/23 budget)
Customer Operations	544	446	(97)	
Customer Services	544	446	(97)	Underspend of £62k on staff costs, £36k underspend on exit from Sudbury Town Council premises.

REVENUE DETAILED VARIANCES

Explanation of Major Variances	Revised Full Year Budget (000's)	Sum of Actuals (000's)	Variance to Budget (000's)	Comment
ICT	1,111	792	(319)	
ICT	1,111	792	(319)	Carry forwards from 21/22 not used due to recruitment delay. £60k favourable variance from release of historic accrual for MS Office licenses due to change in billing by SCC. £25k favourable variance from switch to Pay360 and £25k favourable variance from re-profiling of software costs. Offset by agency costs in Q4 and costs for one off equipment not meeting capital threshold
Strategy Policy, Performance & Insights	217	177	(40)	
Strategic Policy, Performance and Insight	217	177	(40)	Core team underlying net £31k salaries underspend - mid restructure
Economic Development & Regeneration	357	204	(153)	
Open for Business	357	204	(153)	
Economy & Business	193	150	(43)	Staff vacancies
Regeneration	85	64	(21)	Staff vacancies
Returning to High Street Safely	0	(66)	(66)	Expenditure funded by Welcome Back Funding - excess balance to be re-purposed and carried forward
Other Variances			(23)	

REVENUE DETAILED VARIANCES

Explanation of Major Variances	Revised Full Year Budget (000's)	Sum of Actuals (000's)	Variance to Budget (000's)	Comment
Environmental & Commercial Partnerships	3,919	3,551	(368)	
Car Parking	241	270	29	
Car Parks General	24	(15)	(39)	The planned implementation of Short term parking charges included budget for signage, programming of machines, wayfinding, maintenance and cycle and EV parking which is not now required. This resulted in a £54k favourable variance. £2k favourable variance for ID Verde contract coming in house, £16k adverse variance on parking income, £2k adverse variance on NNDR charges
Car Park Assets	155	230	75	£53k NNDR rates paid. £20k under on income as short term stays were not introduced as budgeted in 2021. £5k adverse on extensive machine repairs. £4k adverse on MiPermit bank charges for the year. £8k Saving on grounds maint contract as IDVerde brought in house.
Other Variances			(8)	
Health & Safety, Business Continuity and Emergency Planning	173	144	(29)	
Other Variances			(29)	
Leisure Contracts	270	280	10	

REVENUE DETAILED VARIANCES

Explanation of Major Variances	Revised Full Year Budget (000's)	Sum of Actuals (000's)	Variance to Budget (000's)	Comment
Public Protection	583	487	(96)	
Food & Safety (General)	270	219	(51)	Additional funding in Period 12 from Suffolk County Council for 10% salary costs attributable to COVID work £13k. Further unbudgeted income from DEFRA towards industry specific training.
Other Variances			(45)	
Public Realm	1,409	1,242	(166)	
Public Conveniences	126	78	(47)	£16k underspend on rates due to covid relief on Public conveniences, supplemented by IDVerde contract being brought in house.
Street & Major Road Cleansing	476	362	(114)	Surplus available from break of ID verde contract offset by employee salary costs of TUPEd staff and cost of equipment/uniform set-up.
Open Spaces	657	608	(49)	£176k underspend against ID Verde contract break offset by £140k employee costs including £25k savings contingency built in to budget TUPE staff, £36k favourable variance £9k being held from payment to IDVerde due to contractual performance evaluation. £16k adverse variance on waste disposal costs. £31k favourable variance on vehicle fuel consumption.
Public Realm Transition Project	0	31	31	Plant and vehicle and equipment hire costs have exceeded Transformation/Growth & Efficiency Bid for plant & Vehicle costs by 33K adverse to budget.
Other Variances			13	

REVENUE DETAILED VARIANCES

Explanation of Major Variances	Revised Full Year Budget (000's)	Sum of Actuals (000's)	Variance to Budget (000's)	Comment
Recycling, Waste & Fleet	1,212	1,097	(115)	
Jnt Waste Contract	134	61	(72)	Fuel underspend by switching to HVO part way through the year
Domestic Waste	1,778	1,617	(160)	£142K underspend on Materials Recovery Facility disposal gate fees. £33K overspend on refuse collection contract < 2% £13K overspend for the use of agency part year.
Trade Waste	(219)	(175)	44	Underperformance against budget of waste collection income 32K, however up 21% against 20/21. Trade waste disposal costs 16K Adverse due to price variations to when budget set - this equates to 6%
Garden Waste	(418)	(361)	58	£10K Adverse to budget in write offs of income collection garden waste, £13K on Serco refuse contract, £19K on waste disposal costs and £39K against budgeted for income on garden waste, however 13% up on 20/21. Mitigation by £22K Favourable recycling credit income. Income budget of over £1M was achieved - however the rising costs in meeting the collections caused additional service costs against budget.

REVENUE DETAILED VARIANCES

Explanation of Major Variances	Revised Full Year Budget (000's)	Sum of Actuals (000's)	Variance to Budget (000's)	Comment
Service Improvements -Environment & Projects	31	31	(0)	
Housing	548	441	(107)	
Building Services	(143)	(99)	44	
PV Panels	(143)	(99)	44	Budget for repairs and contracted services swapped. Blue Flame for Services contract to be ceased in Feb 2022, and these only need to be carried out going forward every 5 years.
Housing Solutions	691	539	(151)	
Housing Standards	157	98	(59)	£30k Vacancies not immediately filled following small restructure and £27k Funding from East Suffolk Council to cover employment and agency costs.
Homelessness Private Sector	63	(1)	(64)	£69k savings on B&B costs and £6k decrease in Housing Benefit
Law & Governance	903	878	(25)	
Electoral Services & Land Charges	85	65	(20)	
Governance & Civic Off	353	349	(4)	
Internal Audit	91	85	(5)	
Planning & Building Control	1,215	619	(596)	
Building Control	78	6	(72)	
Building Regulations Chargeable Services	(32)	(76)	(44)	Staff vacancies. Income increased due to new sites and less competitor pressure
Other Variances			(28)	
Service Improvement (Sustainable Communities)	35	35	0	

REVENUE DETAILED VARIANCES

Explanation of Major Variances	Revised Full Year Budget (000's)	Sum of Actuals (000's)	Variance to Budget (000's)	Comment
Strategic Planning	427	425	(2)	
Development Management, Heritage & Enforcement	676	153	(523)	
Development Management	211	(4)	(215)	Cfwd of staffing costs from 20/21 and 21/22 savings from various vacancies. £100k extra planning income to reserves to cover foreseeable reduction in planning fee income associated with decision making ref JLP settlement hierarchy and associated appeals
Development Management - Appeals	217	(29)	(245)	Very low levels of appeals 21/22, underspend to be transferred to appeals reserves for future years
Conservation	104	71	(32)	Staffing underspend
Planning Enforcement	194	163	(31)	£39k staffing underspend; £15.5k training budget underspend. £28k charge on property relating to 2004/05
Senior Leadership Team	653	657	4	
Other Variances			4	
Grand Total	12,498	10,667	(1,831)	

REVENUE DETAILED VARIANCES

Net expenditure on services	12,498	10,717	(1,781)
Recharge to HRA	(1,243)	(1,357)	(113)
Recharge to Capital	(4)	(4)	0
Capital financing costs	(1,079)	(1,180)	(101)
Transfers to (from) reserves not included in above*	(4,479)	(4,479)	0
Carry forwards	0	420	420
Total budget requirement	5,693	4,118	(1,575)
Council Tax	(5,813)	(5,807)	7
Collection fund (Surplus)	64	64	0
Business Rates less Tariff	(1,555)	(1,249)	306
Business Rates - Pooling Benefit	(312)	(452)	(140)
Business Rates - Business Rates Retention Pilot Funding	0	0	0
20/21 distribution of deficit	4,763	4,763	0
Rural Services Delivery Grant	(238)	(238)	0
S31 Grant	(1,486)	(1,484)	2
New Homes Bonus	(835)	(835)	0
Lower Tier Services Grant and Council Tax Support Grant	(281)	(263)	18
Total funding	(5,693)	(5,500)	193
Total variance	0	(1,382)	(1,382)

2021/22 Capital Programme

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22	Original Budget	Carry Forwards / Budget Adjustments	Current Budget	Actual Spend to date	Contractual Commitments	Uncommitted Carry Forwards	Variance after Carry Forwards (favourable)/adverse	Explanation of Major Variances
GENERAL FUND	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
General Fund Housing								
Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant	760	747	1,507	570	187	750	-	In addition to the expenditure to date, the council has already committed a further £241k to fund works that are in progress.
Renovation/Home Repair Grant (formerly Discretionary Housing Grants)	100	37	137	147		(10)	0	To be funded from 2022/23 grant allocation
Empty Homes Grant	100	142	242	1	26	215	-	The Empty Homes Officer has begun processing applications and it is expected that the volume of grants will increase in 2022/23.
Grants for Affordable Housing	-	400	400	-		400	-	A report is to be made to Cabinet in May 2022 with proposals for awarding grants. Unspent allocation to be carried forward and utilised as per approved policy.
Total General Fund Housing	960	1,326	2,286	717	213	1,355	0	(0)
Environment and Projects								
Replacement Refuse Freighters - Joint Scheme	-	-	-	15		-	15	Refurbishment of vehicle to extend its life
Recycling Bins	65	-	65	131		-	66	Increased spend due to housing growth and take up of garden waste collection service (generating additional revenue income)
HVO Storage Tank	50	-	50	33		-	(17)	Cost of tanks less than anticipated. To be financed from CIL
Public Sector Decarbonisation	-	-	-	400		-	400	Funded by grant
Total Environment and Projects	115	-	115	578		-	463	-
Communities and Public Access								
Planned Maintenance / Enhancements - Car Parks	55	79	134	121		13	0	
Vehicle and Plant Renewals	715	-	715	571	30	114	-	Production and delivery of new vehicles is slow. Expect remaining requirements to be delivered in 2022/23.
CCTV Cameras Hadleigh and Sudbury	-	-	-	154		-	154	To be financed from CIL
Total Community Services	770	79	849	846	30	127	155	-

2021/22 Capital Programme

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22	Original Budget	Carry Forwards / Budget Adjustments	Current Budget	Actual Spend to date	Contractual Commitments	Uncommitted Carry Forwards	Variance after Carry Forwards (favourable)/ adverse	Explanation of Major Variances
GENERAL FUND	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Economic Development and Regeneration								
Belle Vue	-	2,000	2,000	73		1,927	-	Still going through the planning process.
Total Economic Development and Regeneration	-	2,000	2,000	73	-	1,927	-	
Sustainable Communities								
Play Equipment	129	77	206	7		199	-	Schemes to utilise the budget have been drawn up but there are issues with supplies and delivery of the equipment.
S106 Open Spaces Grants	-	-	-	62		-	62	Financed from S106 monies
Community Development Grants	117	79	196	116		80	-	There is a high demand for grants but some of the projects are being delayed due to supply issues.
Total Sustainable Communities	246	156	402	185	-	279	62	
Leisure Contracts								
Kingfisher Leisure Centre - Repairs and Renewals	100	627	727	86		641	-	Carry forwards to be used for repairs and renewal requirements identified when the condition survey is completed.
Hadleigh Pool and Leisure - Repairs and Renewals	50	353	403	-		403	-	
Hadleigh Pool and Leisure - New Pool and Refurbishment	-	346	346	88		258	-	Refurbishment works did not fully clear back log of maintenance requirements. Carry forward to enable completion.
Battery Storage and Solar Car Ports	600	-	600	545		-	(55)	LEP grant was fully utilised. Saving is on council's contribution.
Total Leisure Contracts	750	1,326	2,076	719	-	1,302	(55)	

2021/22 Capital Programme

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22	Original Budget	Carry Forwards / Budget Adjustments	Current Budget	Actual Spend to date	Contractual Commitments	Uncommitted Carry Forwards	Variance after Carry Forwards (favourable)/ adverse	Explanation of Major Variances
GENERAL FUND	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Assets and Investments								
Planned Maintenance / Enhancements - Corporate Buildings	30	-	30	4		26	-	
Strategic Investment Fund	-	3,000	3,000	94		2,906	-	Investigating further opportunities for investment.
A1071 Roadside Commercial Workspace Development	-	-	-	46	-	(46)	(0)	Expenditure incurred earlier than planned. To be taken from 2022/23 budget.
Regeneration Fund	64	6,411	6,475	0		6,475	-	Asset reviews are being undertaken to plan future spend.
Regeneration Fund - Former Council Offices	2,979	181	3,160	319		2,841		Still going through planning process. Likely to start in 2022/23. Expenditure in year is a loan to the Growth company
Total assets and Investments	3,073	9,592	12,665	463	-	12,202	(0)	
Total Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement	250	150	400	285	-	115	-	The Laptop refresh programme has begun and will continue into 2022/23.
Total General Fund Capital Spend	6,164	14,628	20,792	3,868	243	17,306	625	

Agenda Item 9

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMITTEE: Cabinet	REPORT NUMBER: BCa/22/7
FROM: Councillor David Busby, Cabinet Member for Finance	DATE OF MEETING: 5 July 2022
OFFICER: Melissa Evans, Assistant Director, Corporate Resources	KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB346

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) FINANCIAL DRAFT OUTTURN 2021/22

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report summarises the 2021/22 financial outturn for the Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme. The Revenue outturn position is an overall surplus of £409k and the Capital Programme for the year is underspent by £409k.
- 1.2 This is subject to the external auditors' report on the Statement of Accounts for the year, which will be presented to the Joint Audit and Standards Committee once the audit is complete.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Transfer funds of £409k to the Strategic Priorities earmarked reserve and support the carry forward of £5.51m HRA capital costs. This is the recommended option.
- 2.2 Transfer funds of £409k to the Strategic Priorities earmarked reserve and not support the carry forward of £5.51m HRA capital costs. This is not the recommended option because there would be insufficient capital resources available in 2022/23 to complete the schemes in progress.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the 2021/22 HRA financial outturn as set out in this report be noted.
- 3.2 That the transfer of £409k, being the HRA revenue surplus for the year (£282k more than planned) as per paragraph 6.4, to the Strategic Priorities Reserve be approved.
- 3.3 That the HRA capital carry-forward requests referred to in paragraph 6.19 of this report totalling £5.51m be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure that Members are kept informed of the outturn position for both Housing Revenue and Capital and to approve earmarked reserve transfers and carry forward requests.

4. KEY INFORMATION

Strategic Context

- 4.1 The financial position of the HRA for 2021/22 should be viewed in the context of the 30-year business plan. The budget set in February 2021 showed a forecast surplus position for 2021/22 of £127k this was achieved by reviewing both capital and revenue budgets.
- 4.2 The Housing Service continuously identifies savings, efficiencies and income generation opportunities that will achieve a sustainable business plan into the future. The business plan sets out the aspiration of the Council to increase the social housing stock by either buying existing dwellings or building new ones.
- 4.3 Following a period of five years that saw annual rent reductions, which ended in March 2020, councils are allowed to increase rents by the maximum of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) +1% for a period of five years from April 2020. Subject to Compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's Rent Standard, this begins to mitigate the impact of the 1% reduction on the 30-year plan.
- 4.4 With the Council's housing stock at 3,538 homes (as at 31 March 2022) there will always be unplanned events that affect the level of income and expenditure in any one financial year. Members should therefore consider annual variances in the context of the medium-term outcomes that the Council wishes to achieve.
- 4.5 As COVID restrictions eased, property repairs and maintenance work re-commenced within the Government's COVID19 safety guidelines. However, the impact of the backlog of works to be carried out means additional costs were incurred during 2021/22.
- 4.6 The new build programme has been impacted as development ground to a halt during lockdown and was slow to recover. A shortage of some construction materials caused delays in completion of projects on site.

5. 2021/22 Financial Impact of COVID19

- 5.1 The HRA has continued to be impacted by COVID19 during 2021/22 due to additional costs for sub-contractors to deal with backlogs in maintenance, potential delays in the capital programme and additional costs as described below and in 4.5 above.
- 5.2 In terms of income, there has not been any reduction to income levels during 2021/22.

6. 2021/22 Outturn Position

- 6.1 The report covers:
- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budget
 - The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital programme

6.2 Budget monitoring is a key tool and indicator on the delivery of the council's plans and priorities for the year. There will, of course, always be reasons why there are variances such as:

- Economic conditions and those services that are affected by demand.
- Base budgets being over or understated.
- Uncertainties relating to funding or other changes that were not known at the time the budget was approved.

6.3 The position on key aspects of the 2021/22 budget is summarised below:

Revenue

6.4 The original budget set for the HRA for 2021/22 shows a surplus of £127k. The final position for 2021/22 is a surplus of £409k, a favourable variance of £282k. The variances identified during 2021/22 have been taken into consideration when setting the budgets for 2022/23.

6.5 The main items that are included in the overall favourable variance of £282k are detailed in the text and tables below:

	Original Budget £'000	Budget £'000	Outturn 2021/22 £'000	Variance (favourable) / adverse £'000
Dwelling Rents	(16,492)	(16,454)	(16,627)	(173)
Service Charges	(584)	(584)	(575)	10
Non Dwelling Income	(183)	(183)	(200)	(17)
Other Income	(11)	(50)	(62)	(12)
Interest Received	(10)	(10)	(3)	7

Total Income	(17,281)	(17,281)	(17,466)	(186)
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Housing Management	2,959	2,959	2,953	(6)
Building Services	3,564	3,681	4,125	444
Depreciation	4,280	4,280	4,595	315
Interest payable	3,161	3,161	2,797	(364)
Debt Repayment	150	150	150	-
Revenue Contribution to Capital	2,901	2,901	2,586	(315)
Bad Debt Provision	139	139	(31)	(170)
Total Expenditure	17,154	17,271	17,175	(96)

2020/21 Carry-forward		(117)	(117)	-
Deficit / (Surplus) for Year	(127)	(127)	(409)	(282)

6.6 **Income – a favourable variance / income surplus of £186k**

- Dwelling rents –The favourable variance of £173k is as a result of new properties not included in the income budget.
- Non Dwelling Income –The favourable variance of £17k is as a result of a reduction in Garage Rent voids.

- Other Income – a favourable variance of £12k from sale of land adjustment for a property, not included in the budget and increased lease income.
- There is also a small adverse variance of £10k for service charges which include increase in Sheltered Void Warden communal services.

6.7 **Housing Management – a favourable variance of £6k**

- A number of items make up the favourable variance of £6k. These can be broken down as follows:
- An underspend of £114k relating to employee costs - vacant posts not filled (shared between the two Councils) and delayed start dates for those posts that have now been filled.
- £31k Funding for Housing Programme Manager role
- More time has been charged to Babergh's General Fund and Capital Projects for surveyors' time resulting in higher levels of income via recharges and a favourable variance of £31k.
- Increased Temp Accommodation rent income and reduced voids £18k.
- The favourable variances above are partly offset by additional fire prevention costs as we prepare for a new contract and prepare for new legislation £98k.
- New build expenditure write offs on cancelled builds £41k.
- Utility cost increases £27k
- Additional Repairs work £13k for catch up on backlog.
- General Fund recharges were £11k lower than expected.
- Other items (net) – a favourable variance of £2k.

6.8 **Building Services (Responsive Repairs and Maintenance) – an adverse variance of £444k**

- £965k Repairs overspend on the use of Sub-Contractors to support the Trades Team in completing a backlog of Void and Responsive jobs built up as a result of Covid restrictions
- £57k increase on Surveyors recharges
- £47k increase Asbestos Prof & Consultancy Fees following catch up after Covid restrictions
- £37k Equipment, Tools & Materials usage increased to use on Repairs work
- £29k Contracted Services increased to help with the backlog and increased cost of materials
- £24k Compensation payments to Tenants
- £21k reduction in recharge to General Fund

- £13k increased Skip usage for Repairs work.
- The adverse variances above are partly offset by £418k Repairs recharges increased in line with costs
- £130k Employee costs reduced due to vacant posts not filled
- £77k income from Heat incentive scheme for Heat pumps
- £74k Grounds Maintenance Contract now carried out internally
- £27k Lease cars saving (although spend is in line with last year) due to new leases postponement to 2022/23
- £14k fire insurance claim
- Other items (net) – a favourable variance of £9k.

6.9 **Depreciation – an adverse variance of £315k**

- An adverse variance of £315k is due to an increase in the valuation housing stock between 31/03/20 and 31/03/21

6.10 **Interest payable – a favourable variance of £364k**

- Lower than anticipated interest charged on loans, due to less new borrowing being required than in the budget and low short-term rates for borrowing taken, has resulted in a favourable variance of £364k for the year.

6.11 **Revenue Contribution to Capital – a favourable variance of £315k**

- £315k less than budget to compensate for adverse variance on depreciation, which is taken to the Major Repairs Reserve to fund capital expenditure.

6.12 **Bad Debt Provision – a favourable variance of £170k**

- Following a build-up of the provision, a re-evaluation of the bad debt procedure resulted in a lower balance required for bad debts.

6.13 The net £409k surplus position means that the total HRA balances as at 31 March 2022 are £17.315m, subject to financing of the HRA capital programme from the Strategic Priorities Reserve yet to be finalised. A breakdown of the HRA earmarked reserves is attached at Appendix B.

Capital

6.14 Use of capital and one-off funds is critical and needs to be linked into our future delivery plans. A zero-based approach was adopted for the capital programme for 2021/22 to ensure that resources are aimed at delivering the council's strategic priorities.

6.15 With complex capital schemes it is difficult to accurately assess the level of payments that will be made during a particular financial year. The Council continues to embark on new projects e.g., building new homes, where it is difficult to accurately predict at the planning stage how payments will be scheduled. Members should therefore focus

on whether overall outcomes are being achieved as a result of the capital investment rather than variances against the plan for a particular year.

- 6.16 Actual capital expenditure for the period April 2021 to March 2022 totals £16.794m, against the budget (including carry forwards) of £27.505m, as set out in Appendix A. The outturn shows a net favourable variance of £409k (after carry-forward requests) as summarised in the table below and is described further in sections 6.17 and 6.18.

BABERGH DC	
CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22 - Position as at 31 March 2022	£'000
Revised Capital Programme	27,505
Actual Expenditure	16,794
Contractual Commitments (Paragraph 6.18)	4,788
Carry forward requests (Paragraph 6.19)	5,514
Total Expenditure and Carry Forward requests	27,095
Net Capital Programme (favourable) / adverse variance	(410)

- 6.17 The favourable variance of £409k can be attributed to an underspend on ICT Projects, which has undergone a review of service needs.
- 6.18 Contractual commitments are detailed in the table below. These funds were committed in 2021/22 and will be spent in 2022/23. Resources to finance the capital expenditure e.g. capital receipts, will also transfer from 2021/22 into 2022/23.

Contractual Commitments	£'000
New Build programme and Acquisitions	3,834
Planned maintenance	603
Neighbourhood Improvements	351
Total Contractual Commitments	4,788

- 6.19 The remainder represents plans or aspirations for investment, for which a carry forward to 2022/23 is requested along with the appropriate capital resources to fund this. It is proposed that the capital resources are carried forward into 2022/23 and reviewed as part of the Business Plan to assess whether it meets the objectives to build new homes and make the best use of our existing assets.

Carry Forward Requests	£'000
New Build programme and Acquisitions	3,459
Planned maintenance	1,452
Neighbourhood Improvements	520
Horticulture and play equipment	60
Council House Adaptations	24
Total HRA Capital Spend	5,514

7. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

7.1 Ensuring that the Council makes best use of its resources is what underpins the ability to achieve the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan. Specific links are to a financially sustainable Council, managing our housing assets effectively, and property investment to generate income.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 These are detailed in the report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no specific legal implications.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT

10.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Significant Risk No. 13 – We may be unable to respond in a timely and effective way to financial demands and also Corporate Risk No. 5E05 – if the Finance Strategy is not in place with a balanced position over the medium term the Councils will not be able to deliver the core objectives and service delivery may be at risk of not being delivered. Other key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
If there are increases in inflation and other variables, then Council Housing self-financing could result in a greater risk to investment and service delivery plans.	Unlikely - 2	Noticeable – 2	Inflation and interest rate assumptions have been modelled in the HRA business plan. Capital receipts and capital programme funding reviewed.
If we fail to spend retained RTB receipts within 5-year period, then it will lead to requirement to repay to Government with interest.	Unlikely - 2	Bad - 3	Provision has been made in the budget and Investment Strategy to enable match funding and spend of RTB receipts.
If we borrow too much to fund New Homes, we will not be able to pay the loan interest.	Unlikely - 2	Bad - 3	Follow the CIPFA Prudential Code which states Capital investment plans must be affordable, prudent and sustainable.
If economic conditions and other external factors like Covid19 are worse than budgeted for it could have an adverse effect on the Councils 2021/22 and medium-term financial position.	Probable – 3	Noticeable - 2	Maintain the focus and momentum on reducing the budget deficit throughout the financial year. Announcement about additional Covid19 funding from the Government into 2021/22.

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
			Maintain sufficient minimum reserve level to withstand the impact.
If capital data is inaccurate it could lead to problems with treasury management debt and cashflows.	Unlikely - 2	Bad - 3	Work closely with treasury management when setting capital budgets and how this will be financed. Monitor the capital spend quarterly and raise any changes with treasury management.

11. CONSULTATIONS

- 11.1 Consultations have taken place with the Assistant Directors, Corporate Managers and other Budget Managers as appropriate

12. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

- 12.1 An equality analysis has not been completed because there is no action to be taken on service delivery as a result of this report.

13. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 In support of the Council's commitment to be Carbon Neutral by 2030, several initiatives have and are being undertaken in relation to the housing and sheltered accommodation stock. These are set out in more detail below.
- 13.2 Since 2020, Babergh has installed 85 Air Source Heat Pumps in council owned homes.
- 13.3 Working alongside the Energy Savings Trust, every property within our housing stock (via a desktop exercise) has been evaluated, which has provided the council with current energy efficiency levels compared with what could be achieved and the level of investment required to achieve improved energy efficiency. The 'hardest to heat' homes will be targeted first. This now allows us to quantify the cost of capital environmental works to existing homes.
- 13.4 Oil fired / storage communal heating has been replaced with individual heat pumps.
- 13.5 The new homes 'design and technical specification' that incorporates carbon saving solutions will be launched alongside our 30-year Housing Business Plan from in the first half of 2022.
- 13.6 Surveyors have been studying for the Retrofit Co-ordinators Diploma by the Retrofit Academy to better support the Council's ambition to retrofit existing properties.

14. APPENDICES

Title	Location
APPENDIX A – Capital Programme	Attached
APPENDIX B – Earmarked Reserves	Attached

15. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

23 February 2021 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Four-Year Outlook Report 2020/21 – BC/20/25

6 September 2021 - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Financial Monitoring 2021/22 Quarter 1 - BCa/21/19

6 December 2021 - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Financial Monitoring 2021/22 Quarter 2 - BCa/21/29

7 March 2022 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Financial Monitoring 2021/22 - Quarter 3 – BCa/21/42

Capital Programme

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22	Original Budget	Carry Forwards / Budget Adjustments	Current Budget	Outturn	Contractual Carry Forwards	Non-Contractual Carry Forwards	Variance after Carry Forwards (favourable) / adverse	Explanation of Variances
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Housing Revenue Account								
Housing Maintenance								
Planned maintenance	3,351	4,202	7,553	5,498	603	1,452	0	There have been procurement delays due to staff turnover and supply issues
ICT Projects	200	213	413	4	-	-	(409)	A review of ICT requirements has been undertaken and concluded that the level of budget required can be reduced
Neighbourhood Improvements	500	991	1,491	620	351	520	(0)	
Council House Adaptations	200	174	374	350	-	24	(0)	
Horticulture and play equipment	30	30	60	-	-	60	-	
New Build and Acquisitions								
New Build programme and Acquisitions	7,473	10,141	17,614	10,322	3,834	3,458	(0)	Delays have occurred due to supply and procurement issues and arranging legal agreements on the latest developments. Some delayed projects were scheduled to complete in the next 2-3 years, so it is likely that final delivery will be later than planned.
Total HRA Capital Spend	11,754	15,751	27,505	16,794	4,788	5,514	(409)	

Earmarked Reserves

	Balance at 1 April 2021 (£'000)	Transfers to (£'000)	Transfers from (£'000)	Balance at 31 March 2022 (£'000)
Working Balance	(1,000)			(1,000)
Strategic Priorities Reserve	(15,780)	(419)	TBC	(16,200)
Building Council Homes Programme (BCHP) Reserve	(20)			(20)
Big 20'	(96)			(96)
TOTAL RESERVE BALANCES	(16,896)	(419)	-	(17,315)

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Agenda Item 10

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: BDC Cabinet	REPORT NUMBER: BCa/22/8
FROM: Cllr Jan Osborne BDC Cabinet Member for Housing	DATE OF MEETING: 4 th July 2022
OFFICER: Gavin Fisk – Assistant Director Housing	KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB306

THE APPROVAL OF THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out the work that has taken place to date to develop a robust and financially sustainable Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan for the period 2022 - 2052 for Babergh District Council. It provides an oversight of the consultation with key stakeholders and how this feedback and insight has shaped and developed the plan.
- 1.2 This report provides an evidence base highlighting the priorities that have been defined within the HRA Business Plan. The final plan will be presented to Cabinet in July 2022 along with evidence the plan has been robustly stress tested and which is deliverable both in the medium and longer term.
- 1.3 This report seeks support of the Council to commit to the current version of the plan based on the priorities set out in this report.

2 OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 To continue with the current version of the HRA Business Plan, which was adopted in 2017. However, it is felt this would prevent us managing the HRA effectively as many changes have occurred since 2017, including the Climate Emergency declared by both Councils in 2019.
- 2.2 To develop an HRA Business Plan that supports Babergh District Councils Vision for the Housing Revenue Account, which is recommended as it reflects the changing external factors, as well as the Councils own aspirations. It has sought to consider opportunities to not only review the financial capacity within the HRA, but the approach and direction to the delivery of Council Housing Services, including meeting the requirements set out in the Social Housing White Paper.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the proposed HRA Business Plan along with the overarching aims as set out in this report.
- 3.2 It is recommended that an annual review of the HRA Business Plan takes place, and any amendments, changes, or updates are reported to Cabinet as part of the annual budget setting process.

REASON FOR DECISION
3.2 To ensure Babergh have an HRA Business Plan, which will be meet the Councils overarching Housing aims over the next five years

4 KEY INFORMATION

4.1 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan sets out the priorities, plans and actions for council housing over the next 5 and 30 years. The HRA Business Plan was last revised in May 2017, therefore, it was pertinent that after five years, a fundamental review of the plan and its priorities took place.

4.2 The purpose of such plans is to show that we can maintain our existing housing assets and deliver a quality customer-focused service, as well as improve homes and neighbourhoods, whilst supporting and endeavouring to achieve the visions of the current organisations' key strategies.

4.3 An effective HRA Business Plan has become ever more crucial since central government announced the reform of the rules governing local authority housing finance and the introduction of the self-financing system a decade ago.

4.4 The development of the HRA Business Plan has been developed during a backdrop of legislative changes all aimed at making all Social Housing safer. Homes of a higher quality and giving tenants more oversight of their landlord's performance. With the ability of tenants to take an active role in the management of their homes. This has been supported through the development of the Regulator for Social Housing which has been given more control and greater ability to enforce regulatory standards and monitor and inspect all social housing landlords.

These changes are the most significant in a generation and will change fundamentally the Social Housing sector with greater monitoring of standards and performance with one primary aim drive up both standards and performance throughout the sector.

4.5 Work to develop the HRA Business Plans has been focussed heavily on research, consultation, scenario testing, and design this includes ensuring the final version of the plans have specific, measurable, realistic targets.

4.6 To do so, research and development has been invested in the organisations proposed '*New Build Design Guide*' and '*Technical Specification*'. Along with far greater intelligence and insight on the energy performance of our existing stock portfolio. This specific piece of work has led to working with the Energy Saving Trust to produce individual reports on every council owned home, which is based on more than 80 separate measures. This work has allowed us to accurately predict the levels of future expenditure and investment required to ensure every Council owned home meets the Government target of EPC C, by 2030.

4.7 To ensure the plan is achievable, it has required officers to produce a baseline position taking into account actual income and expenditure including planned works.

- 4.8 Summer 2021 saw both tenant, staff and member consultation with more than 2,000 separate survey responses to three different consultations, which is evidenced in section nine of this report. As a direct result of this feedback, we have ensured the final version of the HRA Business Plan has been fully costed will provide the following outcomes for all stakeholders, associated with the Housing Revenue Accounts.
- 4.9 During the first half of 2022 we surveyed a further 600 tenants and used this insight to further develop the HRA Business Plan.

What will our Plans deliver?

Investing in our Homes

- 4.10 It is intended that we will see significant investment in retrofitting of existing homes to make them energy efficient (EPC Level C), and compliant with existing legislation.
- With an aspiration to provide additional investment in existing homes to support them reaching a higher level of energy performance above EPC C during the lifespan of these plans.
- 4.11 We will need to make decisions in the future in relation to our stock profile, this could include making decisions on which HRA assets to develop, redevelop, or dispose of, to ensure we consistently provide homes which are cost effective to maintain and provide the highest levels of quality for tenants.
- 4.12 Ensure our homes exceed tenants' expectations, this includes the fabric and condition of the home as well as the services they receive. In the future this is likely to include investment in 'smart' technology to allow homes to be monitored for future repair or maintenance or standards e.g., Smart sensors to monitor the boiler or moisture within the home.
- 4.13 Enhanced 'Void' standards, which ensure that when empty homes are returned to the Council, as a landlord, we are focussed on quality rather than cost and time. In the longer term it is envisaged this will lead to savings on repairs and maintenance and improved levels of tenant satisfaction.

Climate Change

- 4.14 Investment in all homes to improve overall energy efficiency will be a key focus and will require long term investment beyond historic and existing levels of investment in capital improvements.
- 4.15 This will be led through retrofitting and improved energy efficiency of homes. Including monetary investment to ensure every Council owned home meets EPC C by 2030. Supported by practical education for tenants on how to best use and manage the home to gain the greatest benefits, leading to lower energy costs for tenants.
- 4.16 Significant work has already taken place to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes in recent years and this includes programmes of Cavity Wall and Loft Insulation. Solar PV on more than 2,000 Council owned homes across Babergh and Mid Suffolk. The installation of Air Source Heating, External Wall Insulation, Double Glazing

- 4.17 This work will support both organisational and Suffolk wide Climate change ambitions, which will be complemented by greater levels of Biodiversity within our estates and neighbourhoods. A practical example of this approach could be community allotments, which provide a sense of place and belonging, and which exceed tenants needs.

Building and Buying New Council Homes

- 4.18 There will continue to be an ambition to build or acquire additional new homes. It is proposed that 65 new homes are built or acquired each year, for each of the next five years. Through the development of the HRA Business Plan, the Council will be able to identify how many new homes it can build and develop over the medium term. These new homes will be developed using the New Build Design Guide and Technical Specification. Whilst the Councils will continue to work with Homes England to obtain funding through the Affordable Homes Programme, which will enable more homes to be developed rather than solely funding development via the HRA.
- 4.19 An ambition to build on average 65 new homes every year for the next five years should not be underestimated in terms of the Capital investment that is required at a time when additional investment is also required to our existing housing portfolio. This is to ensure we meet the requirements for energy efficient, safe, warm and decent homes. As such there will inevitably always be a balancing act with making best use of the finite capital resources available to the Housing Revenue Account. Without creating unaffordable borrowing or the need to make extensive cuts to existing services to save costs. The ability to achieve optimised Housing development and investment in existing homes is imperative and complimentary to one another.
- 4.20 An emphasis on good quality design, energy efficiency, low running costs, sustainability, and the use of modern methods of construction, where appropriate.
- 4.21 Right to Buy receipts will be used efficiently ensuring they are maximised and contribute effectively to any affordable housing programme.
- 4.22 Whilst there will continue to be a focus on new homes, the Business Plans will focus on how the HRA's and the council housing service makes efficient use of existing homes through for example, incentives to downsize.
- 4.23 Within the housing portfolio there will continue to be a continuous review of existing HRA Assets which will include acquisition, disposal, and remodelling, to maximise revenues and minimise the cost of maintenance, repair and renewal of stock which is poorly performing.

Improving the service we provide to our tenants

- 4.24 It is imperative that we continually improve on existing levels of service and performance. We must ensure that every single tenant feels listened to and satisfied with the service they receive, whilst identifying BMSDC Landlord services as being exemplar in its approach to placing Tenants at the 'Heart' of what we do including decision making.
- 4.25 This will require a greater emphasis on performance, scrutiny, and satisfaction ensuring building safety and compliance at all times with regulation and Housing law.

- 4.26 We will learn from every complaint. Measuring satisfaction in real time and ensure we do not only meet the new regulatory framework and standards as set by the Regulator of Social Housing but exceed them.

Improving our Neighbourhoods

- 4.27 We know all stakeholders identified improvements that could or should be made through the consultation. Therefore, this is an area that we will identify and target to ensure improvements for which tenants identify and benefit from. To support this important work and to take account for the variety of neighbourhoods throughout the District, a Neighbourhoods Strategy will be developed to provide an overarching approach.
- 4.28 We will develop a programme to reduce the number of garages in areas where there is low demand and utilise this space for alternative uses e.g., additional parking, housing solutions or amenity land.
- 4.29 Improve existing car parking provision and develop the opportunities for Electrical Vehicle (EV) charging.
- 4.30 Increased Biodiversity and Environmental Improvements.
- 4.31 Improved quality of estates through enhanced standards and quality which may be achieved through effective service charging, where appropriate.
- 4.32 These and other measures and improvements will aim to ensure neighbourhoods are identified as being safe, secure, pleasant, enjoyable and fun to live within, which leads to increases in tenant satisfaction as a direct result.

Involving Tenants in running of the service

- 4.33 We will ensure that through the business plan, there are opportunities for active decision making for tenants through a person-centred approach.
- 4.34 Development of an innovative Governance model that could introduce a Housing Board (equivalent to our Companies or a Housing Association Board) with officers, tenant/s, members and key specialists actively involved and part of decision making, performance and the development of the service in the long term.
- 4.35 Delivery of an action plan that supports a model of engagement that places tenants at the heart of decision making (in line with Tenant Participatory Advisory Service (TPAS) accreditation).

Digital Transformation

- 4.36 The service will move to a cloud-based software system, which enables greater flexibility for staff and tenants and creates efficiencies.
- 4.37 We will support more tenants with both the skills and tools to embrace digital methods as a result of direct feedback from our digital skills survey. This will enable and encourage users of the service to self-serve 'on the go'. For those that desire, we will provide digital tenancies that are more intuitive and that negate the need to use traditional communication channels to engage with the landlord service, providing a greater level of self-serve on the go than is currently available.

4.38 Whilst the use of digital tools and technology will support staff to manage the service effectively e.g., Using digital dashboards to provide a clear picture of performance in 'real time' along with greater functionality using tablets and software.

5 LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

5.1 Homes and Housing is one of the six key priorities within the Joint Corporate Plan and plays a significant role in achieving the Council's overarching vision to build 'great communities with bright and healthy futures that everyone is proud to call home'.

5.2 The intention is to ensure that the Councils own Housing stock and its tenants are supported through the Business Plan to maintain our housing stock and continue providing good quality, sustainable council homes, which meet a range of needs for today and for future generations. We will do this by:

- Achieving and maintaining high standards of housing management and effective tenant involvement;
- Assisting people in housing need to access social housing; Support vulnerable tenants in maintaining their tenancy and living independently;
- Responding to and pre-empting changing demand patterns by maintaining a balanced portfolio of housing which addresses a wide range of needs;
- Increasing the environmental sustainability of our housing stock

5.3 Our work is inherently about the provision of safe, affordable and decent homes, which support people's quality of life, sense of place and identity. The HRA Business plan must therefore prioritise the way all of its Housing services operate and how we can influence others to play their part.

5.4 The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan will signpost to the other strategies in the Corporate Plan that play a key role in delivering Council Housing outcomes and which enables our tenants to feel empowered to have their say in how their homes are managed and to ensure everyone has accommodation they are proud to call home.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The HRA Business Plan includes a set of financial assessments including scenario testing and projected income and expenditure between 2022 – 2027. This includes actual income and expenditure both now and projected going forward, along with evidence to support the plans as to what is and what is not affordable and how the finite income associated to the HRA Account will be apportioned to meet both the medium term aims of this plan for the period 2022 – 2027 and the long term aims for the period 2022 – 2052.

6.2 This plan was developed using a suite of baseline assumptions which included:

- Revised inflation assumptions
- Consumer Price Index (CPI) projections reflect Bank of England Monetary Policy Report (Feb 2022)
- Rent increases reflect CPI +1% until 2024/25, then CPI only from 2025/26
- Updated Capital and Revenue budgets
- Updated Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) - C investment assumptions
- Spending pressures met from within existing budgets

- EPC-C investment by 2030 included in the Baseline assumptions
- To provide at least 65 new units a year (on average) between 2022 and 2027/2028
- Strategic Priorities Reserve available to spend (s/t £1M minimum balance)
- Rent loss from voids assumed at 2%
- Investment in existing housing stock will continue at current levels

6.3 A series of financial scenarios were also initially developed which included:

- Scenario 1 – Deliver zero carbon measures by 2050
- Scenario 2 – Deliver 500 extra homes in each authority over 10 years
- Scenario 3 – Increase budgets to reflect additional spending pressures
- Scenario 4 – Invest to Save initiatives
- One new initiative a year for four years, starting from 2022/23, Each initiative requires £50k to introduce, Ongoing running costs are £50k pa per initiative, Each initiative reduces costs by £100k pa from its second year
- Scenario 5 – Effects of a 1-year rent freeze in 2023/24
- Scenario 6 – Combined effects of scenarios 1, 2 & 3
- Scenario 7 – Optimised version of scenario 6

6.4 In summary the overall plan between 2022 and 2026 evidences:

(Figures are all Millions)	Babergh District Council
Income 2022/23	£18.3m
Income 2025/26	£21.6m
Responsive Repairs	£17.2m
Capital Expenditure	£30.1m
New Build/ 141 Receipts	£45.4m
New Borrowing	£26.1m

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no legal implications of this report.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Corporate / Significant Business Risk No. 13. We may be unable to react in a timely and effective way to financial demands. Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
-------------------------	-------------------	---------------	----------------------------

<p>Failure to develop a financially sustainable HRA Business plan could lead to in year deficits and an inability to provide an effective Housing service in the long term</p>	<p>1 – Highly Unlikely</p>	<p>4- Disaster</p>	<p>Regular monitoring of the HRA Business Plan through effective budget monitoring and budget setting. Approved by Cabinet.</p> <p>The use of specialist external consultancy to act as a critical friend and business support.</p> <p>The use of an independent business model which ensures all medium and long-term income and expenditure is recorded</p>
<p>Failure to accurately identify and plan for all future investment and expenditure could lead to the Councils being unable to provide both the quality of accommodation and landlord services that everyone expects</p>	<p>2 - Unlikely</p>	<p>4 - Disaster</p>	<p>Research, profiling and insight into future costs of investment and expenditure have been conducted using specialist support.</p> <p>The plan articulates where legislation requires a specific approach going forward</p> <p>Budgets are monitored on a monthly basis and monitored through quarterly outturn reports with a robust budget setting process</p>
<p>The HRA Business Plan is</p>	<p>2 - Unlikely</p>	<p>3 – Bad/Serious</p>	<p>Consultation has taken place with</p>

not relatable to by its stakeholders and hence does not achieve the outcomes and goals desired			all stakeholders. Research has taken place on what the plan needs to achieve to provide the highest levels of service to tenants and to be an exemplar.
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9 CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 During a period in the second half of 2021 there were a total of 619 consultees that responded to an online survey (584 tenants, 27 Staff and 8 Members). A further 14 took part in a virtual workshop.
- 9.2 The following seven areas were identified in priority order with details of the key issues identified during the consultation.
- 9.3 Investing in our current homes
- 71% of respondents did not feel we invested enough in existing homes.
 - Improving home insulation, installing environmentally friendly heating systems and upgrading doors and windows were the priority investment items identified for all existing homes.
- 9.4 Climate change
- 70% of respondents felt we should be doing more to address climate change.
 - Improving the energy efficiency of homes should be the top priority.
- 9.5 Building and buying new Council housing
- Consultees were concerned about a lack of local affordable housing.
 - Building more homes and encouraging under occupiers were considered the most effective ways to increase supply of affordable homes.
- 9.6 Improving the services, we provide our tenants
- Staff thought Housing Officers should visit tenants in their home once a year; tenant preference was for only when requested.
 - 83% of tenant respondents did not want the Housing Service to provide non-housing advice
- 9.7 Improving our neighbourhoods
- 87% of tenants like the neighbourhoods they live in. The friendliness of existing communities was particularly highly valued.
 - Lack of car parking was the issue tenants were most unhappy about.
 - Staff and Members felt neighbourhoods looked untidy or unkempt and poorly maintained.
- 9.8 Involving tenants in the running of the housing service
- 56% felt tenants should be given more opportunities to be involved.
 - 61% of tenants did not feel listened to.

- Digital surveys were the preferred method for tenants to have their say (however, this may be because this consultation exercise was digital, therefore, those without digital access were not as represented).

9.9 Digital Transformation

- There was generally a low awareness of the online 'My Home' portal amongst tenants and Members
- Only 28% of tenants had signed up to the 'My Home' portal
- Tenants mainly use it to contact a member of the housing service
- 46% of staff said they actively promote Digital channels to tenants
- Not being aware of the My Home portal was the main reason for not signing up
- Being able to book and track repairs was the favoured feature to add to the My Home Portal.

9.10 A further 1,500 separate surveys were received in relation to Sheltered Housing and Digital Access and Skills of tenants. These results will help shape further changes to our 'offer'.

9.11 In March 2022, we gained 600 Tenant Satisfaction responses (300 from Babergh and 300 from Mid Suffolk) which have given us a rich picture of current tenant satisfaction and performance which has been incorporated into the final version of the plan. This data has been captured in accordance with the proposed Tenant Satisfaction measures every landlord will be responsible for gathering and reporting on, within the next 18 months across the sector, following government consultation.

An Action Plan has already been developed incorporating a raft of proposals and actions to ensure the Council as a Landlord begins improving the levels of satisfaction amongst Tenants, where lower levels of satisfaction have been recorded, based on the recent quantitative and qualitative feedback. This work will be continuously monitored and provided to the Council and its Members through performance and Outcomes reports.

10 EQUALITY ANALYSIS

10.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from this report, at this stage. When individual specific projects are brought forward, as identified as part of the HRA Business Plan, Initial screening, and where necessary, full Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out.

10.2 It should be noted that a key component of the Business Plans will be to ensure equality and diversity as well as ensuring anyone with a protected characteristic is supported whilst as a tenant of Babergh or Mid Suffolk District Councils.

11 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report, at this stage.

11.2 It is intended that there will be positive environmental implications associated with the HRA Business Plans, specifically, that of our existing Carbon Reduction Management Plan and Bio-Diversity Plan and the emerging wider Environmental Strategy.

11.3 This will include:

- Improving the existing energy efficiency of all council owned homes ensuring that every home meets an Energy Performance Certificate (C) by 2030;
- All existing council owned homes are carbon neutral (wherever possible) by 2050;
- New affordable housing built in the future by the Councils will be delivered to the highest levels of energy performance and standards achievable (on a scheme-by-scheme basis);
- Along with ensuring HRA amenity land provides greater levels of biodiversity, which will support and enhance the natural environment and the wellbeing of local communities.

12 APPENDICES

12.1 HRA BUSINESS PLAN INC AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY, NEW BUILD DESIGN GUIDE, TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION AND FINANCIAL SCENARIOS

13 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

13.1 **BC/21/26** The Development of the HRA Business Plans

13.2 The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan – including Affordable Housing Strategy, New Build Design Guide and Technical Specification and Financial Scenarios.

REPORT AUTHORS

14.1 Gavin Fisk – Assistant Director Housing

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Babergh Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan

Executive Summary

This document sets out the framework that is the HRA business plan. It is essentially a document that sets a broad context for both future financial planning and investment decisions, as well as a medium-term strategy for the HRA and outcomes on behalf of tenants and leaseholders.

The plan must ensure that the Council's housing stock related priorities and programmes are supported and delivered whilst demonstrating sound financial management within existing budgets and through the use of additional debt headroom. The main priorities and programmes aim to;

- Increase the stock of social housing owned by the HRA through an ambitious development programme.
- Develop new homes that are built to the highest standard, contributing to the Council's effort to ensure carbon neutrality.
- Improve the quality of existing homes and communal areas and reduce the carbon footprint of existing council homes through investment in assets, community led regeneration and working with communities and individuals.
- Ensure that our homes, and the management of them, maintain and improve wellbeing outcomes for individuals, families and communities alongside other Council services and partners.
- Making sure the HRA Business Plans continuously remain financially viable and sustainable.

Introduction

The HRA is a ringfenced pot of money that is used solely for council-owned housing. All rent and service charge income goes into it, and all expenditure (management, maintenance etc) comes out of it. The purpose of the business plan is to record expenditure and income of maintaining our housing stock and closely related services or facilities, which are provided primarily for the benefit of our tenants. The business plan must have due regard to the longer-term income expectations as well as any opportunities provided by the additional debt headroom, which allows additional prudential borrowing to meet the Councils ambitions.

More information about what a Housing Revenue Account is and how it can be used can be found [here](#).

The main priorities of the Councils' landlord service can be summarised as follows:

- Tackling and adapting to climate change
- Developing new Council housing
- Investing in our current homes
- Involving our tenants in the running of the housing service
- Improving the services that we provide our tenants
- Improving the neighbourhoods that we manage
- Implementing digital transformation

Financial considerations and securing efficiencies

Whilst the HRA is ring-fenced, there still needs to be a focus on maximising income and gaining efficiencies across all services to make sure services deliver the very best value for money to our customers.

The reinvestment of these savings and efficiencies back into tenant services is key – the funds would be reinvested back into the HRA to deliver the right service priorities for tenants. The savings will benefit our residents and would help fund the following activities, plus more, depending on evolving priorities:

- Enhanced housing management and estate management services provided for the benefit of tenants (e.g. additional resource to address anti-social behaviour, additional support for vulnerable tenants).
- Improved maintenance of existing homes.
- Increased new build activity to increase the number of much needed affordable homes.
- Increased programme to retrofit existing stock and meet the national climate emergency target of being zero carbon by 2050, with the added benefit of lowering fuel bills for tenants.

A financial scenario that we explored through the development of the Business Plan was the introduction of 'Invest to Save' initiatives. The principles of this were:

- One new initiative a year for four years
- Starting from 2022/23
- Each initiative requires £50k to introduce
- Ongoing running costs are £50k pa per initiative
- Each initiative reduces costs by £100k pa from its second year

The impact on the long-term financial plan was significant savings over the medium to long term. We will actively look to identify projects that could meet these criteria. Whether it be individual projects or a group of small, combined projects.

Financial Assumptions

In order to develop the HRA Business Plan its important to create a financial baseline. The assumptions that have been used are as follows:

- Revised inflation assumptions
- Consumer Price Index (CPI) based on ONS (September 2021) and Bank of England Monetary Policy report (November 2021)
- Retail Price Index (RPI) tracks at 1% above CPI
- CPI set at 3.1% for 2022/23 budgets
- Rents increase by 4.1% in April 2022 (CPI +1%)
- Rent increases reflect CPI +1% until 2024/25, then CPI only from 2025/26
- Updated Development Programme
- EPC-C investment by 2030
- Strategic Priorities Reserve available to spend (s/t £1.000m minimum balance)
- Rent loss from voids assumed at 2% from 2022/23
- Assume investment in existing homes continues at current levels

Naturally these assumptions will need to be continually monitored and updated due to the level of uncertainty within the wider environment, for example the rate at which CPI increases and the cost-of-living crisis being faced during 2022.

HRA Business Plan Scenarios

The HRA Business Plan has been developed by evaluating the opportunities and risks of a range of scenarios these were:

- Scenario 1 – Deliver zero carbon measures by 2050
- Scenario 2 – Deliver 500 extra homes in each authority over 10 years
- Scenario 3 – Increase budgets to reflect additional spending pressures
- Scenario 4 – Invest to save initiatives
- Scenario 5 – Effects of a 1-year rent freeze in 2022/23
- Scenario 6 – Combined effects of scenarios 1, 2 & 3
- Scenario 7 – Optimised version of scenario 6

Before finally spending time and effort focussed on the Baseline position and two alternative scenarios as documented within the plan.

HRA Financial Scenarios

Once these baselines assumptions had been agreed and developed the following charts show how these impact the overall performance of the Organisations Business Plan:

- Balances within the Plans
- The levels of investment through the Capital Programme
- Levels of Debt/Borrowing
- Levels of Interest Cover
- Levels of overall Stock holding

Basbergh Baseline

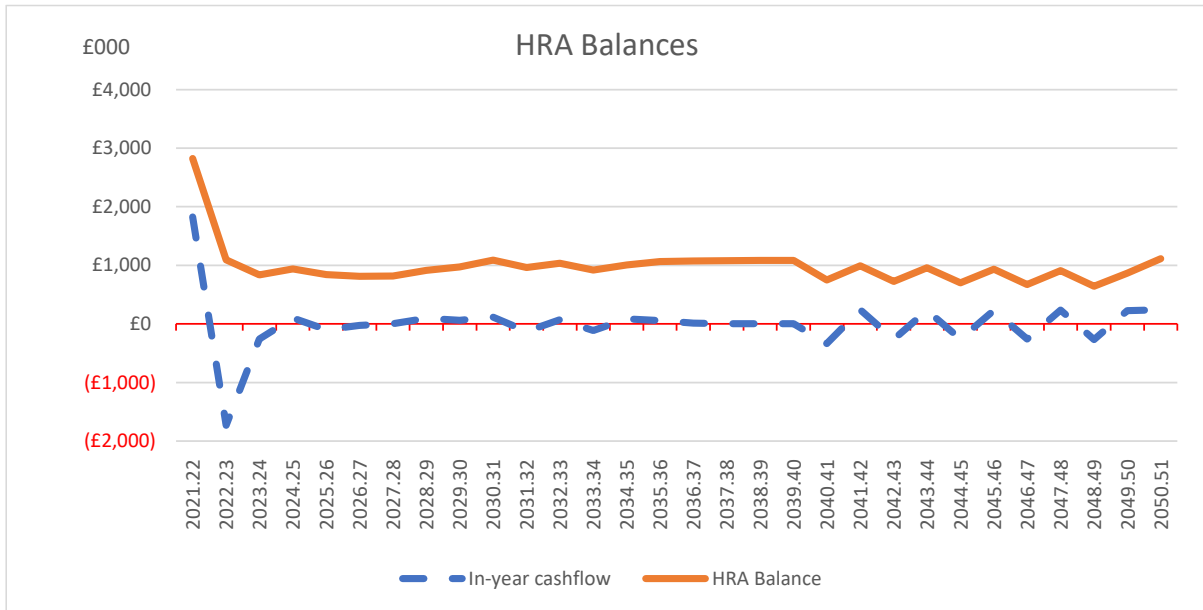
Basbergh District Council -					
Baseline	1	2	3	4	5
Description	2021.22	2022.23	2023.24	2024.25	2025.26
Income	(,000)	(,000)	(,000)	(,000)	(,000)
Gross Rental Income	£16,527	£17,839	£19,452	£20,786	£21,076
Void Losses	-£330	-£357	-£389	-£416	-£422
Tenanted Service Charges	£584	£597	£631	£647	£660
Non-Dwelling Income	£183	£183	£194	£198	£202
Other Income	£11	£48	£50	£52	£53
Total income	£17,271	£18,310	£19,938	£21,267	£21,569
Expenditure					
General Management	-£2,959	-£3,044	-£3,212	-£3,290	-£3,352
Bad Debt Provision	-£139	-£150	-£164	-£175	-£177
Responsive & Cyclical Repairs	-£3,564	-£4,033	-£4,273	-£4,407	-£4,523
Total expenditure	-£6,662	-£7,227	-£7,649	-£7,871	-£8,053
Capital financing costs					
Interest paid on debt	-£3,161	-£3,161	-£3,052	-£3,280	-£3,474
Interest paid on 141 receipts	£0	-£29	-£91	-£178	-£299
Interest Received	£6	£4	£4	£4	£3
Depreciation	-£4,280	-£4,548	-£4,922	-£5,158	-£5,384
Capital financing costs	-£7,435	-£7,734	-£8,061	-£8,612	-£9,153
Appropriations					
Revenue provision (HRA CFR)	£0	£0	£0	-£4,681	-£4,463
RCCO	-£1,198	-£5,079	-£4,486	£0	£0
Other appropriations	-£150	£0	£0	£0	£0
Appropriations	-£1,348	-£5,079	-£4,486	-£4,681	-£4,463
Net income/ (expenditure)	£1,826	-£1,730	-£258	£102	-£100
HRA Balance					
Opening Balance	£1,000	£2,826	£1,095	£838	£940
Generated in year	£1,976	-£1,730	-£258	£102	-£100
Appropriated in	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Appropriated out	-£150	£0	£0	£0	£0
Procurement Fees	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Rolled forward unfinanced spend		£0	£0	£0	£0

Babergh Capital Programme – Baseline

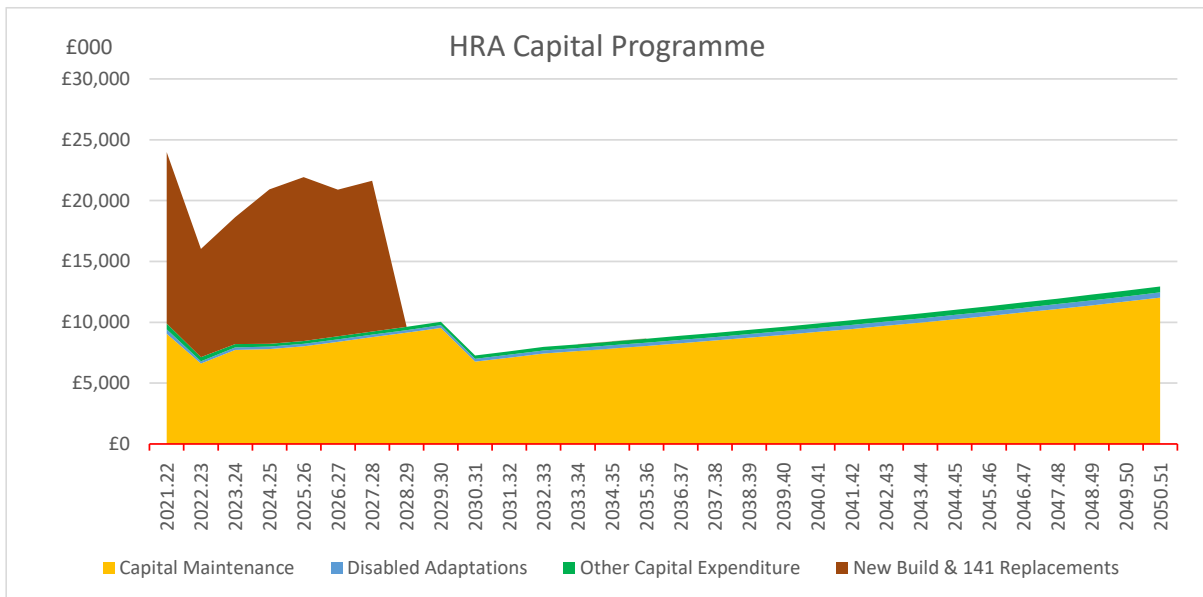
Babergh District Council Capital Programme - Baseline					
HRA Business Planning Model					
Description	1	2	3	4	5
	2021.22	2022.23	2023.24	2024.25	2025.26
Expenditure	(,000)	(,000)	(,000)	(,000)	(,000)
Capital Maintenance	-£9,044	-£6,600	-£7,737	-£7,806	-£8,019
Disabled Adaptations	-£374	-£200	-£200	-£200	-£206
Other Capital Expenditure	-£473	-£337	-£280	-£230	-£237
RTB Buyback Expenditure	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Acquisitions	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Demolitions	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
New Build & 141					
Replacements	-£14,092	-£8,883	-£10,418	-£12,692	-£13,460
Procurement Fees	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Rolled forward unfinanced spend		£0	£0	£0	£0
Total expenditure	-£23,983	-£16,020	-£18,635	-£20,928	-£21,922
Financing					
RCCO	£1,198	£5,079	£4,486	£0	£0
HRA Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Strategic Priorities Reserve	£14,779	£0	£0	£0	£0
MRR	£3,990	£4,838	£4,922	£5,158	£5,384
RTB - Allowable Debt	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
RTB - LA Share	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
RTB - Transaction Costs	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
RTB Buyback Allowance	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other Capital receipts	£0	£0	£0	£0	£2,674
Gen Cap Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
SO Receipts	£1,198	£1,072	£0	£0	£0
Leaseholders' reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
HRA Reserve 4	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
RTB - 141 Receipts	£3,497	£3,105	£4,167	£5,077	£5,384
Capital Grant	£519	£0	£0	£0	£0
S106	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Returned to Capital Reserve	-£1,198	£0	£0	£0	£0
Borrowing	£0	£1,926	£5,061	£10,693	£8,480
Total financing	£23,983	£16,020	£18,635	£20,928	£21,922
Net over/ (under) financing	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0

Babergh Charts

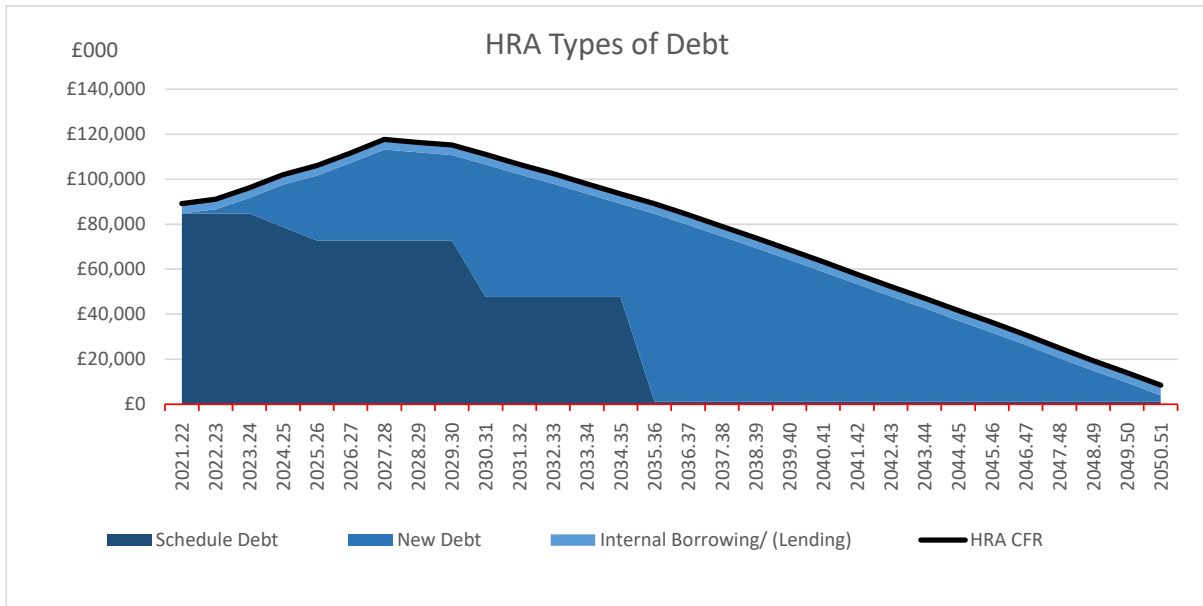
Baseline – HRA Balances – Babergh



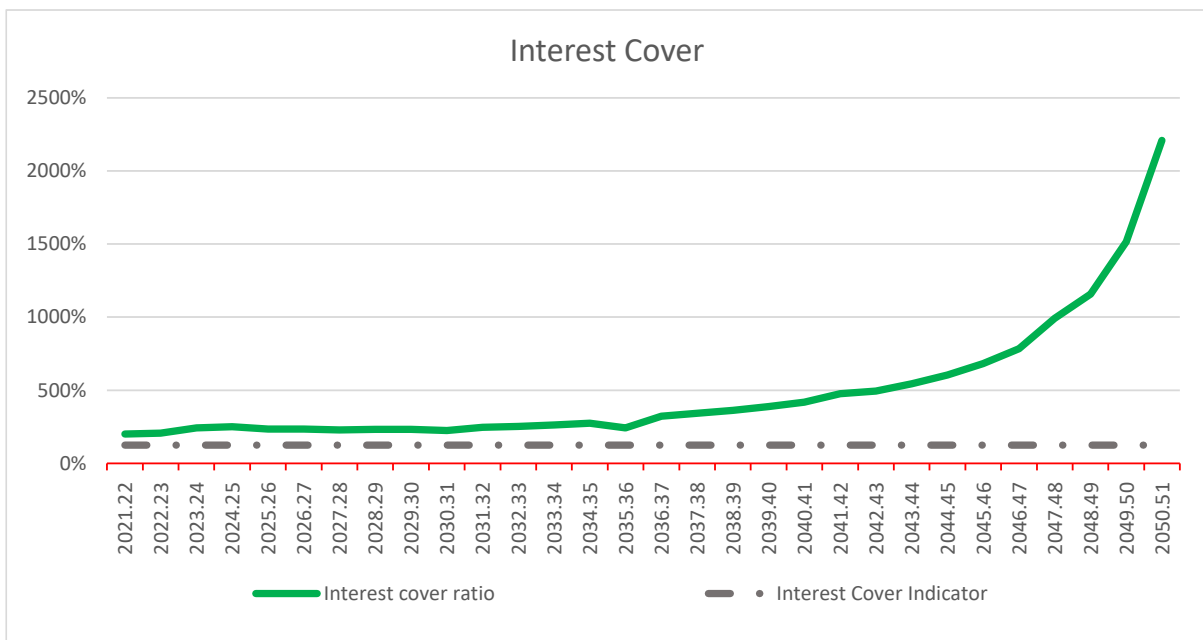
Baseline – HRA Capital Programme – Babergh



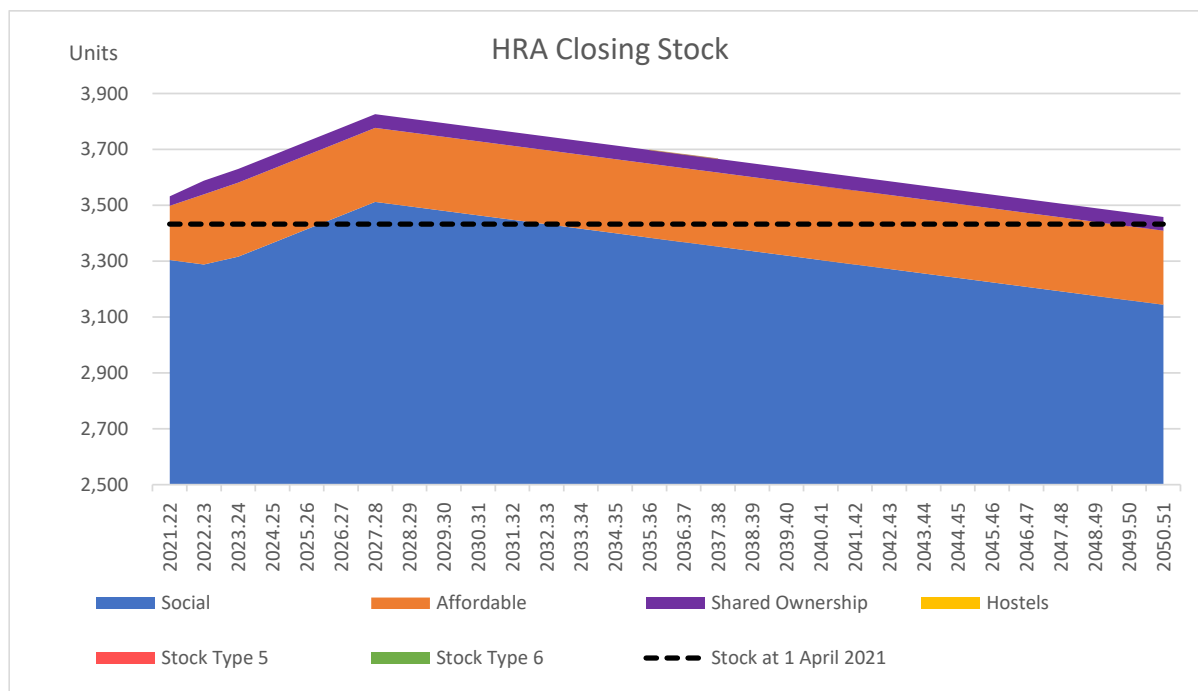
Baseline – HRA Debt – Babergh



Baseline – Interest Cover – Babergh



Baseline – Closing Stock – Babergh



In Summary:

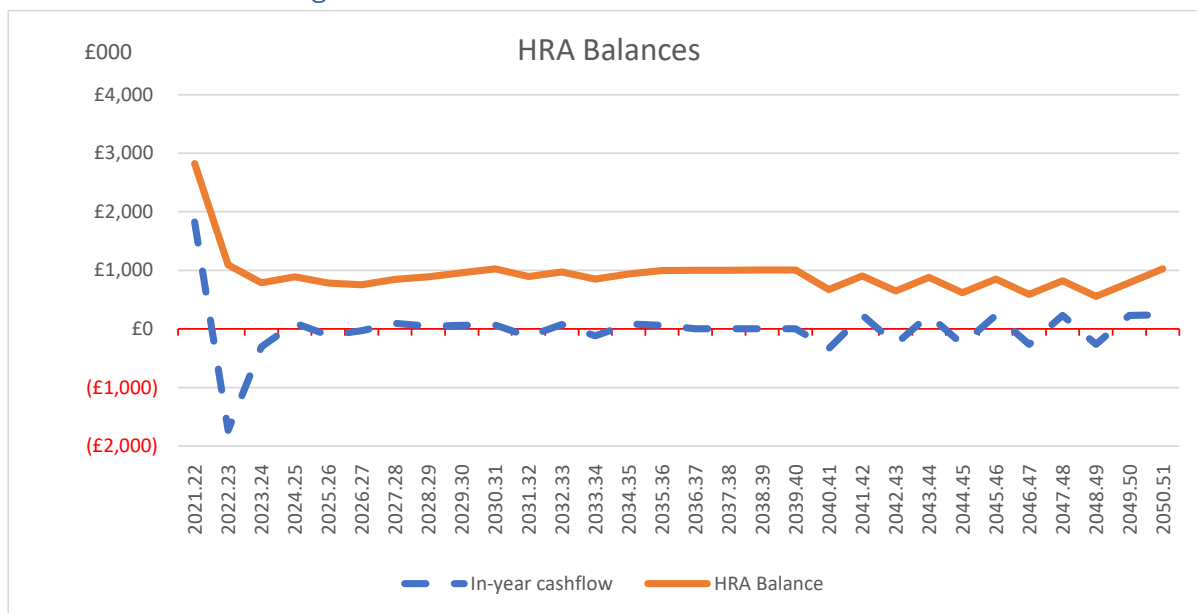
- Peak debt: £117.698m in 2027/28
- £8.430m debt remaining in 2050/51
- Interest cover maintained at 200% or above
- Interest cover increases, indicating good affordability
- Minimum Revenue Balance maintained

Babergh has a sound Baseline position whilst some borrowing is required to deliver the baseline capital programme. Babergh's income is enough to repay most debt within a reasonable timescale. Current gaps in data relating to stock condition, need to be plugged and the intention is to use current stock condition data to update the plan during 2022/2023.

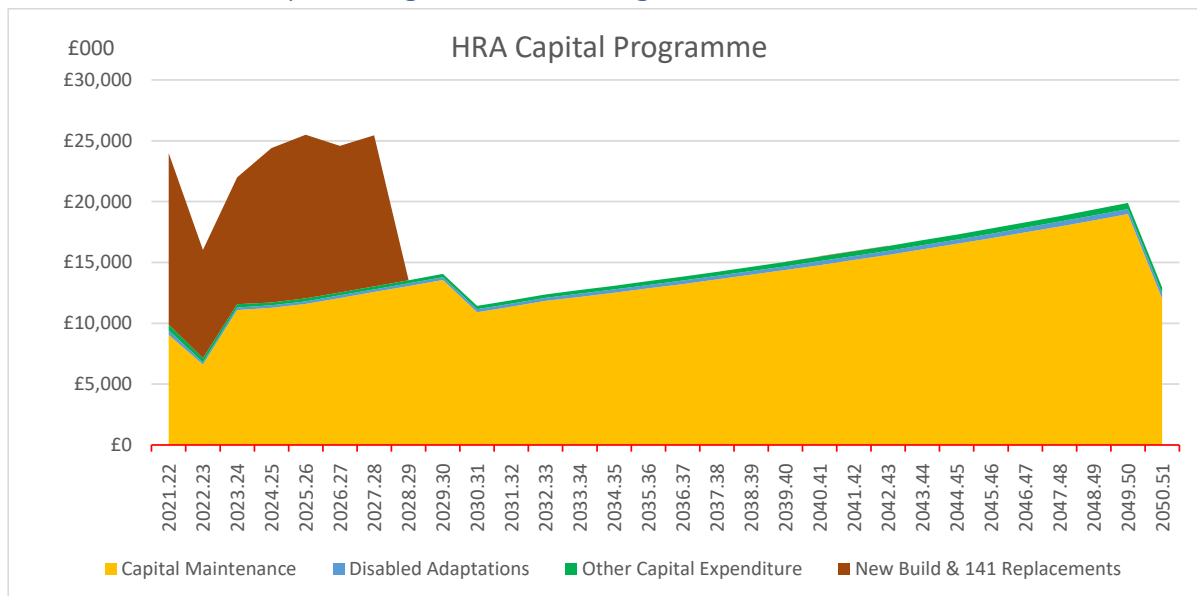
Scenario 1 – Deliver additional zero carbon measures by 2050

Assumptions include: The HRA Baseline position + deliver zero carbon measures by 2050 with a Retrofit cost of £24k per property. To be completed over 27 years, starting in 2023/24

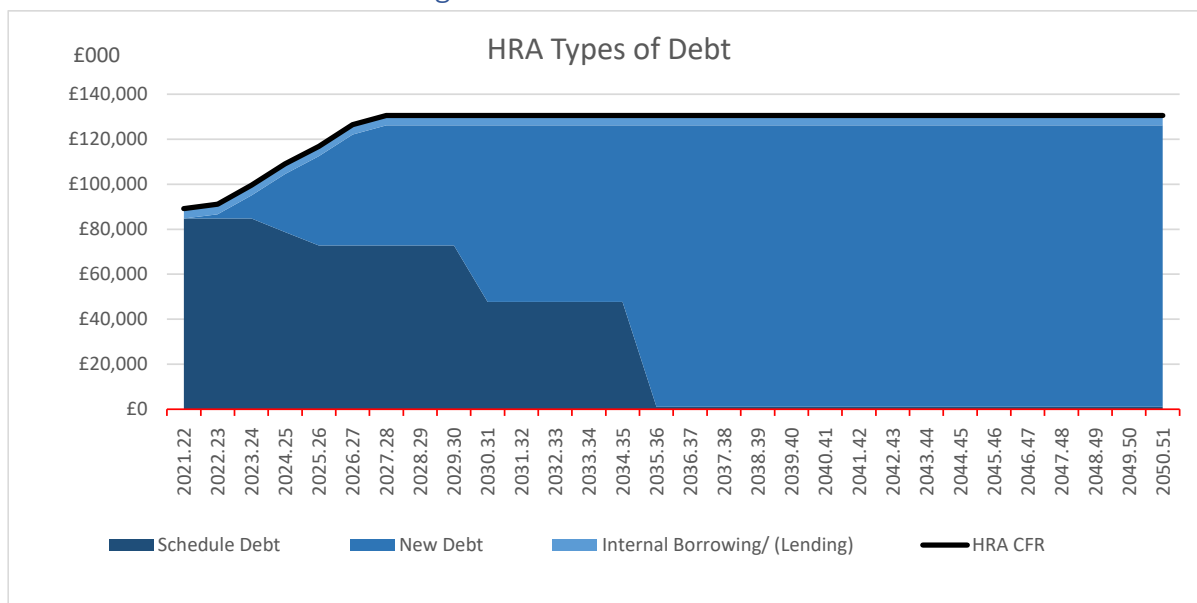
HRA Balances – Babergh



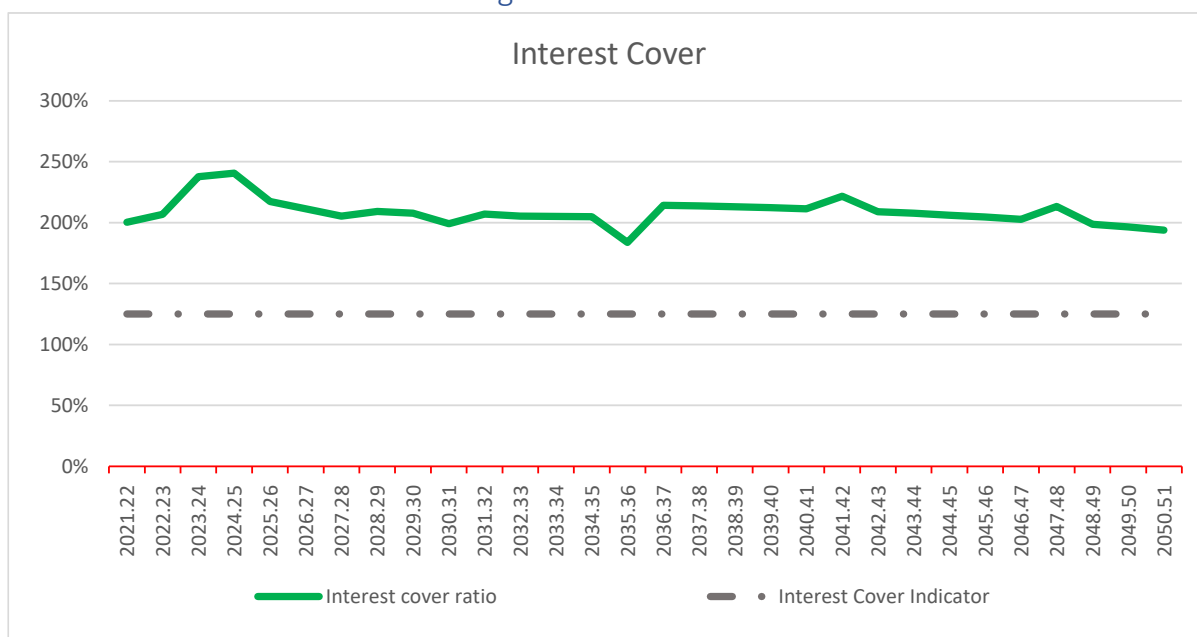
Scenario 1 – HRA Capital Programme – Babergh



Scenario 1 – HRA Debt – Babergh



Scenario 1 – Interest Cover – Babergh



In summary:

- Peak debt: £130.582m from 2027/28
+£12.884m on the baseline position but occurs in the same year
- Residual debt: £130.582m after 30 years Leaving Babergh unable to repay debt.
- Unable to deliver the full capital programme over 30 years
Approximately an £82.733m shortfall by year 30
- Interest cover is acceptable, but in decline
- Minimum revenue balance is maintained

This results in very high debt and a Capital programme which is not fully deliverable for the authority.

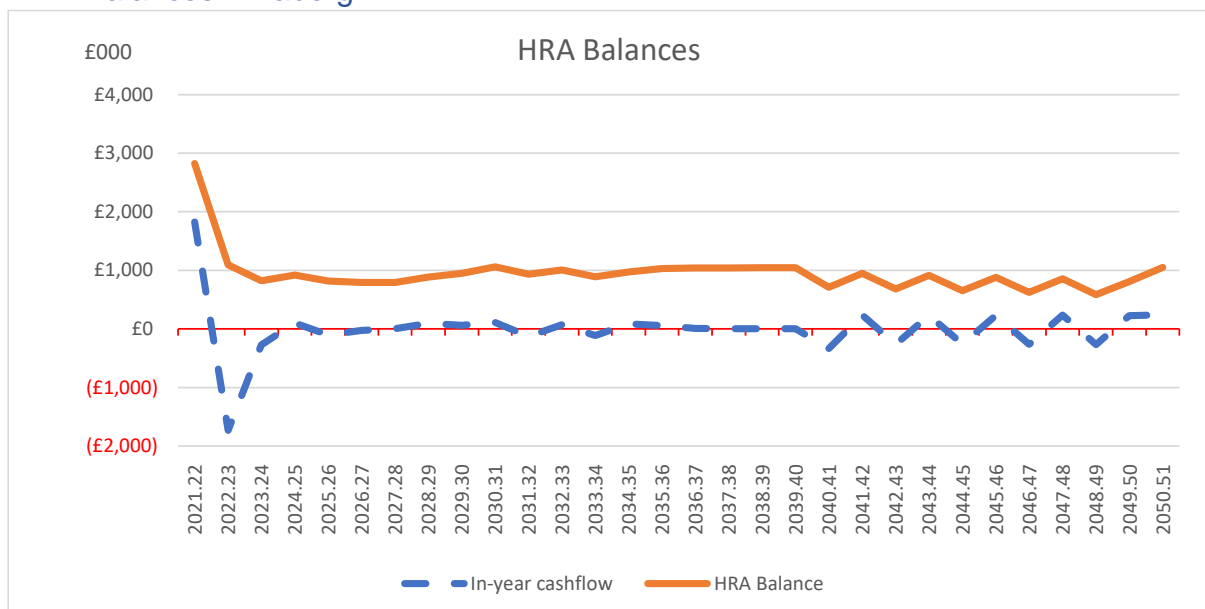
This approach would not be financially sustainable unless something else changes.

Scenario 2 - Effects of a 1-year rent freeze in 2023/24

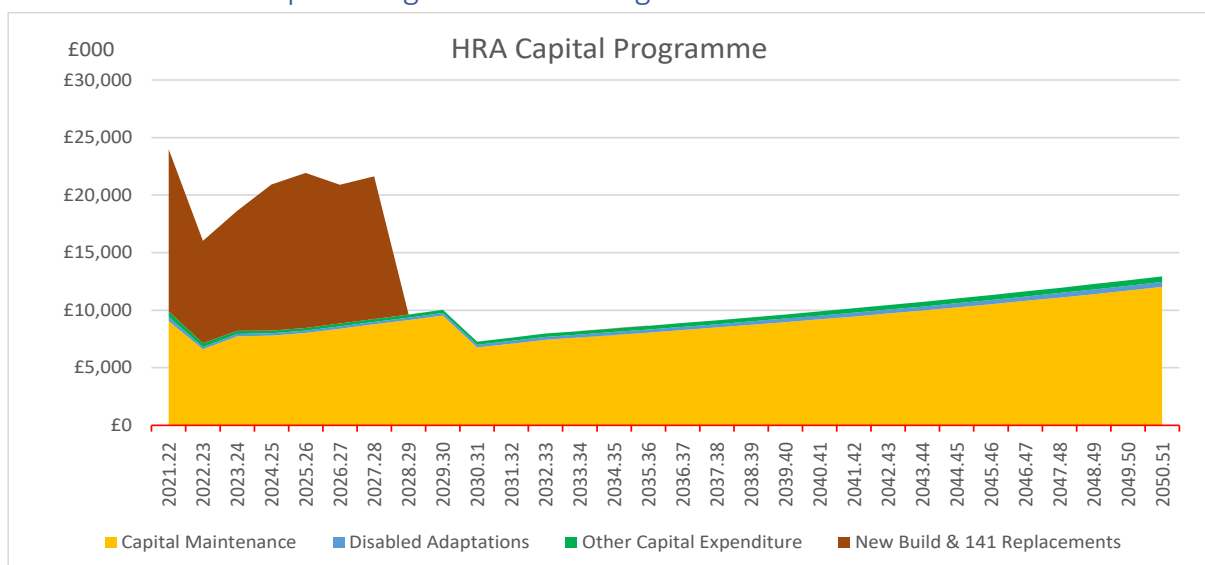
The following scenario considers the baseline, with a 1-year rent freeze in 2023/24

This would reflect a local decision by the authority to implement a zero-rent increase. With Rents continuing to increase by maximum levels from 2024/25 and Formula rents continue to be uplifted in line with Government policy.

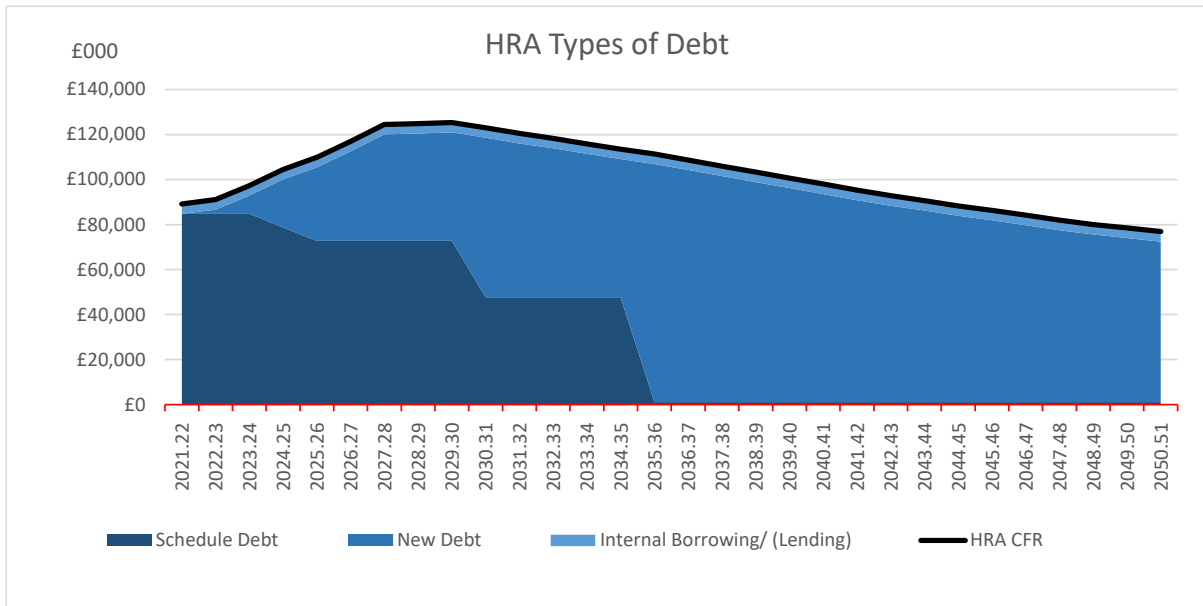
HRA Balances – Babergh



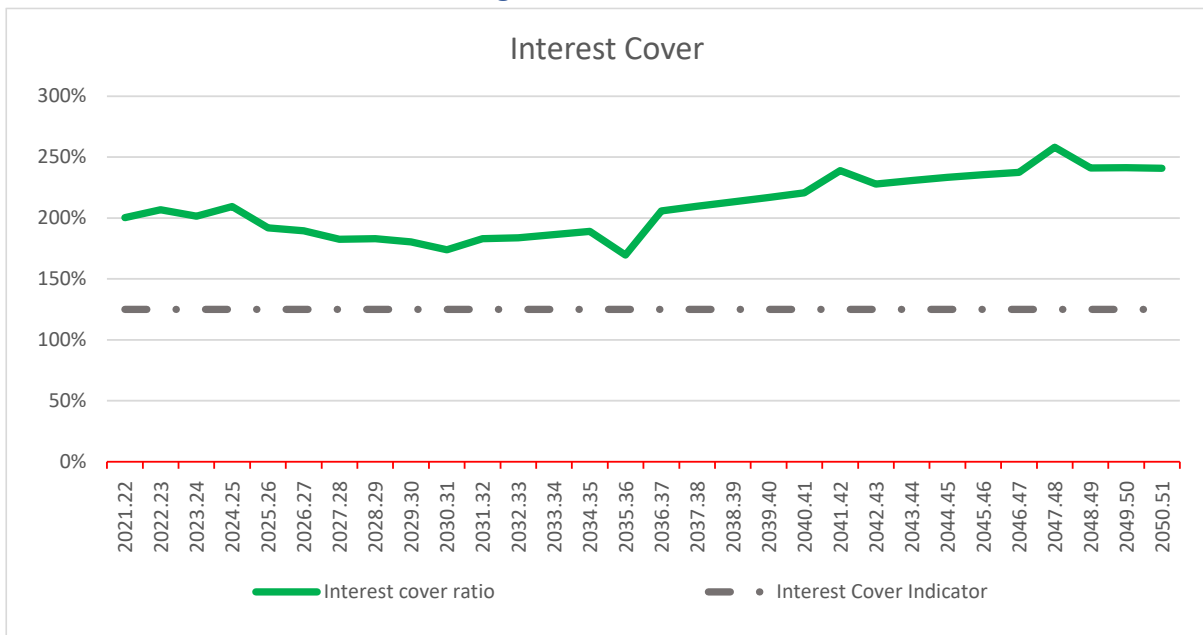
Scenario 2 – HRA Capital Programme – Babergh



Scenario 2 – HRA Debt – Babergh



Scenario 2 – Interest Cover – Babergh



In Summary this scenario requires higher debt for the Authority, but lost income reduces ability to service that debt. Whilst it remains affordable and sustainable for Babergh. A decision to freeze rents would need to be accompanied by compensating measures that reduce costs.

In Conclusion Babergh has a strong underlying position and is able to repay debt within a reasonable timescale.

The introduction of additional zero carbon works (Scenario 1) exposes the limits of the HRA for the council. Whilst any freeze of rents for a year (Scenario 2) would require the authority to borrow more to compensate for lost income.

At present the authority struggles to deliver both new homes and zero carbon investment. As such steps need to be taken to address these challenges over the next 12 -24 months. It is proposed therefore the Business Plan should be reviewed and update annually with consideration to be made as how to address the competing priorities of spending more on both new and existing homes whilst managing any reductions in Income in the long term.

It is therefore the intention to bring forward a plan over the next 12 months which looks to evidence how operating costs can be reduced this includes the development of Invest to Save Initiatives. Which would reduce costs in the long term, along with the use of business process reengineering and lean systems thinking to create efficiencies.

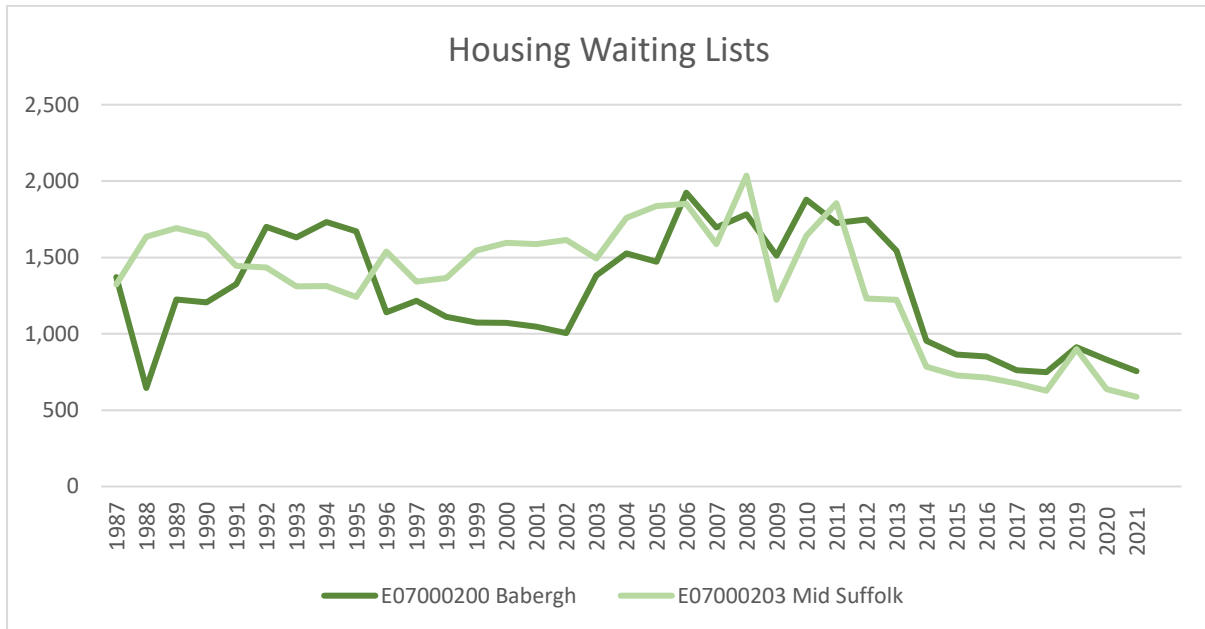
In addition, we will look to maximise income this will initially be through the introduction of a Rent and Service Charge Policy during 2022 with the introduction of Service Charges following and applying Rent Flexibility (as and when the Council) feels it would be appropriate and would be affordable to tenants.

It will also be important to capitalise on any opportunities to bring into the Council additional Government grants through schemes such as the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund which would go along way to support and contribute towards the cost of retrofit measures and which has deliberately been excluded from this financial scenario work.

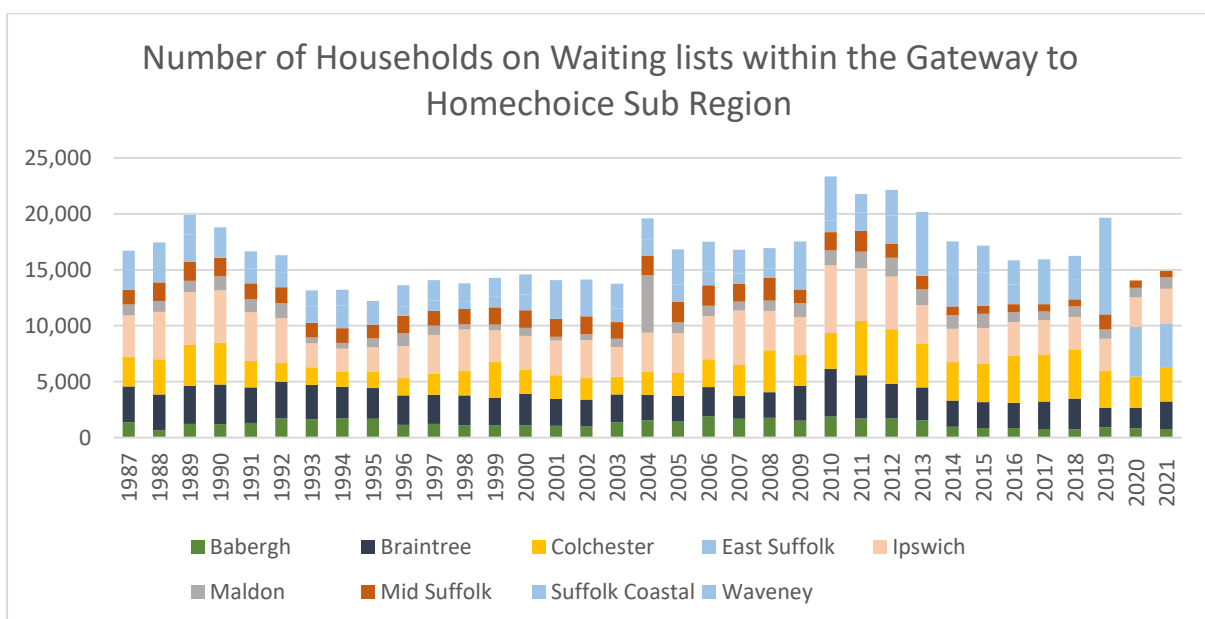
Housing those in need

The following charts show how Housing Waiting lists have evolved over the past 34 years.

Babergh & Mid Suffolk – Housing Waiting Lists



Number of Households on Housing Waiting Lists across the current Sub Region



The Localism Act 2011, which came into force in 2012, gave local authorities the power to set their own qualification criteria determining who may or may not go onto the housing waiting list.

Previously, local authorities were only able to exclude from their waiting list people deemed guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour. The Localism Act changes have contributed to the decrease in the number of households on waiting lists since 2012.

As of March 2022, the demand for housing is as follows:

	Babergh	Mid Suffolk
Households requiring 1 bedroom	155	125
Households requiring 2 bedrooms	338	253
Households requiring 3 bedrooms	262	184
Households requiring more than 3 bedrooms	39	28
Total	796	579

Housing Waiting List data by Band

Priority	Babergh	Mid Suffolk
Band A	59	22
Band B	201	152
Band C	160	121
Band D	26	29
Band E	350	255
Total	796	579

Based upon reasonable Housing Preference (Band A – Band C) there are 420 (52%) households in need of Housing in Babergh and 295 (51%) households in need of Housing in Mid Suffolk.

Developing the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

The priorities for the Housing Directorate in the medium term are determined by several elements, which this section will consider. It outlines both the national and local context for our spending decisions, the commitments already made that will impact on budgets in the future, and the views of Tenants, Elected Members, and Housing staff.

National Policy Context

In the context of the Grenfell tragedy in June 2017, national policy around social housing has gained significant focus over the last few years. This has culminated in a White Paper published in November 2020, 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents'. The key principles embedded within this include increased resident voice and empowerment to shape services, increased redress for residents, increased regulation across the whole social housing sector including in-house council housing services, improved quality of homes, improved fire safety and an increased focus on new build with options for home ownership.

A Building Safety Bill was published in July 2020. There is clear guidance within the bill about the direction of travel – greater accountability for fire safety, improved standards and greater regulation.

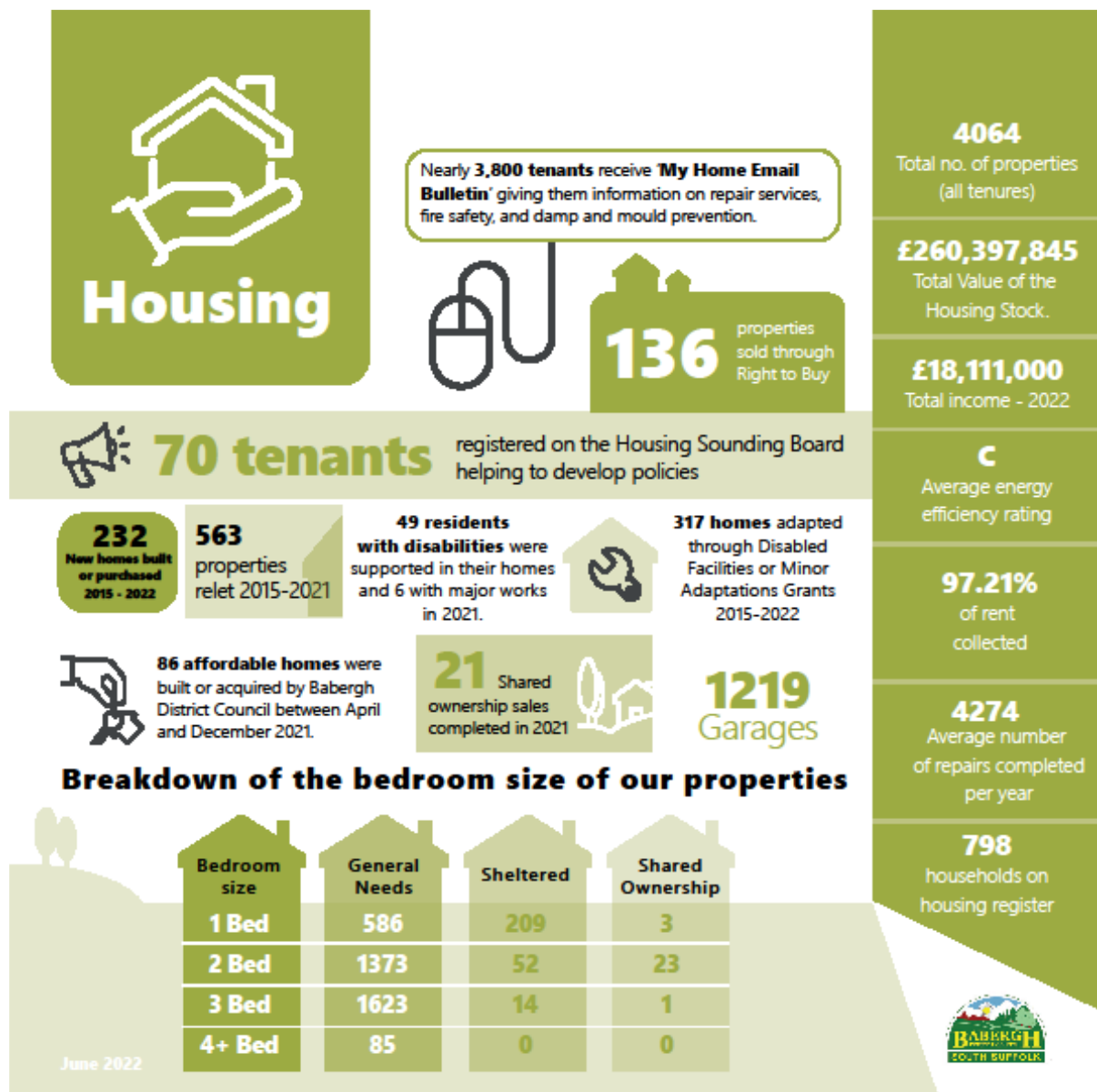
Further national developments focus on the review of the Decent Homes Standard that sets the minimum standards for council owned homes. This is expected to report in 2022 and to focus on how councils' impact on wider "place" and communities across its stock and the delivery of measures to improve energy efficiency across all council owned stock.

Council owned stock will also be subject to the wider national policy statements around energy efficiency as well as the local declaration of the climate emergency. To meet national carbon targets all housing, including council housing, must meet net zero carbon levels by 2050, and all Council homes meeting EPC C by 2030.

The White Paper and the focus on regulation is also being supported by an enhanced role for the Housing Ombudsman. The development of thematic reviews, 'naming and shaming' providers with poor standards and taking a more aggressive approach where the benefit of the doubt no longer rests with the landlord, suggest a time of greater focus on the quality of experience of the resident than has not been seen for the past 10 years nationally.

The future of our council housing stock across both Districts clearly needs to embrace these agendas more proactively and innovatively to make sure we deliver excellent services for our residents.

Local Context



Declaration of climate emergency

As a landlord, we understand our housing stock needs to be prepared for the challenges of climate change; both in terms of reducing emissions from UK homes and ensuring homes are adequately prepared for the future impacts of climate change.

In 2019, following our climate emergency declarations, Babergh and Mid Suffolk set up an Environment and Climate Change Task Force to look at the climate challenge the districts face.

We have been given a target of 2030 to meet the Government's Clean Growth Strategy, which sets an ambition to upgrade all Social Housing to an energy performance rating of C. Our properties currently on average have a rating of C.

The Government has also set a target for all new homes to be "net zero" in relation to carbon emissions by 2030. As such, this plan will incorporate the recent development and adoption of a Design Guide and Specification for all new housing the Councils build in the future.

Rural districts, some deprivation, unaffordable housing market

Suffolk has double the national average of people resident in rural areas and this rural population is older (higher percentage of those aged 65+) than its urban population.

A recent All Party Parliamentary Group inquiry into rural housing shows:

- People living in very rural areas, like ours, experience more limited social networks, isolation, and loneliness which can be exacerbated by poor transport.
- To avoid rural decline there is an urgent need to provide affordable housing for people wanting to live and work in the most rural communities, whilst rural homes are 20% more expensive than in urban areas

Ageing population

Over the next 20 years the population across both Districts is projected to increase by 9% (18,200). The biggest increase is projected to be in people over 75.

Community engagement events during recent years lead us to believe an increasing number of retirees are choosing our districts for a later life move due to the attractive towns and villages, proximity to major cities and relatively lower house prices compared to London and the southeast commuter belt.

Compared to relatively more affordable urban areas the impact of fewer entry level homes in rural areas means there can be less 'churn' / housing turnover per annum – in time this may effectively act as a block to encouraging thriving, vibrant and sustainable communities.

Successful Homelessness and Rough Sleeper work

Preventing Homelessness is a priority for Babergh and Mid Suffolk. Everyone needs somewhere to live and a place that they can call home.

Our vision is to end rough sleeping in our Districts. We have already gone some way to achieving this through our work to date by helping families to access accommodation in the private sector, reduced the use of B&B accommodation, bringing empty homes back into use, and developing and purchasing additional properties to add to our existing Housing Stock.

Our [Housing and Homelessness Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) sets out our commitments up to 2024.

Local Plans

In March 2021, the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan was formally submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for independent examination.

The Joint Local Plan sets out a planning framework to guide development and facilitate growth in Babergh and Mid Suffolk Districts over the long term. It will play an important role in shaping our future – how towns and villages develop, how we protect and enhance our natural environment, develop our local economy, improve leisure and visitor facilities, improve social infrastructure and support more sustainable forms of travel.

Homes & Housing Strategy

We all need and deserve somewhere to live and call home. Having a place to call our own provides belonging, contributes to positive health and wellbeing and strengthens community spirit.

Our Housing vision is for residents to live in affordable and high-quality homes that enable them to build settled, safe and healthy lives, within sustainable and thriving communities.

Our Homes and Housing Strategy sets out how we will meet this challenge.

Consultation and current situation

During the summer of 2021 all tenants, Members and Housing staff were asked to give their views on what priorities should be funded using the HRA over the long term. Feedback was given via digital surveys, with the option of telephone surveys for those not online, and a virtual workshop.

The results identified the following seven priorities which are listed from highest to lowest priority. A brief description on commitments to date are included:

Investing in our current homes

Consultation feedback: 75% of respondents did not feel we invest enough in maintaining our properties. Better home insulation is the most important investment to be made, closely followed by new windows and doors and new heating systems.

Properties require constant investment to maintain their quality. In some cases, this could be as simple as replacing kitchens and bathrooms, but in some cases, more significant upgrades may be required; retrofitting properties to improve insulation, lower household fuel bills, and reduce the carbon cost per property.

Building and buying new council housing

Consultation results: To increase the Council Housing available to local people we should build more homes and encourage tenants in large properties with spare rooms to downsize.

We have large numbers of local people on the waiting list for social housing and know that there is considerable need within our communities. At the same time, we lose a steady stream of homes to the Right to Buy. Hence our focus on building or acquiring new homes which has been extremely successful in recent years.

Climate change

Consultation results: 70% of respondents think we should be doing more to address climate change. Improving the energy efficiency of homes was the preferred choice for tackling climate change. This will be achieved through retrofitting and every Council home achieving an Energy Performance Certificate Level C.

Both Councils have declared a climate emergency and are committed to implementing change that will reduce the impact of human activities on the climate and help us adapt to the climate change that is already happening. through initiatives that reduce carbon and increase biodiversity.

We have gone paperless on a number of processes and introduced a new scheduler module for booking repairs appointments, which enables us to make the most efficient use of our operatives in an area, reducing travel in the district.

Improving the services that we provide our tenants

Consultation results: Respondents would prefer their Housing Officer to visit when requested or once a year. 65% would like to see more Housing Staff in their neighbourhood.

Different social landlords can take very different approaches to the services they offer tenants. On the one hand, a landlord could let the property but then do very little for the tenants other than provide basic services.

Alternatively, a landlord could employ staff that are focused on providing support, advice, and assistance to try and help our most vulnerable tenants improve their lives.

Improving our neighbourhoods

Consultation results: 87% of respondents like their neighbourhood. Friendly neighbours or community is the top reason they liked their area, but a lack of parking was the main reason for disliking the area.

The quality of the built environment varies across our estates, but there are some common themes; a lack of car parking, uninspiring landscaping, neglected garage sites, which this plan will aim to rectify through additional investment.

Involving tenants in the running of the housing service

Consultation results: 61% of respondents do not feel listened to and 55% want more opportunities to be involved. Digital surveys were the preferred method for getting involved.

We recognise the importance of involving our tenants in important decision-making and the running of our service, but we accept that there is much more we could do in this area.

Digital transformation

Consultation results: 52% of respondents regularly access our services online. 28% of respondents had signed up to the 'My Holme' an online tenant portal and mainly used it to contact the housing service. The main reason for not signing up was not knowing it existed or preferring to speak to someone.

We are living in an ever more digitally connected world, and most services can now be accessed online. In the last two years we have introduced a large number of new digital tools and services including an online tenant portal for tenants to manage their rent account, regular electronic communication to tenants, new online systems for managing rent, Anti-Social Behaviour cases, contact from customers and scheduling repairs appointments. Our performance is recorded and reported digitally enabling improved consistency and trend analysis. We have also used digital platforms to engage with customers via surveys and virtual meetings, increasing the accessibility for more customers to work with us.

Digital transformation is important to us and our customers and over the next two years we will be delivering an ambitious programme including booking repairs online, upgrading our whole Housing Management system, new modules for managing voids and the materials our operatives use and carry in their vans to improve the services we deliver.

We will be increasing our digital engagement with customers through social media and continue to develop the digital services we already have in place to ensure we are making the most of the tools available to maximise our services to our customers

What will the Plan Deliver?

This section shows what the plan aims to deliver under each of the 7 priority areas identified above.

Investing in our current homes

It is vitally important that we continue to invest in existing homes, the introduction of the Building Safety Act, the launch of Decent Homes 2 along with new legislation as a result of Social Housing reforms and the Climate emergency. Requires us to

proactively invest in homes both in respect to day-to-day repairs and planned and capital investment in our stock.

In 2020/21 Babergh spent £1,058 per property on Responsive repairs and Void works whilst it spent £1,151 per property on Major works and Cyclical works.

In 2020/21 Mid Suffolk spent £1,061 per property on Responsive repairs and Void works whilst it spent £1,011 per property on Major works and Cyclical works.

We expect these values to increase over the next 3 – 5 years as we see the cost of materials, professional skills and consultancy and wages for certain roles that are in significant demand increase. We will embark on ambitious programmes to ensure every home meet EPC C by 2030, whilst ensuring every home is safe and of a high quality.

We will:

- Make decisions on our future stock profile – including disposal/redevelopment of the poorest and worst performing stock
- Invest in new technology to improve the maintenance of existing homes
- Introduce an enhanced ‘void’ standard based on quality rather than cost and time
- Develop long term savings on repairs and maintenance
- Develop a ten-year Capital Investment Programme (2023 – 2033)
- Exceed tenant expectations

Make decisions on our future stock profile – including disposal/redevelopment of the poorest and worst performing stock

It is vital that we invest the limited resources we have in the right place at the right time. This includes making investment decisions on our existing Housing stock. For example, we do not want to invest in a poorly performing home, that is of the wrong size, in the wrong location.

We will introduce a review process which allows us to overlay a variety of existing data streams to make decisions on our stock profile. Utilising stock condition, demand and need data, along with local intelligence to make decisions on future investment and disposals.

Invest in new technology to improve the maintenance of existing homes

We intend to invest in homes by introducing smart devices/sensors that can fight fuel poverty and provide remote data insights that could cut maintenance costs and improve resident well-being. Using sensors, that could understand occupancy and optimise heating settings, saving residents costs on their energy bills. This data is

then used to produce a dashboard displaying a range of welfare and maintenance including mould risk, poor insulation, fuel poverty risk, boiler performance and abandonment risk. Plus, a messaging service which could conduct surveys, book in maintenance visits and post announcements directly to the in-home display.

Introduce an enhanced 'Void' standard based on Quality rather than cost and time We know that an area of investment and improvement that our tenants have asked us to prioritise is the quality of homes when they are presented to new tenants. This can lead to complaints, higher repair costs, and lower satisfaction.

We will introduce an enhanced standard which will enable us to ensure every home is let to the highest standard and quality based on value for money, whilst ensuring all tenants maintain their homes to an acceptable level and that homes are returned to the Council in an acceptable standard.

Average void costs are £4,500 whilst the sector average for void costs is currently £5,829 whilst upper quartile performance is £2,183.

Develop long term savings on repairs and maintenance We know that a significant amount of our costs are spent maintaining existing homes, this involves existing maintenance staff crisscrossing the districts responding to repairs as they are reported. We intend to develop a Business Case on the introduction of a new Housing MOT, along with the use of remote technology which would allow us to plan work by conducting a raft of repairs/improvements to each home before moving on to the next. This will ensure homes are well maintained, whilst reducing the reactive nature of conducting repairs currently.

Develop a ten-year Capital Investment Programme (2023 – 2033) We will develop a 10-year planned maintenance schedule, which will allow us to accurately predict where investment needs to take place. By creating programmes of activity that support the delivery of wider ambitions, we will ensure that every home is of the highest quality, energy efficient and sustainable. This programme will allow us to inform tenants of exactly what improvements they can expect and when this will take place.

Exceed tenant expectations We know that our existing performance in relation to the maintenance, repair and renewal of homes does not always meet the expectations of tenants.

We expect the improvements outlined in this Business Plan to over the next 2 to 3 years increase satisfaction to 'upper quartile' performance in comparison to fellow social housing landlords.

Tackling and adapting to climate change

The UK has set in law a target to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. To achieve this, as a social housing provider we need to insulate homes and replace fossil fuel heating systems with 'clean heat' technologies such as heat pumps and heat networks.

Decarbonising homes is not only an essential part of tackling the climate emergency, but it also combats fuel poverty, supports the economy, creates jobs, and creates warmer homes and cleaner air.

We like all Social Housing providers face the challenge of how to cut carbon emissions and tackle climate change whilst delivering safety measures work and building new homes.

We will:

- Retrofit – and improve the energy efficiency of homes
- Aspire to provide additional investment in existing homes to reach a higher level of energy performance
- Lower energy costs for tenants
- Educate tenants in how to use the home to gain the greatest benefits
- Use new technology and building methods
- Support organisational and Suffolk wide Climate change ambitions
- Deliver greater levels of Biodiversity within our estates and neighbourhoods
- Ensure neighbourhoods meet tenants needs e.g. community allotments, sense of place and belonging

Retrofit – and improved energy efficiency of homes As part of the government's Clean Growth Strategy, ministers set a target that all social homes must have an EPC rating of 'C' by 2030. The National Housing Federation (NHF) has previously warned that the target would be a "challenge" and government support would be needed. Research last year estimated that the cost of retrofitting all social homes in the UK to zero carbon could cost £100bn.

We have undertaken a comprehensive review of all of our homes in conjunction with the Energy Saving Trust (EST), which has enabled us to plan and understand the cost of improvement measures, to each home, based on ensuring the use of the most cost-effective measures whilst providing the greatest level of enhancement on SAP ratings.

Babergh – The cost of meeting EPC C by 2030

BABERGH	EPC	SAP	Number	%	Ave cost	Totals
	A	92+	0	0	-	Already C+
	B	81-91	507	15	-	Already C+
	C	69-80	1,555	45	-	Already C+
	D	55-68	1,158	33	£10,000	£11,158,000
	E	39-54	174	5	£17,000	£2,958,000
	F/G	21-38	65	2	£24,000	£1,560,000
Total			3,459	100		£16,098,000

Aspiration to provide additional investment in existing homes to reach a higher level of energy performance We have already begun the work to identify how Babergh and Mid Suffolk can exceed the target of meeting EPC C by 2030. This would be achieved by introducing a long-term ambitious programme of improvement activity which would aim to ensure all properties are of a standard with good levels of insulation including new windows.

With Air Source Heating together with associated enlarged radiators and water tanks, ground floor insulation giving opportunity for under floor heating and making Air Source Heating more efficient. As well as additional external insulation to bring properties to an EPC of A. This will require significant additional investment and rely on accessing grant monies when available. We intend to bring forward plans as to how this will be afforded over the medium to long term, as we identify the opportunities to maximise grants and budgets and minimise costs.

Lower energy costs for tenants We will continue to develop solutions including the installation of energy efficient and low-cost heating solutions. This includes expanding our air source heating programme, external wall insulation programmes, and more energy efficient boilers etc

Education of tenants in how to use the home to gain the greatest benefits We recognise that we need to provide tenants, that require assistance, more education on how they can use their home to encourage and support minimising energy bills and reducing the risk of damp and mould.

We will develop a range of helpful YouTube videos and information guides as well as providing bespoke advice and support, where appropriate.

Use of new technology and building methods We recognise that the world is changing, and the use of new building methods and construction materials support us exploring new ways to develop and deliver new homes as well as maintaining existing stock. This includes the use of modern methods of construction, the use of off-site prefabrication, energy efficient products and sensors that enable us to provide and maintain low-cost housing. This will be incorporated through our Design Guide, Technical specification, and Capital Programme.

Support organisational and Suffolk wide Climate change ambitions We are actively involved in working with Suffolk partners together to support and guide our residents, communities, and businesses to make the changes required to best set Suffolk on the path for carbon neutrality by 2030.

<https://www.greensuffolk.org/app/uploads/2021/07/Suffolk-Climate-Emergency-Plan.pdf>

Greater levels of Biodiversity within our estates and neighbourhoods We identify that there is so much more we can do to improve estates and neighbourhoods this includes creating habitats and wildlife corridors. We can achieve this by planting wildflowers, reducing grass cutting and using natural solutions, this in turn can both reduce our costs, improve our environment and our tenant satisfaction at the same time. We will work with Tenants and our Neighbourhoods and Public Realm Teams to develop local solutions.

Neighbourhoods that meet tenant needs e.g. community allotments, sense of place and belonging We want to support tenants and residents to embrace their Neighbourhoods and Communities. This will ensure everyone has ownership of their place, their homes, streets, estates, and neighbourhoods. Providing the ability to influence how neighbourhoods look and feel to live, work and play in. We will achieve this through active and participatory approaches offering tenants, the ability to make decisions this could include for example (but not limited to) Community allotments, play areas, community orchards, community shops.

Building and buying new Council housing

We will:

- Introduce an Affordable Housing Strategy
- Have the ambition to build/acquire 65 new homes, in each District, per year, for each of the next six years
- Implement a New Build Design Guide and Technical Specification
- Place an emphasis on Good Quality Design, Energy Efficiency, low running costs, Sustainability, Modern Methods of Construction
- Ensure efficient use of Right to Buy Receipts
- Ensure efficient use of what we have – Downsizing Programme
- Remodel and make an efficient use of our existing estate – Housing Asset Review

Introduction of an Affordable Housing Strategy As part of the HRA Business Plan we recognise the importance of articulating our Affordable Housing Strategy that provides a backdrop to the ambitions we have to build more new Affordable Homes in our districts over the next few years. Articulating our approach and how new homes will be brought forward and developed.

Councils' development purpose under this strategy will be the provision of new homes at affordable rent or for affordable home ownership, and where financially viable social rent.

Where possible and appropriate these sites will be subsidised through additional funding, which could include Homes England grant funding, Right to Buy receipts, commuted sums received through S106 planning agreements, and other forms of subsidy.

The Councils' will identify a pipeline of sites looking forward over the period of the medium-term financial strategy. These sites will include land already in Council ownership. It is unlikely that the aspirations for housing delivery will be met by existing landholdings and therefore the following will also be considered:

- Acquired properties from developers 'off the shelf'
- Acquisition of land or buildings
- Regeneration projects and opportunities with existing land assets
- Refurbishment/conversion of existing buildings

Financial control, Viability and Risk Management

Members will set the strategic direction of the development programme through the approval of this HRA Business plan and Affordable Housing Strategy and delegate (subject to viability tests and criteria laid out in the attached appendice) the Assistant Director for Assets and Investments, or Assistant Director for Housing operational authority to proceed with schemes.

Each project will be assessed to ensure it meets the following criteria:

- a) Meets housing need and housing demand for affordable home ownership products
- b) That the financial viability is fully assessed and that the basis on which it can proceed is fully understood. The Councils' chosen methodology for this is through the use of 'Proval' software. Project managers will ensure viability assessments are looked at the following scheme stages so that viability can be accurately understood for each scheme.
 - Offer stage (for S106 acquisitions) or RIBA Stage 2
 - Sign of formal contract or award of contract
 - Practical completion (handover)
- c) The development where appropriate meets the design guide, housing technical specification, Building Regulations, and other planning/policy requirements.
- d) That the development has adequate funding (or that it can be obtained) to cover all costs during the development period.
- e) That individual project risk registers are maintained and fed into programme and corporate risk registers.

Delivery of affordable home ownership products

The provision of shared ownership/shared equity/First Homes involves greater short term financial risk. To minimise the exposure to these risks Babergh and Mid-Suffolk District Councils will:

- a) Appropriately balance the mix of rented and affordable home ownership products on a development and across the programme based on housing need and market intelligence.
- b) Consider options for the conversion of affordable home ownership products to rent if there are difficulties with sales.
- c) Implement sales and marketing processes at an early stage to avoid 'voids' on affordable home ownership properties.
- d) Enable staircasing on shared ownership to 100%, except where this is restricted through the planning system.
- e) Shared ownership leases to be provided on a term of at least 990 years as per Homes England model shared ownership lease.

Ambition to build/acquire 65 new homes, in each District, per year, for the next six years across both districts. It's our ambition that over the next six years each Council will build or acquire up to 65 new homes each year. That's a total of 390 homes per Council. These homes will be built in accordance with the Affordable Housing Strategy as set out above.

New Build Design Guide and Technical Specification Our Councils are committed to delivering a housing pipeline to benefit the residents of Babergh and Mid Suffolk. We recognise the important role that the Council play in defining emerging housing quality, design and sustainability to provide a positive legacy for the places in which we reach, together with the environment and standard of living for residents.

This Housing Design Guide [Design Guide V9.pdf](#) sets out a clear and ambitious design framework which captures characteristics in design that we will aim to adopt generally in our projects, and further aspirational objectives that we hope to incorporate where suitable, viable and beneficial.

This Housing Design Guide reflects the high-level design outcomes we aspire to and shall be used to redefine the Councils developments in the future. The Guide is to be read in conjunction with the Technical Specification. The Housing Design Guide and Technical Specification respond to industry movement in design standards, residents' expectations and the recently declared Climate Emergency.

This Design Guide is established around four key design topics, referencing the National Design Guide Characteristics:

- Context and Identity
- Movement, Nature and Public Spaces
- Homes and Buildings (Including the Build Form and Uses)
- Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan)

Our Design Guide and Technical Specification can be found alongside this HRA Business Plan as accompanying and supporting documents that will be approved as part of this Business Plan.

Emphasis on Good Quality Design, Energy Efficiency, low running costs, Sustainability, Modern Methods of Construction Our Design Guide and Technical Specification will focus on emphasising good quality design, energy efficiency, low running costs, sustainability, and modern methods of construction. Broadly this will consider:

Context and Identity - Context and Identity looks at how our work can enhance the existing surroundings with attractive and distinctive developments.

This relates to the holistic design character of the development. It explores aspirational objectives and common themes that we will actively look to incorporate.

Movement, Nature and Public Spaces *Movement, nature and public spaces* covers specific principles relating to these topics. It looks at ways we can enhance accessibility and ease of movement around our developments.

The ways in which we can both enhance and optimise the role of nature in our built environment. And the ways we will champion a safe, social and inclusive public realm.

Homes and Buildings (Including the Build Form and Uses) Homes and Buildings looks at principles we will incorporate to develop a coherent pattern of development, which is both mixed and integrated. It sets goals to ensure our buildings will be functional, healthy, and sustainable.

Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan) In 2019 all Suffolk Local Authority members declared a 'climate emergency'. As part of this, the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, SCCP, will work together with partners across the county and region towards the aspiration of making the county of Suffolk carbon neutral by 2030. This section sets positive and ambitious goals for meeting this pledge, delivering efficient and resilient developments made to last.

All Developments Innovation is encouraged across all scales of development, with Design teams encouraged to meet as many 'we aspire to' statements as practical in addition to all of the 'mandatory' statements. With additional requirements for major developments as outlined below. The approach taken will vary dependent on the nature, scale, location and context of each proposal. The 'we aspire to' statements are included to inspire innovation and the pursuit of higher standards by providing examples of how the councils development objectives can be addressed. These approaches are all underpinned by industry best practice.

Major Developments are defined as ten or more dwellings or a site area of 0.5 hectares or more. Additional Requirements At least one 'we aspire to' statement must be met under each of the following topic headings:

- Movement, Nature and Public Spaces
- Homes and Buildings (including Built Form and Uses) And at least two 'we aspire to' statements must be met under:
- Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan) Design teams will be expected to outline their approach to meeting the selected aspirational goals and how these will be monitored to ensure success and to inform future council projects and iterations of the Design Guide.

Efficient use of Right to Buy Receipts We already ensure we make best use of our Right to Buy Receipts.

However, we intend to go further it is current Government policy that any new council homes built since July 2008 are eligible for exclusion from the provisions in the pooling regulations relating to Right to Buy sales.

This means that, if these replacement homes were subsequently sold under the Right to Buy, the Councils would be able to retain the whole receipt with no conditions or the same constraints placed on the use of 1-4-1 receipts. (Receipts from sales of properties built since July 2008 can be spent on any eligible capital purpose - affordable housing, regeneration projects or the paying down of HRA debt).

An exception to this is where homes sold were built with social housing grant. In this case the balance of the initial grant will be returned to the Homes England 'pot' enabling them to reinvest in building more affordable rented homes.

An Agreement will be made under powers provided by section 11(6) of the Local Government Act 2003 permitting the council to retain the full capital receipt on any subsequent sale of excluded properties.

Efficient use of what we have – Downsizing Programme We recognise that we need to ensure that we have a sufficient supply of the right homes of the right size in the right place. Whilst building and developing more homes is one alternative. It is important we consider making best use of existing assets as such we will proactively identify those tenants that are currently occupying their homes, then consider how we can proactively support those that would like to consider downsizing.

Remodelling, efficient use of existing estate – Housing Asset Review We recognise that many of our estates were built in a post war period and now would benefit from a wider review which would involve surveying estates and neighbourhoods. To identify improvements to the hard and soft landscaping including remodelling of estates, neighbourhood improvements, and regeneration. This will be a long-term review that will rely on up-to-date stock condition data, feedback from tenants and residents, opportunities such as available land etc.

Improving the services that we provide our tenants

It is imperative that we continually improve existing levels of service and performance. We want every single tenant to feel listened to and satisfied with the service they receive. We want our tenants to experience an exemplar landlord service and we will place tenants at the heart of our decision making.

We know this will require a greater focus on ensuring our data, performance, scrutiny, and satisfaction all evidences the approach being taken is the right one; and that our tenants are satisfied with the services they receive.

We will:

- Place Tenants at the 'Heart' of what we do, including decision making
- Develop a coherent approach to Data, Performance, Scrutiny and Satisfaction
- Benchmark our performance and report on it
- Exceed the new Regulatory Framework and Standards as set by the Regulator of Social Housing.
- Learn from every Complaint
- Measure satisfaction in 'real time' and in accordance with the newly developed RSH Tenant Satisfaction Measures
- Conduct a review of staff training and qualifications to improve services and ensure residents' complaints are dealt with effectively
- Introduce a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to manage demand

Place Tenants at the 'Heart' of what we do including decision making. Tenants should be at the centre of decision making and have choice as to how services are delivered. We want our tenants to feel empowered and equipped to be able to hold us to account and will therefore co-design with tenants a Tenant Engagement Strategy which provides both variety and choice on how, and when, tenants can be actively involved and engaged.

It's important to us all tenants have their voice heard, for example, through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being part of decision making. We will ensure we provide support, where it is wanted, and provide the right tools to ensure we actively listen.

Develop a coherent approach to Data, Performance, Scrutiny and Satisfaction. We know that ensuring we have accurate data will enable us to make informed decisions on how we deliver services.

This will enable us to use data intelligence to provide a more bespoke and tailored approach to meeting tenants needs. Data will drive decision making and ensure we can manage performance and trends effectively.

We want to ensure by collecting, recording and evaluating data we will be able to offer a more inclusive and accessible service to meet the specific needs of our tenants.

We will ensure our performance is actively scrutinised by both our existing organisational Overview and Scrutiny function as well as providing opportunities for those tenants who are actively involved and want to make a difference.

We know it is vital that we can evidence how our landlord service is performing, including on repairs, complaints, and safety, and how it spends its money, and so that our tenants have access to the information they require to hold us to account.

Benchmark our performance and report on it Where we collect data and performance measures, we will ensure that we benchmark our services against the sector and publicly report and promote our performance. This will ensure that we learn from those performing well, as well as, ensuring we continuously improve in the areas in need of development and celebrate our successes.

Learn from every Complaint We want to ensure that everyone can have their complaints dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong ombudsman who will provide swift and fair redress when needed.

We value complaints. We will ensure we learn valuable lessons from every complaint we receive.

Whilst we strive for high standards in everything we do, we recognise that sometimes we will not always get it right. When tenants take the time to inform us of their views and opinions, we will ensure that we identify any lessons learnt and demonstrate where we have improved our services. We will provide opportunities for tenants to be involved in regular reviews of complaint themes and lessons learnt and publish our performance on customers' satisfaction with complaint handling.

Exceed the new Regulatory Framework and Standards as set by the Regulator of Social Housing In 2020, the government published [The charter for social housing residents – social housing white paper](#), which set out ways to improve experiences for people living in social housing. We want to ensure that we do not only meet all the requirements as set out by legislation and the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Standards but exceed the framework.

Identifying where we can go further and how we can ensure our function and responsibilities as a landlord is identifiable as leading by example. This would for example involve setting stretching Key Performance Indicators and aspirational outcomes for the service.

Measure satisfaction in ‘real time’ and in accordance with the newly developed RSH Tenant Satisfaction Measures Following the publication of the Charter for social housing one of the proposed steps was introducing a set of consistent tenant satisfaction measures throughout the sector. The aims of these measures are to provide visibility to tenants around how their landlord is performing and enable them to compare and identify areas for improvement.

These measures have been refined and can be found in attached appendix. We will undertake a commitment to ensure all tenants have access and the ability to provide us with their opinions and views through a suite of Tenant Perception Surveys, each year. We expect these to be managed independently of us as the landlord and to ensure consistency as well as compliance with the RSH expectations.

We will ensure that we continuously review our performance against these standards and take steps to develop actions if we identify areas in need of improvement.

Conduct a review of staff training and qualifications to improve services and ensure residents’ complaints are dealt with effectively A review of qualifications and professional training will drive up standards by making sure our housing staff are better equipped to support tenants, deal effectively with complaints, and make sure homes are safe and of good quality.

We know that the Regulator is reviewing the Professional Standards expected of Housing Professionals with key stakeholders and will put forward recommendations to the government. It will also consider if additional training is required to improve the service provided to residents.

We will ensure that everyone working within the Housing Service not only meets our own organisation values and behaviours, but they are equipped with the most appropriate level of qualifications and training to ensure our tenants receive the highest levels of service now and in the future. This includes specialist training and experience for example supporting someone that has a recognised mental health condition in a professional manner.

Introduce Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to manage demand Data organised and presented by a CRM platform leads to a better understanding of our customers’ needs and requirements. This leads to greater intelligence which helps us to offer a more efficient customer experience. This tool will enable our teams to collaborate more easily, break down silo working and improve our communication. A CRM system will ensure tenants only need to tell us once and enable us to get it right first time.

Improving the neighbourhoods that we manage

We know that the environment in which tenants live is important to them and it can support strong levels of satisfaction along with a sense of community, safety, security and wellbeing. Its therefore important that we support tenants by providing attractive, clean, welcoming and appealing neighbourhoods and estates to live in and enjoy.

We Will:

- Regeneration, Redesign, and redevelopment of estates (where appropriate and necessary)
- Improve existing parking provision, inc EV charging
- Increase biodiversity and environmental improvements
- Improve quality of estates through the development of a Neighbourhoods Strategy
- Neighbourhoods that are identified as being safe, secure, pleasant, enjoyable and fun to live within
- Increases in tenant satisfaction in respect of where they live

Regeneration, Redesign, and redevelopment of estates (where appropriate and necessary) We recognise that our existing estates and neighbourhoods were historically built to high standards and to the needs of those choosing to live there. However, of course, needs, wants, and desires evolve and change over time. We need to be responsive to these changes and this includes developing solutions fit for purpose not just for now but the future. We will actively review each of our larger estates and actively engage tenants and stakeholders on how we could develop solutions this could include identifying opportunities to develop additional new homes, improve the environment, and create neighbourhoods that are attractive and desirable to all.

Improved existing parking provision, including EV charging We recognise the rising number of cars utilising the existing parking provision that is available, with the expectation that in the short term more and more tenants will require alternative solutions including EV charging. We will actively review existing estates and neighbourhoods in a holistic way that allows us not to just focus on one issue or one solution. This will require exploring opportunities to fund the work through the introduction of a Neighbourhood Renewal Fund which is funded proportionately by existing funds where the Communities are diverse with a blend of homeowners and tenants and leaseholders.

Increased biodiversity and environmental improvements Urban green spaces are important places for wildlife in the UK, but many are not as good as they could be. We will proactively utilise the Biodiversity Toolkit which provides information on how we can improve, maintain and monitor green spaces around estates and neighbourhoods for wildlife. Early engagement with staff and residents will be key to success. Codesigning green space will be a great way to bring together wildlife enthusiasts within our Housing and Neighbourhoods team and residents and help bring a sense of ownership to all involved in the project.

We will review all of the biodiversity management options. Then choose which of the options as a team, we want to implement on site.

https://www.shgroup.org.uk/media/1023167/biodiversity-toolkit_23022021.pdf

Improved quality of estates through the development of a Neighbourhoods Strategy

We intend to develop a Neighbourhoods Strategy in conjunction with tenants, residents, members, and stakeholders. This strategy will provide a backdrop for how we will ensure:

- To have neighbourhoods that we, and our customers and the community are proud of.
- To ensure we have clear standards so that residents know what to expect from our service.
- To ensure our services deliver value for money.
- To maintain a regular, visible presence on our estates e.g. estate inspections.
- To ensure we comply with all Health & Safety requirements.
- To encourage residents to take responsibility for their environment/neighbourhood.
- To take a robust approach to environmental crime which includes fly-tipping, abandoned cars and dog fouling

Neighbourhoods that are identified as being safe, secure, pleasant, enjoyable and fun to live within It is vital that neighbourhoods are places which provide multiple benefits, including being safe and secure and creating a sense of safety and security. We believe through the introduction of a Neighbourhood Fund from 2023 alongside other funding streams we can prioritise improvements that can have mutual benefits such as increasing biodiversity, improving the appearance and creating opportunities to have fun, and play.

Increases in tenant satisfaction in respect of where they live We anticipate through the approaches described we will see increases in the levels of satisfaction of tenants and residents. However, we will not make assumptions and will continually review whether the improvements improve the happiness and well being of tenants, residents, and communities. This may be through perception surveys and feedback.

Involving tenants in the running of the service

We recognise both the importance and value of active participation by tenants in the running of the Housing service. Whilst our existing Governance structures support elected Members to make decisions on the development and delivery of key Strategies, Policies and Key Decisions. We will create an environment which empowers tenants to be actively involved in the development and management of our landlord services.

We will:

- Active Decision Making for tenants through a person-centred approach
- Development of an innovative Governance model that would introduce a Housing Advisory Board
- Delivery of an action plan that supports a model of engagement that places tenants at the heart of decision making (in line with TPAS accreditation)
- Increase levels of satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them
- Reduce the 'Stigma' associated with being a tenant

Active Decision Making for tenants through a person-centred approach We believe a person-centred approach will enable our officers and members to work collaboratively with tenants who use services. Person-centred supports tenants to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to more effectively manage and make informed decisions about the services they personally receive. It is coordinated and tailored to the needs of the individual. And, crucially, it ensures that people are always treated with empathy and respect. We will ensure this is a culture that runs through everything we do.

Development of an innovative Governance model that would introduce a Housing Board This would involve the creation of an advisory board composed of Council Members, tenant representatives, and independent members with expertise in the field to oversee performance, contribute to strategy and operating plan/budget, as well as consider policy or service changes before formal approval through the council's established decision-making routes as per the constitution. The purpose of an advisory board can be summarised as overseeing the activity of and offering advice, expertise, and insight to the council, in the delivery of services to tenants.

In greater detail, the advisory board would:

- Assist the service to meet the objectives set by the council in consultation with tenants.
- Oversee and monitor the performance of the service against its targets, annual operating plan and the HRA Business Plan.

- Offer advice, expertise, and insight in seeking continuous improvements and innovation in performance and service delivery.
- Assist the council to develop strategies for the service to be reviewed from time to time, and an annual operating plan to deliver our Strategies and Business plan
- Within the budgetary envelope set by the council for the HRA, assist and support in the development of the annual HRA budget report and associated operating plan.
- Ensure that the service and the council as landlord meet the revised and enhanced landlord expectations embodied in the housing White Paper.
- Ensure that the service meets the new enhanced regulatory expectations in respect of safety, compliance and the consumer standards.
- Ensure that principles of resident involvement and engagement are fully embedded in the work of the new service, that the views and needs of residents are clearly considered in delivering and improving services and that 'Together with Tenants' commitments are delivered as anticipated by the White Paper.
- Receive and act on reports from tenant scrutiny panels.

Delivery of an action plan that supports a model of engagement that places tenants at the heart of decision making (in line with TPAS accreditation)

We will ensure we develop and deliver an action plan which aims to meet the requirements of Tenant Participation Advisory Service TPAS - National Tenant Engagement Standards. This includes:

- There is a clearly defined and agreed role for residents in the governance arrangements of the organisation
- Scrutiny activity works to the five TPAS Scrutiny key principles; Independent, Inclusive, Positive, Constructive & Purpose
- Residents are meaningfully engaged in the co-creation, monitoring, and review of the organisation's engagement strategy to make sure it delivers clear impact and value
- Residents are meaningfully engaged in the development, monitoring and review of the organisation's policy; service; budget and strategic development as well as any local offers for service delivery
- All information provided to residents is clear and understandable with key points summarised, using an inclusive range of methods and in a format to suit the intended recipient
- The organisation provides sufficient resources to deliver effective engagement and residents have the opportunity to influence the decision about the resources made available

- There is an appropriate menu of engagement opportunities that; reflects the resident profile; responds to the different needs in relation to equality strands and any additional support, which can be evidenced in the delivery of their services, engagement activities and communications to promote widespread engagement

Increase levels of satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them We want to initially capture a baseline of tenants' views and opinions on how well (or not) we listen and act on tenants' views. We will then regularly monitor progress by making incremental improvements to what we do and how we do it in response to tenants' views which may include feedback, complaints, and survey results.

Reduce the 'Stigma' associated with being a tenant The government acknowledged it in its green paper of 2018, a new deal for social housing, recognising that stereotypes shaped by the negative language used by politicians and the media can be reinforced by the way social housing is managed and run.

Conversations with tenants to inform the green paper emphasised the sense of 'institutional indifference' they can experience from landlords. The causes of stigma are many and varied. They include the way in which the media represents and reports on social housing and the people who live in it creating and reinforcing unfair stereotypes. Housing policy which promotes home ownership as superior to renting also plays a part.

We will create a culture that ensures through every aspect of what we do. Tenants feel assured that 'stigma' does not exist within Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

Implementing digital transformation

Like most Landlords within the sector, external factors continue to impact on our Business Plan. For example, the period of rent reduction in recent years.

At the same time, our customers' aspirations are increasing, and we've found they are requesting a 24-hour approach, more self-service, and an alternative to phoning our customer services teams during working hours.

In response to this shifting backdrop, we have taken a step back to look ahead at the future and how we can run a strong, growing landlord service which creates more opportunities to thrive.

We will:

- Move to a cloud-based software system to enable greater flexibility for staff and tenants
- More tenants with both the skills and tools to embrace digital tools (Digital Survey)
- Self-serve on the go
- Move towards 'Digital Tenancies'
- Use of dashboards to provide a clear picture of performance 'in real time'

Move to a cloud-based software system to enable greater flexibility for staff and tenants by 2023 we aim to move to a new cloud-based Housing Management System that will provide secure, resilient, and agile infrastructure. Which increases the opportunity and ability for both our staff and tenants to access services digitally with greater flexibility and reliability.

More tenants with both the skills and tools to embrace digital tools (Digital Survey) Our Digital Skills survey conducted during 2021 provided a clear direction of travel and the need to support and assist more tenants to gain the skills, confidence, and ability to access and utilise Digital Services. Whilst having access to (Tablets, Computers, and devices to access the Internet). We will develop a programme of activities including access to learning, development, and training which will provide more tenants to not only access our services including the 'My Home' portal and self-serve their tenancies but the ability to access other services on the go.

Self-serve on the go We have seen significant numbers of tenants signing up to the 'My Home' portal which provides them with the ability to self-manage more of their tenancies including managing their rent and having an active role in understanding what is going on within the Housing Service.

We want to go much further and support tenants to actively self-serve and manage their tenancies this includes reporting and monitoring repairs, contacting officers through online chat as well as uploading pictures or video conferencing with staff.

Move towards 'Digital Tenancies' We know many of our tenants do not need to contact us day to day and would choose to have more flexibility and freedom in managing their homes if given the opportunity. We want to provide more choice including the introduction of 'Digital Tenancies'. These would enable people to sign their tenancy, book a repair, pay rent, report anti-social behaviour and more, with all their documents available via a digital portal.

One of the most significant parts of this is the introduction of 'digital tenancies', which signals the start of being able to handle the complete landlord-tenant relationship online. One of the major advantages for tenants is that it significantly reduces paperwork and time and costs.

This is part of wider organisational transformation which means our employees are working in a much more agile way, and everyone is working much more smartly.

Use of dashboards to provide a clear picture of performance 'in real time' Its important to us that we can provide a really clear picture of how well we are performing at any time ensuring we are compliant with regulation but able to evidence to tenants, staff and members how well were doing. This would provide an opportunity to drill down to a tenant's own address and provide them with a complete digital library of information including all documents, certificates, instructions for the use of systems within their home.

Performance and Benchmarking

Rent arrears and management of empty homes performance have been challenging over the past decade due to the combined effects of austerity measures, welfare reform and increases in personal debt.

When benchmarked, Babergh and Mid Suffolk's landlord service is seen to be performing adequately when compared nationally and with comparator organisations.

Benchmarking Data from 2020/21

We already work with Housemark a provider of benchmarking comparable data within the Social Housing sector. We receive both monthly and annual performance summaries which shows us, at a glance, what the numbers mean to our tenants, our people, and our business. With Housemark we receive on-time data and insight needed to pivot services and build an agile data driven culture. These reports compare our costs and performance with a peer group of similar social landlords.

We know that our overheads cost per property in 2020/21 was £141 in Babergh and £185 in Mid Suffolk. These were down £47 per property on 2019/20 in Babergh and £28 in Mid Suffolk. Overheads include premises spend, ITC, HR and other central back-office costs. These costs compare to a 'Peer Median of £339 per property.

However we commit to a complete review of the current 'Recharge to the General Fund' to ensure the Housing Revenue Account is receiving value for money.

Whilst the Housing management cost per property (which is the cost of core landlord services including specialist staff such as Housing Officers, Income Officers) was £177 in Babergh in 2020/21 and £211 in Mid Suffolk compared to a 'Peer Median' of £245 per property.

In line with the recommendations in the Social Housing White Paper we will publish performance data on the Tenant pages of our website and share this directly with tenants via the My Home Bulletin on a quarterly basis.

Our aim is to perform even better whilst supporting the people we work with by developing genuine relationships with each of them to realise their potential.

Performance – Tenant Survey Results 2022

Babergh & Mid-Suffolk District Council commissioned Acuity Research & Practice (Acuity) to carry out an independent survey of residents to collect data on their opinions and attitudes towards their landlord and the services provided. The survey shows that there are some positive results but also highlights areas for improvement.

A good percentage of residents are satisfied with the overall service provided by Babergh & Mid Suffolk (70%). More are satisfied that they are treated fairly and with respect (77%), are kept informed (74%).

With satisfaction of the repairs service, they received in the last 12 months (74%).

That they know how to make a complaint should they need to (73%) and that the home provided by BMS is safe and well-maintained (71%).

Slightly fewer are satisfied with the quality of their homes (69%) and that BMS are easy to deal with (68%). Considerably fewer are satisfied that BMS provides a positive contribution to their neighbourhood (56%), the repairs and maintenance service (55%), that BMS listens to their views and acts upon them (53%) and their approach to handling complaints (51%).

When asked what one thing Babergh could improve, comments were grouped into three main themes, which provides appropriate focus for individual service areas, as well as the Council may wish to investigate further.

The results of the key driver analysis should also be taken into consideration. Through the development of the Business Plan and the goals set out it is recognised we should concentrate our efforts upon the following three areas. It is likely there would be a noticeable increase in resident satisfaction as a direct result.

Resident Engagement Satisfaction - with being kept informed about the things that matter to residents is the strongest driver of overall satisfaction in the present survey and performed well. This measure is often linked to listening to views and acting upon them.

Customer Services - being easy to deal with is also a key driver of overall satisfaction and can be linked to complaints handling, one of the areas with the highest level of dissatisfaction in the survey. When asked what one thing BMS could do to improve its services, customer contact was mentioned often by residents, primarily answering phones, and overcoming accessibility and language barriers.

The Home - the quality of the home is often driven by the performance of the repairs and maintenance service, and this is likely to be the case for BMS. The repairs and maintenance service produced the highest level of dissatisfaction in the survey (34%) and when asked what could be improved, residents most often mentioned outstanding or forgotten repairs and the timescales to complete repairs.

Through the development of this plan, we expect to demonstrate to tenants that we have actively listened to their feedback and will take every opportunity to improve the services we provide throughout the landlord function and duties to provide high quality, safe homes and the highest levels of customer service and customer satisfaction. We will monitor progress through regular tenant satisfaction perception surveys.

Conclusion

In considering an aspiration for the future of the housing service, and the delivery of HRA Business Plans, that everyone can commit to for the next few years.

The following seven aims will drive the service forward in the medium term. These will in themselves be partly driven by national and local considerations as well as best practice elsewhere and linked to the Council's corporate objectives.

- **Investing in our current homes**
- **Tackling and adapting to climate change**
- **Building and buying new Council housing**
- **Improving the services that we provide our tenants**
- **Improving the neighbourhoods that we manage**
- **Involving tenants in the running of the service**
- **Implementing digital transformation**

A detailed 'smart action plan will be developed in response to this plan being adopted by both Councils and will run alongside the existing Homes and Housing Action Plan and the organisations Outcomes framework.

It is recognised that whilst it is five years since the last Housing Revenue Account Business Plan was adopted moving forward an annual review of progress will be undertaken that considers both financial performance of the accounts alongside the qualitative outcomes being delivered and the satisfaction of tenants and leaseholders.

An Annual Report published in May each year will publicly demonstrate the progress being made by looking back at the previous 12 months. This approach will also enable us to look forward at least a year ahead ensuring that we continuously adjust the Business Plan to reflect the environment around us including identifying what's working and what's not. What has changed and what we need to do differently.

Whilst the seven aims will set the destination and future of the service it should be accepted that the objectives may need to adapt and flex to meet all stakeholders' expectations.

In summary these will be:

- To provide new homes that are energy efficient and improve the efficiency of existing homes to tackle the climate emergency.
- To engage with residents to reduce fuel poverty and raise awareness of climate friendly actions.

- To manage our external communal areas and green spaces well so that residents can enjoy these areas and be proud of where they live.
- To develop and provide affordable housing in a range of tenures and types to the highest standard of construction that can be afforded.
- To maintain and manage our homes to deliver the best outcomes for those living in them.
- To provide homes that are safe and healthy to live in by ensuring that all building safety standards are met, and residents can easily raise concerns.
- To deliver services that are influenced by and reflect the needs of local communities.
- To work in partnership with many agencies to promote social inclusion and support residents to be involved and thrive in their local communities.
- To deal effectively with complaints of anti-social behaviour and ensure there is appropriate support for victims.
- To work in partnership to support the needs of vulnerable residents to enable them to lead safe and independent lives.
- To work in partnership to reduce poverty wherever possible amongst tenants and to promote financial inclusion.
- To provide support for residents so they can manage and maintain their tenancies.
- To make the best use of technology and deliver new ways of working that benefit our residents.
- To ensure staff receive appropriate training and development to enable them to provide a high standard of service.
- To ensure that our services are responsive to diverse needs and that residents can access these in ways that are most convenient to them.
- To continually benchmark service delivery and ensure cost and performance outcomes are upper quartile.
- To promote resident involvement in service development and review by providing support, information, and resources to individual tenants and community organisations.

- To robustly measure resident satisfaction and provide services that are shaped by the views of our residents.
- To provide transparent information to residents about how well we are performing including how we deal with complaints.

APPENDICES

Appendix One	Annual financial assumptions and scheme approval process
Appendix Two	Tenant Satisfaction Measures
Appendix Three	Affordable Homes Development Strategy
Appendix Four	New Build Design Guide
Appendix Five	Technical Specification

Appendix One

Annual financial assumptions and Scheme approval process

These are to be reviewed on an annual basis with the Finance and Housing teams.

Rented Schemes

- Net Present Value (NPV) Discount rate – 4.5%
- Loan repayments based on 50-year loan repaid under annuity method.
- Development interest rate – at prevailing rate
- Short term investment rate receivable
- Inflation – Retail Price Index
- Rent on completion
- Rent increase – as per Government Rent Policy
- Allowance for voids and bad debts – 2%
- Management costs - £400 per property per annum
- Maintenance (day to day) - £500 per property per annum
- Major works – 0.8% of works from year 15

Shared Ownership schemes

- Sales initial tranche rate of 30%
- Households will not purchase further shares in their property

Approvals and Delegations

Net Present Value (NPV) will be used for determining the level of internal approval required and schemes proceeding. Net Present Value is the value of all future cash flows (positive and negative) over the entire lifetime of an investment and discounted to the present.

The following table sets out the approval process to be followed when a scheme is presented or varied: -

Category	Criteria	Approving body
1	Within the terms of the development strategy and Net Present Value – positive after 50 years	Assistant Director – Assets and Investments or Assistant Director for Housing

2	Outside of Development Strategy or Net Present Value – negative after 50 years	Member Approval
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Note

A positive NPV assessment over 50 years means that a scheme will generate sufficient income to cover its running costs and repay the loan needed to undertake the initial construction within 50 years. A negative NPV assessments means that the initial loan will only be repaid at some stage after year 50.

APPENDIX Two – Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Keeping properties in good repair

01: Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	Measured by landlords directly
02: Repairs completed within target timescale	Measured by landlords directly
03: Satisfaction with repairs	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys
04: Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys

Maintaining building safety

05: Gas safety checks	Measured by landlords directly
06: Fire safety checks	Measured by landlords directly
07: Asbestos safety checks	Measured by landlords directly
08: Water safety checks	Measured by landlords directly
09: Lift safety checks	Measured by landlords directly
10: Electrical safety checks	Measured by landlords directly
11: Satisfaction that the home is well maintained and safe to live in	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys

Respectful and helpful engagement

12: Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys
13: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys
14: Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys

Responsible neighbourhood management

15: Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord	Measured by landlords directly
16: Percentage of communal areas meeting the required standard	Measured by landlords directly
17: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean, safe and well maintained	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys
18: Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys
19: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of anti-social behaviour	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys

Effective handling of complaints

20: Complaints relative to the size of the landlord	Measured by landlords directly
21: Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	Measured by landlords directly

Babergh and Mid-Suffolk Joint Affordable Homes Development Strategy

April 2022

1) Councils' development purpose

The Councils' development purpose under this strategy will be the provision of new homes at affordable rent or for affordable home ownership, and where financially viable social rent.

Where possible and appropriate these sites will be subsidised through additional funding, which could include Homes England grant funding, Right to Buy receipts, commuted sums received through S106 planning agreements, and other forms of subsidy.

The Councils' will identify a pipeline of sites looking forward over the period of the medium term financial strategy. These sites will include land already in Council ownership. It is unlikely that the aspirations for housing delivery will be met by existing landholdings and therefore the following will also be considered

- Acquired properties from developers 'off the shelf'
- Acquisition of land or buildings
- Regeneration projects and opportunities with existing land assets
- Refurbishment/conversion of existing buildings

2) Financial control, Viability and Risk Management

Members will set the strategic direction of the development programme through the approval of this strategy and delegate (subject to viability tests and criteria laid out in Appendix 1) the Assistant Director for Assets and Investments, or Assistant Director for Housing operational the authority to proceed with schemes.

Each project will be assessed to ensure it meets the following criteria:

- a) Meets housing need and housing demand for affordable home ownership products
- b) That the financial viability is fully assessed and that the basis on which it can proceed is fully understood. The Councils' chosen methodology for this is through the use of 'Proval' software. Project managers will ensure viability assessments are locked at the following scheme stages so that viability can be accurately understood for each scheme.
 - Offer stage (for S106 acquisitions) or RIBA Stage 2
 - Sign of formal contract or award of contract
 - Practical completion (handover)
- c) The development where appropriate meets the design guide, housing technical specification, Building Regulations and other planning/policy requirements.
- d) That the development has adequate funding (or that it can be obtained) to cover all costs during the development period.
- e) That individual project risk registers are maintained and fed into programme and corporate risk registers.

3) Delivery of affordable home ownership products

The provision of shared ownership/shared equity/First Homes involves greater short term financial risk. To minimise the exposure to these risks Babergh and Mid-Suffolk District Councils will:

- a) Appropriately balance the mix of rented and affordable home ownership products on a development and across the programme based on housing need and market intelligence.
- b) Consider options for the conversion of affordable home ownership products to rent if there are difficulties with sales.
- c) Implement sales and marketing processes at an early stage to avoid 'voids' on affordable home ownership properties.
- d) Enable staircasing on shared ownership to 100%, except where this is restricted through Designated Protected Area status.
- e) Shared ownership leases to be provided on a term of at least 990 years as per New Homes England model shared ownership lease.

Annual financial assumptions and Scheme approval process

These are to be reviewed on an annual basis with the Finance and Housing teams.

Rented Schemes

NPV Discount rate – 4.5%

Loan repayments based on 50 year loan repaid under annuity method.

Development interest rate – at prevailing rate

Short term investment rate receivable

Inflation – Retail Price Index

Rent on completion

Rent increase – as per Government Rent Policy

Allowance for voids and bad debts – 2%

Management costs - £400 per property per annum

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Major works – 0.8% of works from year 15

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The following table sets out the approval process to be followed when a scheme is presented or varied:-

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Note

A positive NPV assessment over 50 years means that a scheme will generate sufficient income to cover its running costs and repay the loan needed to undertake the initial construction within 50 years. A negative NPV assessments means that the initial loan will be repaid at some stage after year 50.

APPENDIX Four

New Build Design Guide – Attached - [Design Guide V9.pdf](#)

APPENDIX Five

Technical Specification - Attached

SharePoint link - [New Homes Technical Specification v7.pdf](#)

Housing Design Guide

May 2022





This document has been prepared by multidisciplinary design practice Hamson Barron Smith on behalf of, and in close collaboration with, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and is designed to work alongside existing council policies.

This document is due for review 2024





"Places affect us all - they are where we live, work and spend our leisure time.

Well-designed places influence the quality of our experience as we spend time in them and move around them.

We enjoy them, as occupants or users but also as passers-by and visitors. **They can lift our spirits by making us feel at home, giving us a buzz of excitement or creating a sense of delight.**

They have been shown to affect our health and well-being, our feelings of safety, security, inclusion and belonging, and our sense of community cohesion."

National Design Guide; Open Government Licence

Housing Design Guide





Introduction

Our Councils are committed to delivering a housing pipeline to benefit the residents of Babergh and Mid Suffolk. We recognise the important role that the Council play in defining emerging housing quality, design and sustainability to provide a positive legacy for the places in which we reach, together with the environment and standard of living for residents.

This Housing Design Guide sets out a clear and ambitious design framework which captures characteristics in design that we will aim to adopt generally in our projects, and further aspirational objectives that we hope to incorporate where suitable, viable and beneficial.

This Housing Design Guide reflects the high-level design outcomes we aspire to and shall be used to redefine the Councils developments in the future. The Guide is to be read in conjunction with the Technical Specification.

The Housing Design Guide and Technical Specification respond to industry movement in design standards, residents expectations and the recently declared Climate Emergency.

This Design Guide is established around four key design topics, referencing the National Design Guide Characteristics:

- Context and Identity
- Movement, Nature and Public Spaces
- Homes and Buildings (Including the Build Form and Uses)
- Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan)





Introduction

Context and Identity

Context and Identity looks at how our work can enhance the existing surroundings with attractive and distinctive developments. This relates to the holistic design character of the development. It explores aspirational objectives and common themes that we will actively look to incorporate.

Movement, Nature and Public Spaces

Movement, nature and public spaces covers specific principles relating to these topics. It looks at ways we can enhance accessibility and ease of movement around our developments. The ways in which we can both enhance and optimise the role of nature in our built environment. And the ways we will champion a safe, social and inclusive public realm.

Homes and Buildings (Including the Build Form and Uses)

Homes and Buildings looks at principles we will incorporate to develop a coherent pattern of development, which is both mixed and integrated. It sets goals to ensure our buildings will be functional, healthy and sustainable.

Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan)

In 2019 all Suffolk Local Authority members declared a 'climate emergency'. As part of this, the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, SCCP, will work together with partners across the county and region towards the aspiration of making the county of Suffolk carbon neutral by 2030. This section sets positive and ambitious goals for meeting this pledge, delivering efficient and resilient developments made to last.





All Developments

Innovation is encouraged across all scales of development, with Design teams encouraged to meet as many 'we aspire to' statements as practical in addition to all of the 'mandatory' statements. With additional requirements for major developments as outlined below.

The approach taken will vary dependent on the nature, scale, location and context of each proposal. The 'we aspire to' statements are included to inspire innovation and the pursuit of higher standards by providing examples of how the councils development objectives can be addressed. These approaches are all underpinned by industry best practice.

Major Developments

Classification

Major developments are defined as ten or more dwellings or a site area of 0.5 hectares or more.

Additional Requirements

At least **one** 'we aspire to' statement must be met under each of the following topic headings:

- Movement, Nature and Public Spaces
- Homes and Buildings (including Built Form and Uses)

And at least **two** 'we aspire to' statements must be met under:

- Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan)

Design teams will be expected to outline their approach to meeting the selected aspirational goals and how these will be monitored to ensure success and to inform future council projects and iterations of the Design Guide.





Context and Identity

We will...

- Consider not just the past but also the future ways we will live and interact within our communities for the 21st Century.
- Design our new homes so they are visually attractive and delight their occupants and other users.
- Create neighbourhoods that have a positive influence to their surrounding context.
- Design our new homes to enhance and compliment the surrounding context.
- Develop neighbourhoods through public engagement that provides a cohesive environment (extending beyond the built form) that everyone can identify with.
- Design homes that create character and identity in form and build.



Housing Design Guide





Movement, Nature and Public Spaces



We will...

- Promote walking and cycling that connects to local community facilities.
- Design public spaces that feel safe, secure and attractive for all to use and enjoy.
- Detail all external fixings and street furniture to be robust and hard-wearing to minimise ongoing maintenance and repairs.
- Incorporate home zones within our neighbourhoods to promote fully inclusive environments that are focused on the pedestrian and the aging populations.
- Integrate and enhance existing natural environments to enrich the sense of place to the local community.
- Provide a calculated net gain for biodiversity on all our developments

We aspire to...

- Provide a range of good quality outdoor spaces that will encourage a wide variety of activities, well-being and interaction, social and civic inclusion.
- Use permeable surfaces and sustainable urban drainage to reduce and manage water run-off. Create green corridors throughout new neighbourhoods to encourage areas of play, food production and recreation.
- Prioritise areas of nature within new developments to address climate change mitigation and resilience.
- Provide external areas that range from public parks to shared spaces and private gardens.
- Provide opportunities for food growing on all our developments





Homes and Buildings (Including the Built Form and Uses)



We will...

- Take account of the demographic profile and specific needs of our occupants.
- Design our homes to respond to the ageing population and ensure high levels of accessibility and adaptability are incorporated throughout all new developments.
- Provide housing to good design quality with high levels of naturally daylight that connects with its private external environment, to promote health and well-being to its occupants.
- Design our homes to be practical and last for generations with a minimum design life of 60 years.
- We will promote recycling through well designed and integrated storage areas which facilitate ease of use and collection.
- Design a variety of housing types that are tenure blind and socially inclusive, affordable housing will not be visually distinguishable from market housing in terms of build quality, materials, details or levels of amenity space or privacy.
- Provide homes and developments where people feel safe and secure.

We aspire to...

- Create areas of new sustainable development that are accessible to local public transport, services and facilities.
- Design comfortable housing that exceeds the minimum National Space Standards.
- Provide dedicated Working From Home, WFH, space in all of our new homes.
- Develop neighbourhoods that bring wider benefits to the community.





Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan)



We will...

- Adopt a fabric first approach for all new buildings to reduce the need for energy consumption reducing fuel poverty, make best use of the efficient renewable energy creating homes that are 'zero-carbon ready'.
- Select building materials considering their carbon footprint, whole life cost and ease of repair and maintenance.
- Provide sustainable features that are utilised and can be operated with ease by the occupants.
- Continue to monitor a selection of completed houses to ensure the specific levels that they were designed to perform at are being achieved.
- Work with the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, SCCP, and our partners across the county and region towards the aspiration of making the county of Suffolk carbon neutral by 2030.
- Reduce water use within homes through carefully specified fittings and water butts.
- Create a legacy of buildings where communities establish a sense of ownership and belonging.
- Plan for long term stewardship by all stakeholders for buildings that can adapt to the changing needs of the occupants and evolving technologies.
- Use Space Heating Demand as the primary metric to drive improvements in energy efficiency.
- Install the most appropriate renewable energy resources and consider renewable energy supplies.





We will...

- Meet the requirements of the Building Regulations Part L 2022, developments must achieve a reasonable reduction in carbon emissions of at least 31% measured against the 2016 amendments to Building Regulations Part L
- Provide an electrical car charging point to all new in-curtilage car parking areas.
- Out of curtilage parking will include the installation of infrastructure for EV charging

We aspire to...

- Meet Zero Carbon targets in all our future new homes.
- Reduce water use within homes through grey water recycling.
- Meet the Passivhaus Standard or equivalent.
- Provide all our new homes with filtered fresh air with heat recovery (MVHR)

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Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council (BMSDC)

New Homes Technical Specification

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May 2022



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1.0

Introduction

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Document Guide



Documents

This **New Homes Technical Specification** document and its sister document the **Housing Design Guide** have been produced by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils to guide all future development. The standards set out in these two documents are highly deliverable and should be met by all developments going forward.

The documents respond to current best practice and address both the Climate Emergency Declaration made by all Suffolk councils and our response to the recent and currently ongoing affect of the Covid19 pandemic.

These two documents will form an integral part of any new designer's or developer's appointment. They will support and complement the written **Project Design Brief** provided for a particular development.

Developments

It is expected that all aspects of scheme designs comply with the design guide and the new homes technical specification. Where this is not possible, written approval must be obtained from The Council to vary the specification. These guides apply to all tenures of affordable housing and open market housing delivered by the Councils'.

Viewing & using these Documents

If you are viewing this document as a hard copy please refer to the contents pages.

When viewing as an electronic file we have introduced a series of hyperlinks to make it easier to navigate. In order to use this feature you should view the document in Adobe Acrobat.



All hyperlinks can be selected when this symbol appears when you hover over text in the contents page. Just one click will take you where you want to go. Other hyperlinks within the document are shown as yellow underlined text.

Document Updates

This Technical Specification has been developed taking into account various documents currently under consultation, including:

- The Future Homes Standard, 2019 Consultation on changes to Part L and Part F.
- Planning for the Future, White Paper August 2020

This Technical Specification remains under constant review.

Mandatory and Aspirational Design Goals will be reviewed every 2yrs or sooner if required.

Babergh & Mid Suffolk

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Babergh and Mid Suffolk are two District Councils providing services throughout the two regions of central Suffolk. These two Councils continue to govern matters as two separate, sovereign councils but now share a fully integrated staffing structure, allowing an experienced and professional workforce to deliver support to both regions.

The districts of Babergh and Mid Suffolk have 60 Conservation Areas and are home to some of the most important and distinctive listed buildings in the country. New developments should add to the beauty and unique character of the many towns and villages which comprise these two districts.

Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils own and manage circa 7,000 properties within the District that provide affordable housing for applicants registered on the

Choice Based Letting System. In 2012 government approved changes to Housing Revenue Accounts that allowed Local Authorities to build their own affordable housing.

Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils identified several sites within their ownership for development as a part of the New Build Development Programme with affordable housing for local people.

Once built, homes will become part of both Councils housing stock and managed by them.

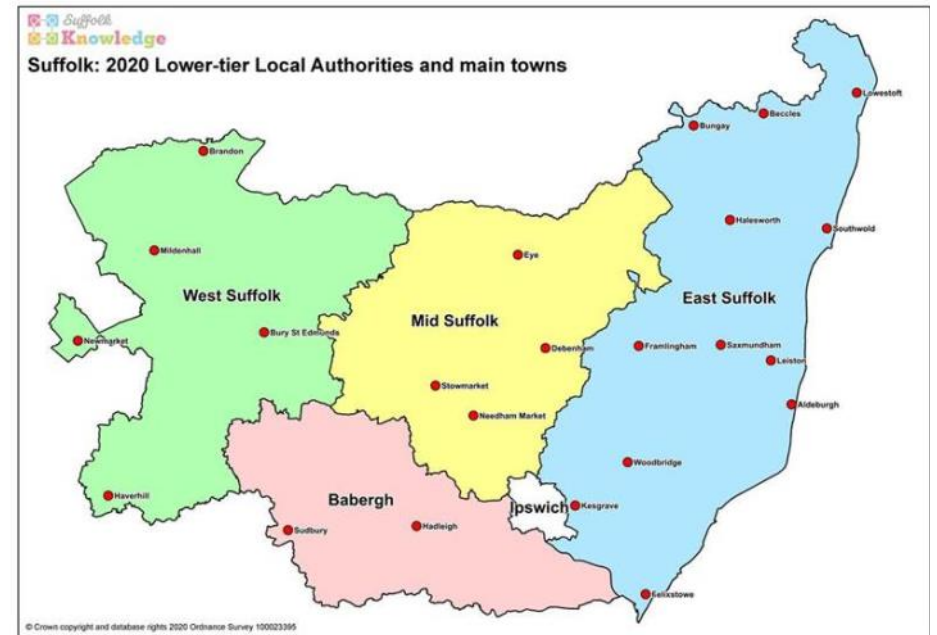


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2.0

Achieving Design Quality

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Design Quality

We strive for all of our projects to meet the high design quality standards set out in this document.

The underlying purpose for design quality and the quality of new development at all scales is to create well-designed and well-built places that benefit people and communities. This includes people at different stages of life and with different abilities.

New Build Development Programme

Our New Build Development Programme will deliver high quality innovative design. To achieve this goal this document sets out robust procedures to monitor quality through the design development and procurement process.

All future development should aspire to achieve the requirements set out in this document.

Equal Opportunities

The Council is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in all its commissioning and therefore requires that all consultants and contractors adhere to our Equal Opportunity Policy when working on behalf of The Council. Copies of both of these policies are available upon request.

Future Maintenance

The future maintenance of the building should always be considered, and facilities to ensure that the buildings are able to be maintained easily and safely should be incorporated into the design.



Design Goals (page 1 of 5)

The Housing Design Guide ([Appendix 1](#)) sets out a clear and ambitious design framework which captures characteristics in design that we will adopt generally in our projects moving forwards, and further aspirational objectives that we hope to incorporate where suitable, viable and beneficial.

This Housing Design Guide reflects the high-level design outcomes and shall be used to redefine the Councils developments moving forwards. The Guide is to read in conjunction with this Technical Specification which includes a [Design Compliance Matrix](#) setting out clearly the mandatory and aspirational requirements contained within the Design Guide.

The Housing Design Guide and Technical Specification respond to industry movement in design standards, residents expectations and the Climate Emergency.

This Design Guide is established around four key design topics, referencing the National Design Guide Characteristics, these are:

1.0 Context and Identity

Context and Identity looks at how we can enhance the existing surroundings with distinctive and attractive developments.

2.0 Movement, Nature and Public Spaces

Movement, nature and public spaces covers principles relating to these topics. It looks at ways we can enhance accessibility and ease of movement around new developments whilst providing safe, social and inclusive public spaces.

3.0 Homes and Buildings

Homes and buildings looks at principles around providing practical, safe, healthy and sustainable buildings which promote integrated and mixed communities.

4.0 Towards Zero Carbon

In 2019 all Suffolk Local Authority members declared a 'climate emergency'. As part of this, the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, SCCP, will work together with partners across the county and region towards the aspiration of making the county of Suffolk carbon neutral by 2030. This section looks sets positive and ambitious goals for meeting this pledge, delivering efficient and resilient developments made to last.



Design Goals (page 2 of 5)

Extracts from the Design Guide, full document is included in [Appendix 1](#)

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Context and Identity

We will...

- Consider not just the past but also the future ways we will live and interact within our communities for the 21st Century.
- Design our new homes so they are visually attractive and delight their occupants and other users. Create neighbourhoods that have a positive influence to their surrounding context.
Design our new homes to enhance and compliment the surrounding context.
- Develop neighbourhoods through public engagement that provides a cohesive environment (extending beyond the built form) that everyone can identify with.

We aspire to...

- Design homes that can be recognised as a new place that does not appear to be a standard design or otherwise watered down in to neutral design without design.



Movement, Nature and Public Spaces

We will...

- Promote walking and cycling that connects to local community facilities.
- Design public spaces that feel safe, secure and attractive for all to use and enjoy.
- Detail all external fixings and street furniture to be robust and hard-wearing to minimise ongoing maintenance and repairs.
- Incorporate home zones within our neighbourhoods to promote fully inclusive environments that are focused primarily on the pedestrian and the aging populations.
- Integrate and enhance existing natural environments to enrich the sense of place to the local community.

We aspire to...

- Provide a range of good quality outdoor spaces that will encourage a wide variety of activities, well-being and interaction, social and civic inclusion.
- Use permeable surfaces and sustainable urban drainage to reduce and manage water run-off. Create green corridors throughout new neighbourhoods to encourage areas of play, food production and recreation.
- Prioritise areas of nature within new developments to address climate change mitigation and resilience.
- Provide external areas that range from public parks to shared spaces and private gardens.
- Provide opportunities for food growing on all our developments



Homes and Buildings (Including the Built Form and Uses)

We will...

- Take account of the demographic profile and specific needs of our occupants.
- Design our homes to respond to the ageing population and ensure high levels of accessibility and adaptability are incorporated throughout all new developments.
- Provide housing that is to a good design quality providing high levels of naturally daylight that connects with its private external environment, to promote health and well-being to its occupants.
- Design our homes to be robust and last for generations with a minimum design life of 60 years.
- We will promote recycling through well designed and integrated storage areas which facilitate ease of use and collection.
- Design a variety of housing types that are tenure blind and socially inclusive. affordable housing will not be visually distinguishable from market housing in terms of build quality, materials, details or levels of amenity space or privacy. **Tenure mix must meet, as a minimum - B&MSDC please confirm mix.**

We aspire to...



- Create areas of new sustainable development that is accessible to local public transport, services and facilities.
- Design comfortable housing that exceeds the minimum National Space Standards.
- Provide dedicated Working From Home, WFH, space in all of our new homes.
- Develop neighbourhoods that bring wider benefits to the wider community.



Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan)

We will...


- Adopt a fabric first approach for all new buildings to reduce the need for energy consumption, reducing fuel poverty and make best use of the efficient renewable energy.
- Select building materials considering their carbon footprint, whole life cost and ease of repair and maintenance.
- Provide sustainable features that are utilised and can be operated with ease by the occupants.
- Continue to monitor a selection of completed houses to ensure the specific levels that they were designed to perform at are being achieved.
- Work with the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, SCCP, and our partners across the county and region towards the aspiration of making the county of Suffolk carbon neutral by 2030.
- Reduce water use within homes through carefully specified fittings and water butts.
- Create a legacy of buildings where communities establish a sense of ownership and belonging.
- Plan for long term stewardship by all stakeholders for buildings that can adapt to the changing needs of the occupants and evolving technologies.
- Use Space Heating Demand as the primary metric to drive improvements in energy efficiency.



Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan)

We aspire to...

- Meet Zero Carbon targets in all our future new homes. **Could add renewables as additional target?**
- Provide electrical car charging points for all new homes.
- Reduce water use within homes through grey water recycling.
- Meet the Passivhaus Standard or equivalent for all new homes.
- Install the most appropriate renewable energy resources and work towards decentralised energy sources.
- Provide all our new homes with filtered fresh air with heat recovery (MVHR)



Design Goals (page 3 of 5)

Design Compliance Matrix

Within the Design Guide, for each of the four design topics a number of mandatory design goals have been set, along with a number of approaches for achieving higher quality indicated in the table below as aspirational design goals. Innovation is encouraged across all scales of development, with Design teams encouraged to meet as many 'aspirational' design goals as practical in addition to all of the 'mandatory' design goals. However, it is not the intention of this document for these aspirational design goals to be meticulously followed for each development proposal. The approach taken will vary dependent on the nature, scale, location and context of each proposal. Instead, these aspirational design goals are included to inspire innovation and the pursuit of higher standards by providing examples of how the councils development objectives can be addressed. These approaches are all underpinned by industry best practice.

Design Goal to...		Mandatory	Aspirational*
1.0 Context and Identity			
Page 140	Consider not just the past but also the future ways we will live and interact within our communities for the 21st Century.	✓	
	Design our new homes so they are visually attractive and delight their occupants and other users.	✓	
	Create neighbourhoods that have a positive influence to their surrounding context.	✓	
	Design our new homes to enhance and compliment the surrounding context.	✓	
	Develop neighbourhoods through public engagement that provides a cohesive environment (extending beyond the built form) that everyone can identify with.	✓	
	Design homes that create character and identity in form and build.	✓	
	2.0 Movement, Nature and Public Spaces		
Promote walking and cycling that connects to local community facilities	✓		
Design public spaces that feel safe, secure and attractive for all to use and enjoy	✓		
Detail all external fixings and street furniture to be robust and hard-wearing to minimise ongoing maintenance and repairs	✓		
Incorporate home zones within our neighbourhoods to promote fully inclusive environments that are focused primarily on the pedestrian and the aging populations	✓		
Integrate and enhance existing natural environments to enrich the sense of place to the local community	✓		

Design Goal to...	Mandatory	Aspirational*
2.0 Movement, Nature and Public Spaces Cont...		
Provide a net gain for biodiversity on all our developments	✓	
Provide a range of good quality outdoor spaces that will encourages a wide variety of activities, well-being and interaction, social and civic inclusion		✓
Use permeable surfaces and sustainable urban drainage to reduce and manage water run-off		✓
Create green corridors throughout new neighbourhoods to encourage areas of play, food production and recreation		✓
Prioritise areas of nature within new developments to address climate change mitigation and resilience		✓
Provide external areas that range from public parks to shared spaces and private gardens		✓
Provide opportunities for food growing on all our developments		✓
3.0 Homes and Buildings (including Built Form and Uses)		
Take account of the demographic profile and specific needs of our occupants	✓	
Design our homes to respond to the ageing population and ensure high levels of accessibility and adaptability are incorporated throughout all new developments	✓	
Provide housing that is to a good design quality providing high levels of naturally daylight that connects with its private external environment to promote health and well-being to its occupants	✓	
Design our homes to be robust and last for generations with a minimum design life of 60 years	✓	
We will promote recycling through well designed and integrated storage areas which facilitate ease of use and collection	✓	
Design a variety of housing types that are tenure blind and socially inclusive affordable housing will not be visually distinguishable from market housing in terms of build quality materials details or levels of amenity space or privacy. Provide homes and developments were people feel safe and secure.	✓	
Create areas of new sustainable development that is accessible to local public transport services and facilities		✓
Design comfortable housing that exceeds the minimum National Space Standards		✓
Provide dedicated Working From Home WFH space in all of our new homes.		✓
Develop neighbourhoods that bring wider benefits to the wider community.		✓

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Design Goal to...	Mandatory	Aspirational*
4.0 Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan)		
Adopt a fabric first approach for all new buildings to reduce the need for energy consumption reducing fuel poverty, make best use of the efficient renewable energy creating homes that are 'zero-carbon ready'.	✓	
Select building materials considering their carbon footprint whole life cost and ease of repair and maintenance	✓	
Provide sustainable features that are utilised and can be operated with ease by the occupants.	✓	
Continue to monitor a selection of completed houses to ensure the specific levels that they were designed to perform at are being achieved	✓	
Work with the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership SCCP and our partners across the county and region towards the aspiration of making the county of Suffolk carbon neutral by 2030	✓	
Reduce water use within homes through carefully specified fittings and water butts	✓	
Create a legacy of buildings where communities establish a sense of ownership and belonging	✓	
Plan for long term stewardship by all stakeholders for buildings that can adapt to the changing needs of the occupants and evolving technologies.	✓	
Use Space Heating Demand as the primary metric to drive improvements in energy efficiency	✓	
Instal the most appropriate renewable energy resources and consider renewable energy supplies	✓	
Building Regulations Part L from June 2022, developments must achieve a reasonable reduction in carbon emissions of at least 31% measured against the 2016 amendments to Building Regulations Part L	✓	
Install the infrastructure to support the future installation of electrical car charging areas were out of curtilage parking is provided	✓	
Provide an electrical car charging point to all new in-curtilage car parking areas.	✓	
Reduce water use within homes through grey water recycling.		✓
Meet Zero Carbon Targets in all our future new homes.		✓
Meet the Passivhaus Standard or equivalent.		✓
Provide all our new homes with filtered fresh air with heat recovery (MVHR)		✓

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*For Major developments, defined as ten or more dwellings or a site area of 0.5 hectares or more, at least one aspirational goal must be met under each topic heading. Design teams will be expected to outline their approach to meeting the selected aspirational goals and how these will be monitored to ensure success and to inform future

Design Development Process (page 1 of 2)

The RIBA Plan of Work is the definitive model for the design and construction process of buildings and we require all Design Teams to work within this model.

Page 143
“The RIBA Plan of Work organises the process of briefing, designing, constructing and operating building projects into eight stages and explains the stage outcomes, core tasks and information exchanges required at each stage.

Guidance in the RIBA Plan of Work 2020 Overview is based on nearly seven years of feedback, gathered by the RIBA, from the construction industry. It now includes an expanded glossary, comparison to international plan of work equivalents and guidance on the following core project strategies:

- Conservation Strategy
- Cost Strategy
- Fire Safety Strategy
- Health and Safety Strategy
- Inclusive Design Strategy
- Planning Strategy
- Plan for Use Strategy
- Procurement Strategy
- Sustainability Strategy - including detailed tasks aligned to the RIBA Sustainable Outcomes Guide**

RIBA Plan of Work 2020 Overview



RIBA
Plan of Work

www.ribaplanofwork.com

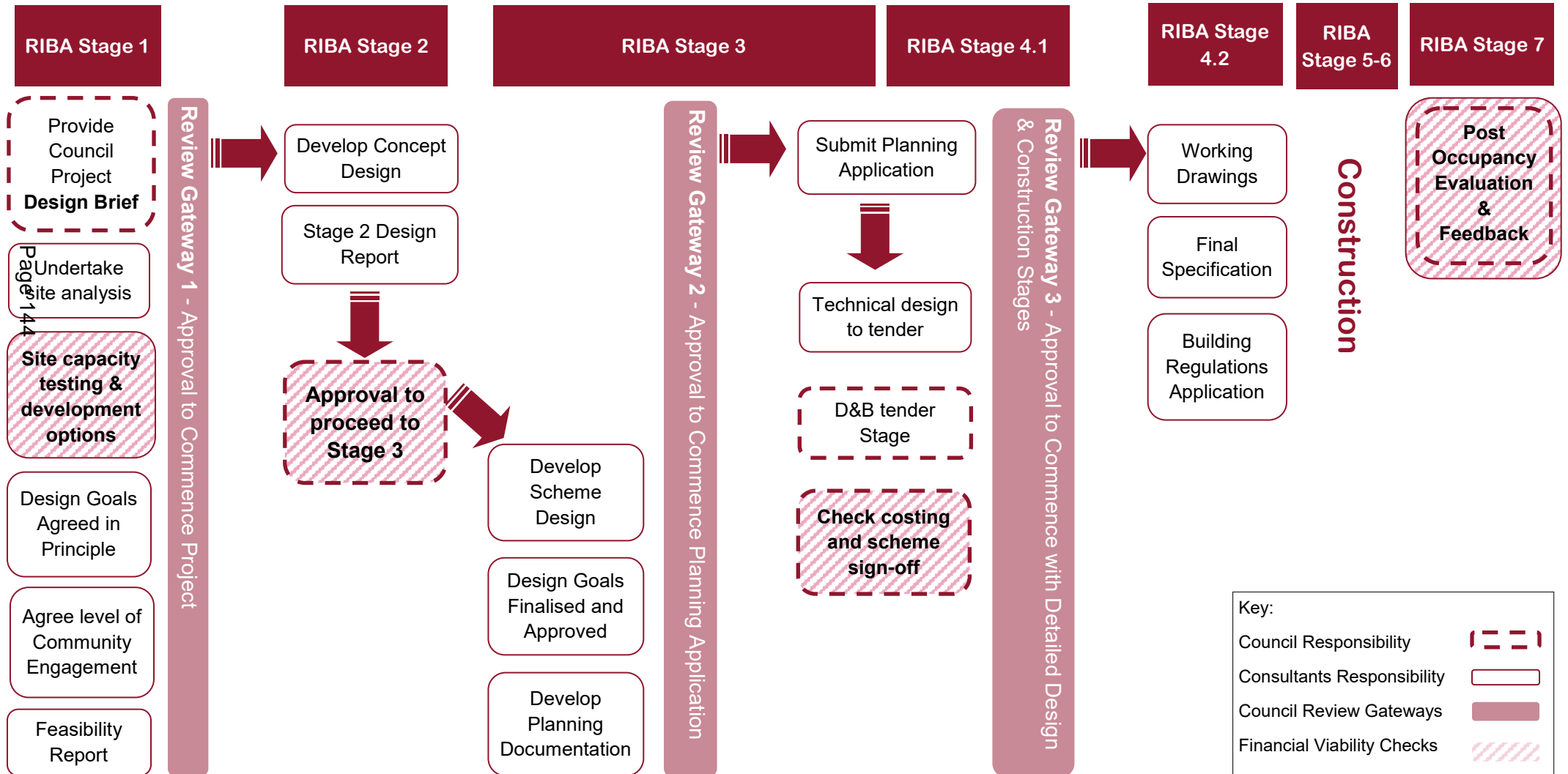
RIBA 
Architecture.com

*<https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/riba-plan-of-work>

Design Development Process (page 2 of 2)

In order for the Design Goals set by the council (Design Compliance Matrix) to deliver successful new developments, they need to be integrated into the design process from the Strategic Definition Stage of the RIBA Plan of Work. For further guidance on the Plan of Work see <https://www.ribaplanofwork.com/>.

This diagram illustrates our typical process of design development with key responsibilities and actions to ensure the design quality of our schemes. This also introduces our 3 Project Review Gateways, which are expanded on in our Design Review Processes on P18-19.



Babergh and Mid Suffolk Review Process (page 1 of 2)

Our Design Review Process is informed by the principles set out in the UK Design Council's Principles of Design Review. Our design reviews are always focused on improving the outcomes for our residents and communities. Through this process we endeavour to improve the quality of the architecture, urban design and landscape delivered through our developments.

We use this process to explore how the design proposals can better meet the needs of our future residents and of everyone within the community who will be affected by it. This internal Design Review Process and the team who will facilitate it is set out on the proceeding page.

Community Engagement

We strive to harness the passion and experience of local communities to help shape the future development of their local area.

Community engagement requires a bespoke approach for every development. It is a way of developing a working relationship between ourselves along with our development team, and members of our local community and community groups. Good community engagement helps us to achieve design quality and positive change.

Community engagement provides an opportunity for the design teams we are working with to learn about the context in which they are designing from those who live, work or have an interest in the locality, and for the evolving design to be challenged by those who are most familiar with the area.

The level of local and community pre-planning engagement must be agreed with our team at the earliest possible stage. The level of engagement will

depend on the significance and the locality of the project, and a stakeholder engagement plan will be produced for each new development.

As a council we place a great emphasis on engaging with key stakeholders before submitting our planning applications. The National Planning Policy Framework for England (2019) states the important role of pre-application engagement:

“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”

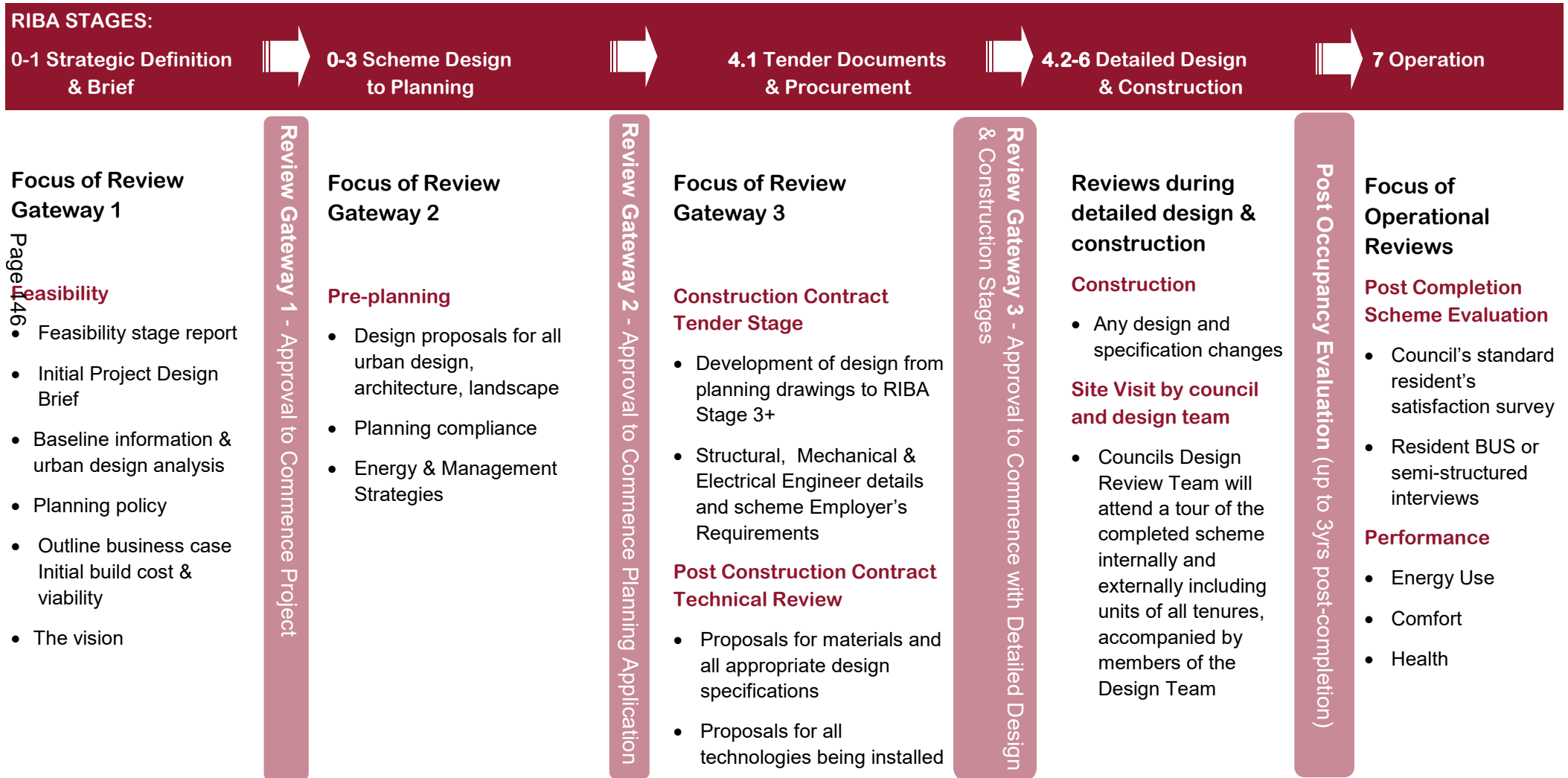
It is important to us that feedback from all community engagement is carefully recorded and shared with participants.



Babergh and Mid Suffolk Review Process (page 2 of 2)

The council require all design teams to follow the RIBA Plan of Work for each project stage so as to ensure design quality. In addition, the council have an internal Design Review Process. This sets out key Review Gateways which must be approved to allow the project to proceed to the next stage. These Design Reviews will be completed by a **Project-focussed group** within the council and typically will consist of a single representative from each of these teams: asset management, asset compliance, tenancy management, building services, public realm and others as appropriate.

This review process is set out below.



3.0

Technical Design Principles

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Project Standards

The quality of new housing can play a significant role in helping residents out of fuel and water poverty, improving their health and wellbeing, as well as contributing to sustainable development and addressing the issue of affordability of housing. High quality development also contributes to place making.

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It is the responsibility of all consultants and contractors to design and build our schemes to the most current form of these standards. Schemes will be delivered to the following standards and the Council and its representatives will require written, relevant evidence of adherence to these requirements before a scheme starts on site:

- Latest version of the Building Regulations
- The Councils **Project Design Brief**
- Principles and Specification as set out in this document and the Design Guide
- Technical Housing standards – Nationally Described Space Standards – March 2015
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- Building for a Healthy Life, July 2020
- Considerate Constructors Scheme incorporating the Building Social Value resource
- Soft Landings Framework (for major developments)

There are a number of best practice Climate Emergency documents referred to in this specification which teams should be familiar with:

- LETI Climate Emergency Design Guide
- RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge
- Passivhaus: the route to zero carbon



On all new build schemes, the design must accommodate the need for access to all dwellings and movement around the site by people with disabilities by ensuring compliance with Building Regulations Approved Document Part M (“Category 1” compliance only, unless stated otherwise).

All completed projects must participate in Post Occupancy Evaluation as set out in this document, [section 6.0](#).

Fire Safety

Fire safety procedures and protocols should always comply with industry best practice and reflect the recommendations of Dame Judith Hackitt's review - **'Building a Safer Future, Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: Final Report, May 2018'** published in response to the fire at Grenfell Tower. While the report is most relevant to new and existing high-rise residential properties which are 7 storeys high or more there are important lessons for design teams to adopt for all building typologies and scales.

In addition to full compliance with Building Regulations, adherence to the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Building Safety Act (expected to come into force in 2023), BMSDC are committed to installing sprinklers in all new developments that are three storeys or above and only using non-combustible cladding systems.

Fire Safety Design

A clear fire strategy is fundamental to the design of all new buildings and must be followed through the design and construction stages.

Page 149
It is the councils preference for developments to follow the guidance in Approved Document B¹ wherever possible, before fire engineered solutions are considered.

The Dame Judith Hackitt's review identified the need for "a 'golden thread' of information....so that the original design intent is preserved and changes can be managed through a formal review process. Equally, access to up-to-date information is crucial when effectively carrying out a fire risk assessment of a building and determining whether any action is required."² As such it is important that all information relating to fire safety is captured and presented at Design Review Gateways and included in the hand-over documentation.

Contractor/consultant teams must consider the different aspects of fire safety under the Building Regulations as part of its Fire Strategy including:

- Means of escape
- Spread of fire
- Access for fire fighters

The following additional documentation should be referred to for specialist housing and for the consideration of disabled peoples ability to escape with dignity:

- NFCC's Fire Safety in Specialised Housing, 2017
- BS 9991:2015

Every opportunity must be taken to eliminate fire risk areas (such as designing in suitable secure mobility scooter charging).

Fire & Rescue Service Access

When designing buildings, careful consideration should be given to ensuring that the Fire and Rescue Service can gain the required access to the building perimeter and manoeuvre vehicles safely.

Where considered appropriate Fire and Rescue Service should be consulted at the design stage, prior to a planning application being submitted. Consideration should be made to the following whilst consulting guidance in the current Approved Document B of the Building Regulations:

- Access to building perimeters.
- Landscape provision which may aid or restrict access including gates, barriers and street furniture
- Turning and sweep circles of fire service vehicles
- The impact of any adjacent future developments on access.

¹ Guidance on ways to comply with the fire safety requirements in Part B of Schedule 1 to the Building Regulations 2010.

² Building a Safer Future, Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: Final Report, May 2018

Towards Zero Carbon (page 1 of 5)

We have a number of important [mandatory and aspirational Design Goals](#) which relate to Zero Carbon. Contractor/consultant teams are required to comply with all of the mandatory Design Goals and as many aspiration Design Goals as suitable, viable and beneficial for the project.

In 2019 all Suffolk Local Authority members declared a 'climate emergency'. As part of this, the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, SCCP, will work together with partners across the county and region towards the aspiration of making the county of Suffolk carbon neutral by 2030.

All our new buildings must be designed to meet the energy requirements set out in Building Regulations Part L. However, this standard is based on a series of percentage reductions in emissions relative to the building's particular shape/size and so no specific level of emissions is currently being mandated. This method actually benefits inherently inefficient building shapes and so does not penalise poor design. Given the importance of the current Climate Emergency, it is clear that current targets do not go far enough in reducing energy use.

Our ultimate aim must be to look holistically at carbon emissions in the built environment and determine the most effective way to reduce them. We must consider both embodied carbon¹ and operational carbon².

The council requires all developments to consider ways in which they can minimise embodied carbon, but do not consider it appropriate to mandate any targets for embodied carbon while the methodology for calculating embodied carbon is rapidly evolving.

The council is focusing on the **operational carbon** of our developments. When we refer to Zero Carbon we are referring to operational carbon. And are aspiring to achieve **net operational zero carbon emissions** across all of our developments.

In addition to operational carbon (energy use), we are also providing targets and specifications within this document to address:

- Amount of construction waste generated, re-used and recycled.
- Water consumption;
- Indoor comfort;
- Performance of renewable and/or low carbon technologies

¹ Embodied carbon refers to the carbon emissions relating to the construction of a building, including the carbon emissions resulting from the manufacture and transport of the materials used. Definition from Passivhaus Trust

² Operational carbon refers to the carbon emissions generated during the building's lifetime relating to its use and principally arising from the building's energy demand. Definition from Passivhaus Trust



Towards Zero Carbon (page 2 of 5)

Throughout this document the council is prioritising a fabric first approach to building well designed, high quality, energy efficient homes that are affordable to run, provide a healthy living environment for residents which are easy to maintain.

Operational Carbon

Contractor/ consultant teams will be expected to provide, on completion of each new home, a SAP certificate with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) confirming the rating achieved and stating the calculated Space Heating Demand in kWh/m².year.

All developments must adopt a fabric first approach to reduce the need for energy consumption reducing fuel poverty and make best use of the efficient renewable energy.

The councils aspirational Design Goal is to meet the **Zero Carbon*** target in all new developments with every new home built to meet the Passivhaus Standard or equivalent and an EPC A or B rating. Where this is not practical the council have adopted the staged policy approach**, proposed by the Passivhaus Trust, as the table right, with all projects meeting the Zero Carbon target by 2026. For reference, new dwellings designed to minimum current building regulation compliance, have a predicted average space heating demand of around 54 kWh/m².year.

The space heating figure can be taken from the SAP calculation worksheets. Where projects are aiming to meet the Passivhaus Standard this calculation should be completed in the Passivhaus Planning Package (PHPP).

Zero Carbon Target



Stage Policy Approach to Target Dwelling Energy Efficiency**				
	2020	2022	2024	2026
Space Heating Demand (kWh/m ² .yr)	45	30	20	15*
Minimum EPC Rating	C	B	B	A

Monitoring is required on all projects to demonstrate compliance with these requirements. This is set out in [Section 6.0.](#)

Embodied Carbon

When considering the specification of materials, designers should follow the Green Guide for Housing aiming for materials which have an A rating. Developments should make the best use of reused and recycled parts and materials. For example, using demolition material instead of new materials to build up roads, footpaths or underground floors, or using aggregate for ground slabs, foundations or concrete pavements.

** 15kWh/m².yr is the figure required to meet Passivhaus Classic, it is the recommended limit for meeting Net Zero Carbon in the RIBA 2030 Pledge and the LETI Climate Emergency Design Guide

*this staged approach was set out in the Passivhaus Trust document 'EPCs as Efficiency Targets' published April 2020

Life Cycle

The newly constructed buildings should be designed and built so that materials that are incorporated can be easily reused or recycled when the buildings are demolished.

Water consumption

The council requires all Design Teams to ensure designs promote water conservation. It is a mandatory Design Goal for all new homes to reduce water use through carefully specified fittings and water butts. In addition, we aspire to further reduce water use through grey water recycling, where suitable and viable.

Indoor comfort

Air quality is becoming an increasingly important issue in our new homes with the improving standards of air tightness being achieved on site. Homes should enable ventilation that controls humidity and odours without causing discomfort from draughts. Ventilation should not add significantly to the heat load to be met by mechanical heating. It is expected that design solutions will utilise Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery. If this is not being provided the council require a report outlining how air quality will be maintained.

Summer comfort is a key design consideration with all designs carefully

balancing good daylighting levels with the overheating risks. Homes should make maximum use of natural and passive solutions such as fixed shading, deep window reveals and landscaping.

All habitable rooms should have openable windows and where possible natural cross ventilation should be provided.

All new homes should be carefully orientated to make maximum use of solar gain in the winter/ heating season and to prevent summer overheating. East and West orientated windows create particular challenges in controlling overheating, due to the low sun angles.

We recommend the LETI guide for window ratios is consulted and any significant variation from the standards set in this document are referred to the council and its representatives for review. Summary values from the LETI document are shown in this table.

Overheating calculations should be submitted with each plot.

*Housing window areas guide	
(% of wall area)	
Small Scale	Medium-large Scale
North 10-15%	North 10-20%
East 10-15%	East 10-15%
South 20-25%	South 20-25%
West 10-15%	West 10-15%

*LETI Climate Emergency Design Guide, path to Zero Carbon

Towards Zero Carbon (page 4 of 5)

This page is included to highlight the importance of the strategic design moves to produce an efficient development. Reference is made here to the LETI Climate Emergency Design Guide.

Key Early Design Decisions

Key design decisions which are taken very early on have a significant impact on the energy demand, even more so than the specification of the building fabric and mechanical systems.

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These key decisions relate to orientation, form factor and glazing ratio.

The council requires design teams to consider a building's orientation combined with its glazing ratio to minimising energy demand. And control overheating.

Orientation

The LETI diagram, top right, shows that purely by changing the building's orientation, the space heating demand increases, in this case, from 13kWh/m².yr to 24kWh/m².yr.

Form Factor

A building's form factor is the ratio of its external surface area to the internal floor

area. The greater the ratio, the less efficient the building and the greater the energy demand.

It is reasonable to achieve a form factor of ≤ 3 for most buildings. As shown in the LETI diagram, bottom right.

Detached dwellings will have a high form factor, whereas apartment blocks will have a much lower form factor and thus will tend to be more energy efficient. The result is that the detached dwelling will need a higher performing fabric specification and mechanical systems to achieve the same performance as a terraced home or flat.



Why Orientation is important, Image from the LETI Climate Emergency Design Guide

Type	Form Factor	Efficiency
Bungalow house	3.0	Least efficient
Detached house	2.5	
Semi-detached house	2.1	
Mid-terrace house	1.7	
End mid-floor apartment	0.8	Most efficient

Types of home and their form factor Image from the LETI Climate Emergency Design Guide

Towards Zero Carbon (page 5 of 5)

Performance of low carbon and renewable technologies

The development of low / zero carbon and decentralised energy is strongly supported and encouraged.

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New developments must achieve a reasonable **improvement / reduction in carbon emissions of at least 20%** measured against the relevant Target Emission Rate (TER) as set out in the latest Building Regulations Part L.¹

This should be achieved through a 'fabric first' approach to reduce energy demand, followed by the utilisation of energy efficient systems and the provision of appropriate clean, renewable and low carbon technologies on site and / or in the locality of the development.

1 - This document may be reviewed to take into consideration requirements set out in future revisions of Building Regulations Part L



Internal Space Standards (page 1 of 6)

We have a number of important [mandatory and aspirational Design Goals](#) which relate to the internal design of our homes. Contractor/ consultant teams are required to comply with all of the mandatory Design Goals and as many aspiration Design Goals as suitable, viable and beneficial for the project.

Furniture Layouts

All floor plans to show indicative furniture layouts to comply with the furniture schedule detailed in Annex B2 'Furniture for use in demonstrating compliance with space standard' and 'Furniture Schedule' dated 29th April 2013 based on diagrams from the former HQI and London Housing Design Guide 2010.

A wheelchair turning circle should be demonstrated in all ground floor habitable rooms.

The contractor/ consultant teams must prepare detailed drawings (1:50) of every kitchen layout, showing door swings, tiling layout, electrical outlets etc. including capacity of kitchens and gas/water connections. Drawings will be considered and agreed with The Council and its representatives prior to site commencement. The Council's preference is for kitchen/diners as opposed to lounge/diners.

Where possible direct access from the kitchen to open space is to be provided.

Storage Provision for Social Rent Properties

Hat and coat hooks at 2Nr per bedspace to a maximum of 6. Hooks must be provided in a recessed area, or in a separate cloakroom where provided, and appropriate to the number of occupants the property is designed for.

Secure storage is required for harmful substances, medicines etc (one kitchen cabinet to be fitted with a lock). Enclosed storage is required for food, utensils, washing and cleaning items, brooms and tall equipment.

Circulation

The staircase is to be designed to allow for the future provision of a chair/stair lift. A handrail should be fitted which is continuous and unbroken for the full length of the stair. Open risers are not acceptable.

Living rooms are not to be an essential part of circulation and essential storage should not be accessed only in the living room.



Internal Space Standards (page 2 of 6)

We aspire for all of our new homes to exceed the standards set out in the Nationally Described Space Standards.

2020 saw many households demand for space in their homes increase. We are committed to providing new homes which respond to this increased need and specifically the increase in working from home (WFH) which is expected to remain in some form in the future.

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The following should be used as minimum guidance for gross internal floor and storage areas but are subject to alteration if circumstances dictate. This is in line with the Nationally Described Space Standards, with additional WFH aspirational area in brackets.

The contractor/ consultant teams shall provide confirmation of unit gross internal floor areas and room sizes scheduled on block plan for The Council and its representatives approval prior to start on site and again at practical completion.

Gross internal floor areas*:

Bed-rooms	Bed spaces	1 Storey Dwelling (m ²)	2 Storey Dwelling (m ²)	3 Storey Dwelling (m ²)	Built in storage (m ²)
1	2	50 (2)	58 (2)		1.5
2	3	61 (2)	70 (2)		2.0
	4	70 (2)	79 (2)		
3	4	74 (4)	84 (4)	90 (4)	2.5
	5	86 (4)	93 (4)	99 (4)	
	6	95 (4)	102 (4)	108 (4)	
4	5	90 (4)	97 (4)	103 (4)	3.0
	6	99 (4)	106 (4)	112 (4)	
	7	108 (4)	115 (4)	121 (4)	
	8	117 (4)	124 (4)	130 (4)	
5	6	103 (6)	110 (6)	116 (6)	3.5
	7	112 (6)	119 (6)	125 (6)	
	8	121 (6)	128 (6)	134 (6)	
6	7	116 (6)	123 (6)	129 (6)	4.0
	8	125 (6)	132 (6)	138 (6)	

*Further detail on how to apply this standard can be found by referring to the technical housing standards – nationally described space standard (2015).



Internal Space Standards (page 2 of 5)

Room Sizes

All dwellings with two or more bedspaces must provide at least one double (or twin) room.

Every single bedroom must have a floor area of at least 7.5m² and be at least 2.15m wide.

Every double (or twin) bedroom is to have a floor area of at least 11.5m² and at least one double (or twin) bedroom is to be 2.75m wide as a minimum, with every other double (or twin) to be 2.55m minimum wide.

Any area which has a headroom of less than 1.5m is not counted within the gross internal area (GIA) unless it is used solely for storage (if the area under the stairs is to be used as storage, assume a general floor area of 1m² within the GIA). Any other area which is used solely for storage and has a headroom of 900-1500mm (such as under eaves) is counted at 50% of its floor area, and any area lower than 900mm is not counted at all.

GIAs for one storey dwellings include enough space for one bathroom and one additional WC

(or shower room) in dwellings with five or more bedspaces.

GIAs for two and three storey dwellings include enough space for one bathroom and one additional WC (or shower room).

Built in storage areas are included within the overall GIA and include an allowance of 0.5m² for fixed services or equipment such as hot water cylinder, boiler or heat exchanger.

Further guidance is available from the Technical Housing Standards – national described space standard documents.

Day lighting

Dwelling layouts should provide good day lighting with kitchens, living rooms and dining rooms designed to meet the day lighting criteria set out in BS8206:Part 2 and should also have a view of the sky as set out in this standard.



Internal Space Standards (page 3 of 5)

BMSDC accept some variation in the kitchen design to meet market expectations where homes are being sold. The HQI requirements listed in this document can be considered aspirational and some flexibility on the requirements listed will be considered by the Council and its representatives.

Kitchens

The kitchen design/layout is to be approved by The Council and its representative prior to placing orders with suppliers.

Internal kitchens are not permitted, a window must be provided.

A worktop should be provided on each side of the cooker space and adjacent to the sink, providing a minimum clear space of 500mm either side. Work surfaces should not be obstructed and the worktop-cooker-worktop-sink-worktop sequence is not to be broken by doors, passages or tall units.

At least one multi-drawer unit to be provided.

A 1.2m run of worktop between the cooker and the sink to be included. Where located in kitchens, wall mounted central heating boilers must be at least 450mm clear from the worktop, located within a boiler housing unit to match surround wall units and with the pipework neatly concealed and accessible.

A 630mm wide fridge/freezer space is to be provided. The fridge/freezer space should not to be located adjacent to the cooker space.

Electric cooker points must be provided, for induction cooking, it is no longer expected that gas cooking should be facilitated.

Wall cupboards should be set back 150mm when located adjacent to a cooker, or boiler position, or in a position where they cannot be reasonably reached.

Space and connection points should include an appliance space for a dishwasher, cooker, fridge/freezer and washing machine. The washing machine space should be adjacent to the sink unit, unless a separate utility area is provided, and must be provided with suitable water supplies and waste connections, stop valves and holes to feed connection pipes through. All connections should be easily accessible and enable the incoming resident to connect their appliances.

Kitchen layout and cubic capacity of units are to be designed in accordance with the Housing Quality Indicators Version 4.

Market sale homes can include independent inland units, breakfast bars and large pan drawers.



Internal Space Standards (page 4 of 5)

Kitchens cont.

To meet market demand, tiling can either:

(1) extend full height between kitchen worktops and wall units and extend behind the cooker recess from floor to wall unit height.

(2) be substituted with 100-150mm high upstands matching the worktops.

No electrical sockets shall be within reach of the sink or drainer.

Sink units are to be located under windows wherever possible and the drainer should be adequately supported from beneath by means of a timber batten.

Adequate space to be provided for free standing bins in the kitchen area.

Floor to ceiling heights

A minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.5m is required for all flats and 2.6m* for the ground floor of all two and three-storey homes. The minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.4m is required for the first floor and above of all multiple storey homes.

*for at least 75% of GIA of floor

Kitchen	1p	2p	3p	4p	5p	6p	7p	+
1 sink top and drainer 600x1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
2 cooker space 600x600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600
3 washing machine position / worktop 600x630	630	630	630	630	630	630	630	630
4 other base units 600 x length	1200	1200	1600	1600	1600	2700	2700	+
5 ancillary equipment space 600x length -					600	600	1200	1200
6 fridge/freezer space 600x600(space above not in VOL)	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600
7 broom cupboard 600x600x1950. (Note this may be counted towards the "tall storage" requirement)	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600
8 tray space 600x150	Inc.	Inc.	Inc.	inc.	Inc.	inc.	inc.	inc.
9 Recycle bins space	300	300	600	600	600	600	600	600
10 Length of fitments =1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8+9	4930	4930	5630	5630	6230	7330	7930	+
11. VOL- min capacity (cu m.) (MUST include drawers)	1.3	1.5	2	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.6	+
Any wall units provided should be 300 deep and 450 above base units.								
Note: Item 3,5,6,7,9 may be in adjacent rooms to the kitchen.								

Design Unit - Layout

721 HQLv4 April 2008

Internal Space Standards (page 5 of 5)

Bedrooms

All double bedrooms to be designed to allow double or twin beds to be accommodated in the bedroom with adequate circulation space and allowing for furniture etc.

All main bedrooms are to be provided with a built-in wardrobe, incorporating a hanging rail and a shelf above.

In all bedrooms it should be possible to locate the bed in two different positions.

Provision of a space for an occasional cot to main bedroom is required.

Space for a small worktop or similar is to be provided in single bedrooms.

All bedrooms are to have access to washing and WC facilities on the same level.

Storage

Properties should be designed in such a way as to maximise storage space. Slatted shelving to be provided in linen/airing cupboards and a heat source should be provided. Where MVHR is provided for within the home the heat source is

not necessary, an MVHR extract point should be provided instead.

Dedicated Working From Home Space

We aspire to provide a dedicated working from home (WFH) space in every new home.

This space must have as a minimum:

- Access to natural daylighting. With a daylighting factor of $\geq 1.5\%$.
- Space for a small desk:
 - ⇒ 750 x 900mm for 1-2 beds
 - ⇒ 750 x 1500 for 3-4 beds
 - ⇒ 750 x 2400 for 5+ beds
- Access to power, USB charging and wired for connection into the home WiFi (Cat5).
- A shallow wall mounted shelf should be provided above this dedicated desk space to the full length of the desk provision, for storage of work related items.
- In homes with 3 bedrooms or more, this space should not be in the main living area, kitchen or master bedroom.



External Areas (page 1 of 4)

We have a number of important [mandatory and aspirational Design Goals](#) which relate to the external design of our developments. Contractor/ consultant teams are required to comply with all of the mandatory Design Goals and as many aspiration Design Goals as suitable, viable and beneficial for the project.

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External areas are very important in establishing the overall quality of the development. Layout of the scheme should provide a clear delineation between public, community and private space. Public spaces should be connected via a clear and well-lit route. All homes should be grouped and orientated in a manner which enhances privacy for occupants and minimises noise.

Areas of existing high-quality landscape, or valuable ecologies which support plants, mammals, birds and insects must be protected. Ecological enhancements such as bird and bat boxes, perches or similar are encouraged.

Private Gardens

Private gardens should be capable of containing sheds/outside stores, washing lines, patios and fuel storage vessels (if required). Manhole covers in gardens are to be avoided wherever possible. A minimum of 25 square metres should be provided for rear gardens. Where private gardens are not provided a minimum of 5 square metres should be provided for balconies.

A level paved patio area (minimum size 9m²) and an accessible rotary clothes dryer are to be provided in the rear garden of all houses and bungalows. A lockable external store/shed is to be provided with access to a path.

Sheds should be located in the rear garden on a concrete base, comprising timber shiplap with apex roof and supplied without a window to accord with Secured by Design requirements.

A level path is to be provided from the property to the garden entrance gate, clothes dryer and shed. A hard surface mowing area is to be located between all grassed areas and external walls

Adequate anti climb close-boarded, pressure-treated fences are to be provided. These must be at least 1.8m in height with concrete gravel boards secured by concrete posts and treated to achieve five-year protection and must also have a gate. Hedgehog doors should be provided in all garden fences, these can be formed on site to the British Hedgehog Preservation Society



External Areas (page 2 of 4)

recommendations or a preformed hedgehog friendly gravel board can be installed. Appropriate signage should accompany this to inform residents of its intended use. Gates are to be fitted with a key operated lock in accordance with the Secured by Design full certification scheme requirements. This fencing must be provided between private gardens and public areas, and between private gardens (when fencing works are being undertaken work must comply with BMSDC Fencing Policy).

Communal External Areas

In communal external areas, a screened drying area is to be provided to flats, finished in coated macadam or pre-cast concrete paving slabs to receive one large accessible rotary clothes dryer per four flats. An accessible rotary dryer is to be included on wheelchair and very sheltered housing projects.

Road designs and layouts are to meet adoptable standards while restricting vehicle speeds. The design of the street and car access must not allow speeds over 20mph on development roads.

Any change from public road to residential road should be marked by a change in the use of material.

External Lighting

All dwelling entrances (front and rear) should be provided with a PIR external light. Lights are to be energy efficient and be set dusk to dawn. All homes are to have a canopy, porch or recess to the main point of access to the dwelling.

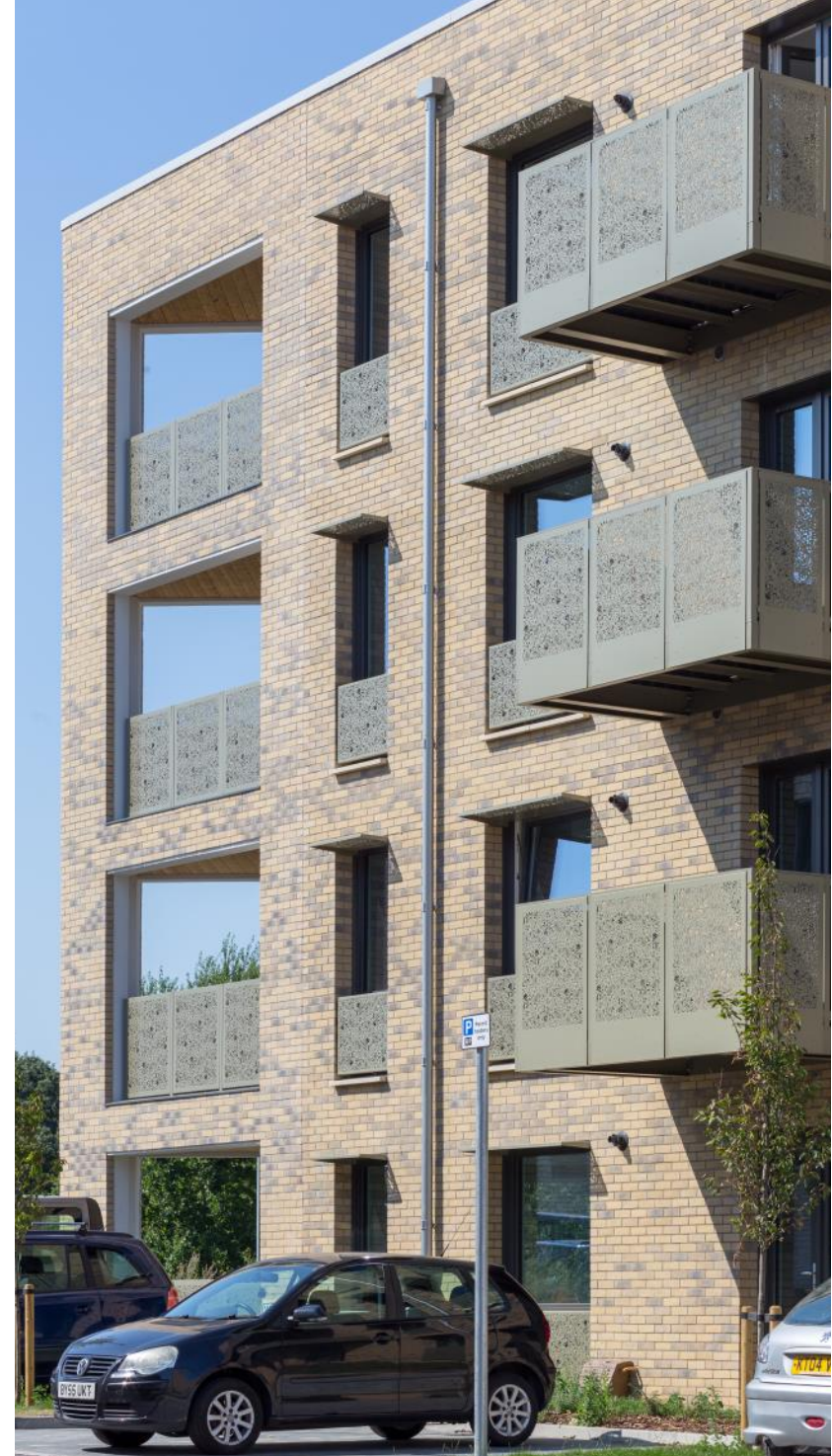
Light fittings (street and dwelling) must be carefully selected and agreed with The Council. All lighting should be adopted by the local authority where possible and, where unadopted lighting is provided, a metered landlord's supply is to be provided.

Letter boxes

No letter boxes should be installed through the thermal envelope, this includes front doors.

Communal Notice Boards

The contractor should allow to provide a lockable notice board for communal areas in flats or a



weather proof external version.

Development Signage

The contractor is required to design a proper signing system for the project and obtain The Council's and its representatives approval. Signs to be constructed of cast iron, brass, stainless steel, anodised aluminium or stoved enamel steel. Plastic signs will not be permitted.

Wayfinder Signage

Wayfinder signage for flats and blocks to comply with the requirements of approved Document B should provide:

- Information to assist in the evacuation of occupied buildings during emergency situations.
- A means of identifying at the building entrance, an individual block within a development or access to specific part of each building or different stair core.
- A visual perspective when entering the building, which would be typically A3 size fitted no higher than 1200mm from the floor level to include ground and typical floor plans

with floor number information and flat unit numbers.

- Visible numbering on each floor level in the building within the stairwell and the lobby adjacent the stair.

Landscaping

Areas of soft or hard landscaping should be suitably located, be sustainable and easily maintained.

Rear access paths must be well lit and avoid any recesses. All main paths should be a minimum of 1000mm wide with a firm and even surface. Where a change in level is unavoidable ramps are to be provided in lieu of steps with a gradient of no more than one in twelve.

Access to the front and rear gardens must be possible without having to pass through the dwelling.

Gardens to the front and rear of dwellings are to be well drained, levelled and cleared of builder's rubble. Front and rear gardens to be turfed.

Communal landscaped areas to be laid to turf or shrub-planted. All planted areas to be covered with weed-suppressant membrane and topped with bark

mulch around shrubs.

Outside taps are required in the rear gardens of every new home. A water butt should be provided to rear gardens of houses and bungalows. A note should be included within the Home Owner's Manual stating that these are not to be connected to a pump or pressure washer, etc. to prevent risk of legionella disease.

Parking Standards

Resident and visitor parking will be provided in line with current local and national planning policies and should reflect the requirements of the end user. Individual spaces to comprise a suitable hard surface area of minimum 3.6m x 6.0m and should be in curtilage where possible. Where in-curtilage parking is provided, one space to have a 900mm adjoining firm even surface to make the space 4.3m x 6.0m overall. Electrical car charging points for all new homes with in-curtilage parking is mandatory. Council parking areas (out of curtilage) are to have the infrastructure for electrical car charging point installed.

Group parking areas are to be identifiable to the groups of dwellings they serve and be within 30m of the dwelling entrances. All communal car parking

External Areas (page 4 of 4)

areas should be provided with a sign stating “Residents Parking Only. Vehicles and contents are left at owner’s own risk”. Individual parking spaces must be demarcated by means of thermoplastic white lining where tarmac surfaced, or by contrasting block pavings where block paved. Communal parking areas should be provided with provision for charging electrical vehicles, ratio of provision to be agreed with the council and its representatives.

Reduced parking numbers may be considered by The Council and its representatives, where there is an alternative sustainable transport policy proposed. Designs should ensure cars are not able to park in areas that would ‘clutter’ the development with cars or restrict use of the roads by emergency or refuse vehicles.

Refuse Standards

Contractors should provide the refuse bins to the size and number required by the local authority (following appropriate consultation with the local authority).

The design layout must ensure access to all dwellings and turning for refuse collection, emergency vehicles, delivery and removal vehicles and people with disabilities.

Individual bins are to be stored at the rear of the dwellings where possible in an area that is secure and accessible for residents to place their bins out on rubbish collection days. The design should take into account attractive and practical storage for refuse and recycling bins.

Communal bin stores must be designed and situated in conjunction with local authority waste management requirements. These stores



must be secure, robust and enable ease of access for occupants and waste disposal teams. Subject to agreement with the local authority, doors/gates shall be fitted with a combination code lock. A wash down point served off a dedicated landlord’s water supply is to be provided with trapped drainage. Bin stores to be build of non-combustible materials and situated away from the main residential building. Adequate lighting (on PIR with timed overrun) and fire detection installations must be provided, served off a dedicated landlord’s electric supply.’

Security Standards

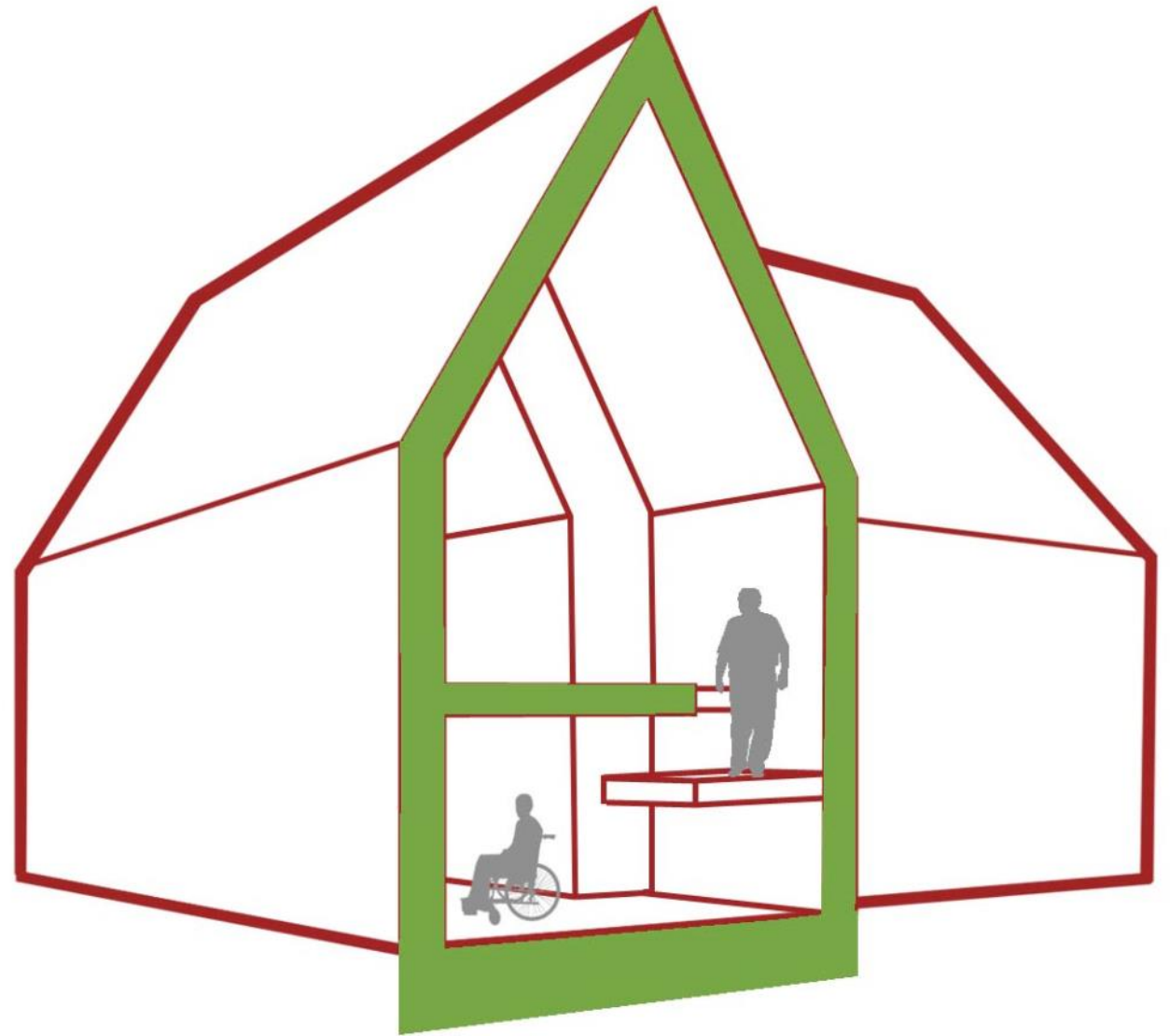
The design of the scheme should provide a safe and secure environment for the residents by enabling natural surveillance and creating secure private areas around individual dwellings, restricting unauthorised access to communal areas around flats and maisonettes by the provision of walls, fences and gates.

Communal bicycle stores shall meet the secure and robust and in compliance with the relevant requirements of Secured by Design. Adequate lighting installations (on PIR with timed overrun) must be provided, served off a dedicated landlord’s electric supply.’

4.0

Technical Performance Specification

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Building Fabric and Materials (page 1 of 12)

Contractor/ consultant team shall be responsible for the specification of materials and monitoring workmanship. The following general specification should be regarded as a Brief. If the consultant or contractor has a conflicting opinion or view it should be brought to the Council or its representatives attention by a notice requiring written confirmation of The Council's opinion.

All materials shall be the best of their respective kind and must wherever possible be British Standard approved and kite-marked or carry a BBA certificate.

British Standard Codes of Practice and the latest recommendations of the BRE should always be referred to in respect to the use, application, procedure and tolerances acceptable for all products and workmanship, along with any specific requirements made by the manufacturer. Workmanship should be to the minimum standards set out in BS 8000 Workmanship on Building Sites and always to the satisfaction of the Architect or The Council's appointed site representative.

Page 166 **Design Life**

Developments should be designed to take account of the long term maintenance requirements, in terms of both accessibility and cost.

When selecting products the Contractor/ consultant team must consider the life cycle costs and the former HCA's (now Homes England) requirement for a maximum 80% capital cost over a 60 year period.

See current NHBC, or equivalent, Technical Requirements and Performance Standards

Primary Structural elements:

60 years minimum – free from necessity for major repairs or renewals

Airtight components, tapes, gaskets etc.:

60 years minimum – free from necessity for major repairs or renewals

Secondary elements, services & installations:

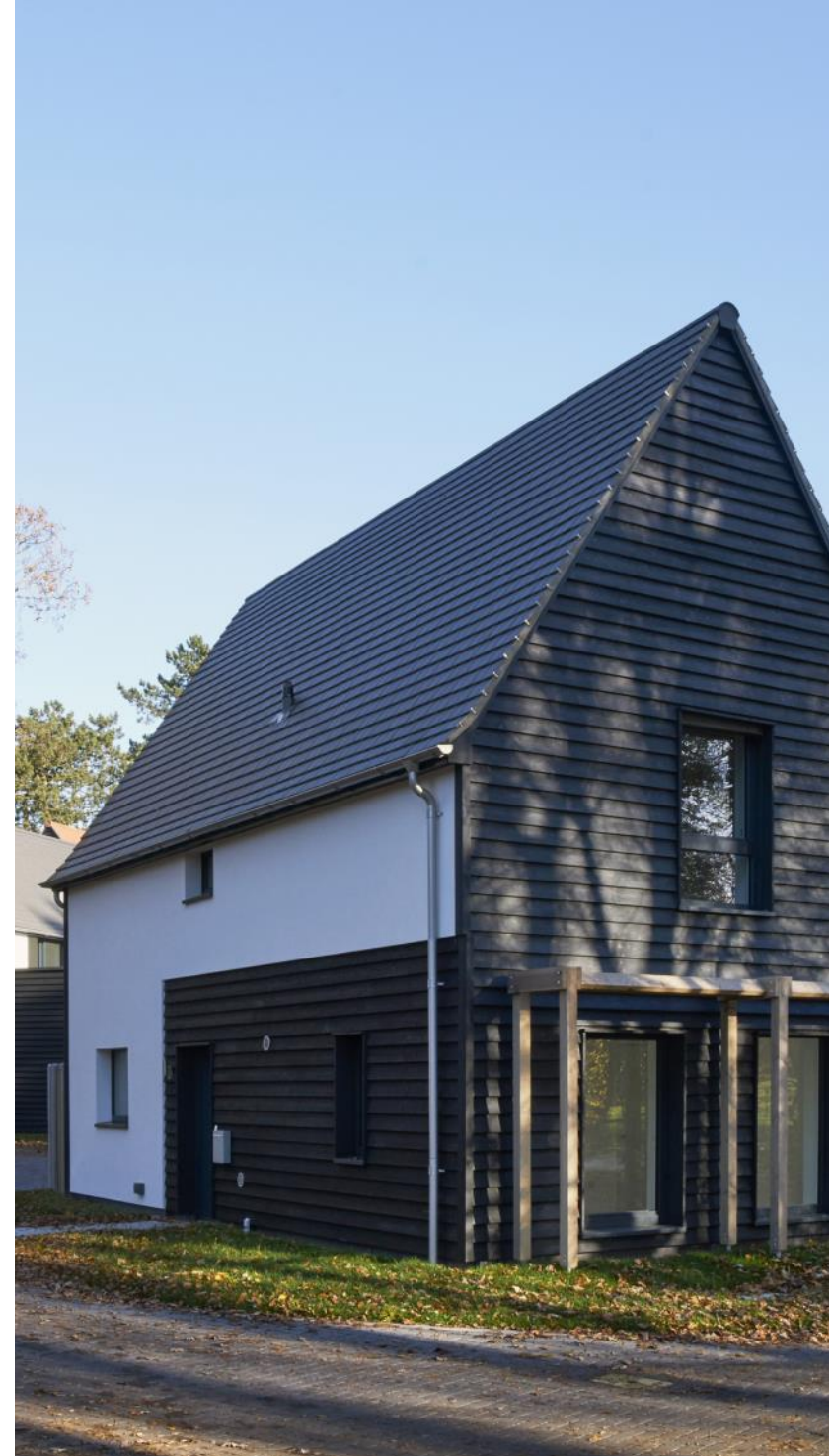
30 years minimum - designed to reduce the need for maintenance free from necessity for major repairs or renewals

Fixtures and fittings:

15 years minimum – appropriate for use, capable of withstanding normal wear and tear and fixed in a manor so as to remain serviceable

Finishes to internal areas:

10 years minimum - robust and maintenance free



Building Fabric and Materials cont. (page 2 of 12)

Materials

All materials, goods and appliances are to comply with: -

1. Latest relevant British Standards
2. British Board of Agreement Certificate
3. BRE Digests
4. Warranty Provider requirements
5. Local Authority requirements

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All timber and timber-based products including particleboard and panel board to use wood from well regulated and managed sources as specified in BREEAM Environmental Standard V.3. 1995. To include certification under the Forest Stewardship Council scheme.

Structural timber to be used in accordance with BS5589: 1989 and BS5268 Part 5:1989.

Particle boards specified to conform to BS5669: 1987

Facing bricks shall be to BS EN 771-1:2011 F0-2 quality.

Furthermore all materials are to be used and fitted in accordance with the manufacturers' recommendations.

Fabric Performance:

It is not the intension of the council to set u-value limits for building fabric. It is for contractor/ consultant teams to produce proposals which comply with the [Dwelling Energy Efficiency table P24](#). The following indicative values are provided as best practice guidance. Note, these values or better are expected to be required when meeting the councils Aspirational Design Goal for Zero Carbon buildings.

U-values

Indicative u-values (W/m².K)*

Walls	0.13 - 0.15
Floor	0.08 - 0.10
Roof	0.10 - 0.12
Exposed ceilings/ floors	0.13 - 0.18
Windows/ Doors	0.80 - 1.00 (triple glazing)

Air tightness

It is the councils preference for all homes to be draught free with a target air tightness less than 1m³/h.m2@50Pa*. This level of air tightness requires an MVHR system.

It is recommended that an early air pressure test is carried out during construction to make rectification

works easier to carry out.

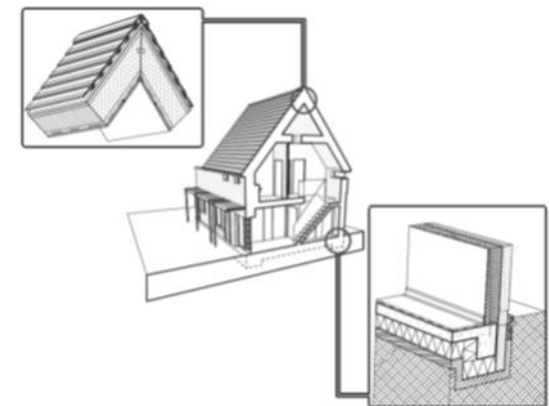
When developments are meeting the Aspirational Design Goal of Passivhaus certification an air tightness of 0.6 ACH@50Pa is required.

The council will consider alternative proposals where these can demonstrate how 1) the dwelling energy efficiency targets can be met and 2) the health and well being of residents will be maintained.

Thermal Bridge Free Detailing

Thermal bridges result in localised reduced interior surface temperatures in winter, which can lead to increased heat losses, surface mould or even condensation.

It is expected that thermal bridging is kept to a maximum of 0.04 (y-value)*



* Fabric Performance Limits from LETI Climate Emergency Design Guide

Building Fabric and Materials cont. (page 3 of 12)

External Walls

All external wall construction including external cladding systems shall be fully non-combustible.

Render

Render is to be off white through coloured rather than painted, with aluminium beading. All rendered walls to have a plinth detail, recessed from the line of the main façade, plinths to extend to 150mm above external finished ground level and be rendered in a dark grey. The render shall be approved by the council and its representatives before being submitted to the Planning Authority for approval

Brick

Where brickwork is to be used as an external finish a facing brickwork sample panel is to be constructed and approved by the council and its representatives in consultation with the local authority planning department. Only through colour bricks will be accepted.

Bricks shall be mixed from a minimum of three packs to prevent banding. Pointing shall be flush, bucket handle or weatherstruck.

Brickwork below ground level is to be in frost resistant bricks in cement mortar. Any brick screen walls or garden walls are to be built and capped in frost

resistant bricks.

Exposed brickwork below damp-proof course level shall be built with facing bricks and pointed to a minimum of 150mm below finish ground level. Top surface of lintels over service entries shall be kept at least 150mm below finished ground level and sealed to prevent vermin entering void below ground floor where suspended slab construction is used

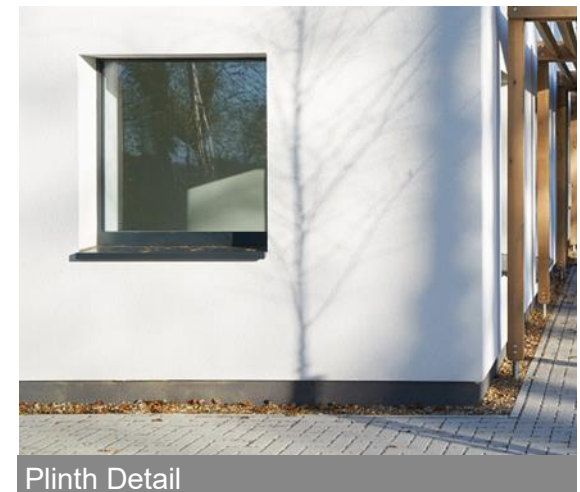
Where any other external facing material is to be used, samples and specification details will be required for approval by the council and its representatives and the local authority planning department.

Ground Floor Construction

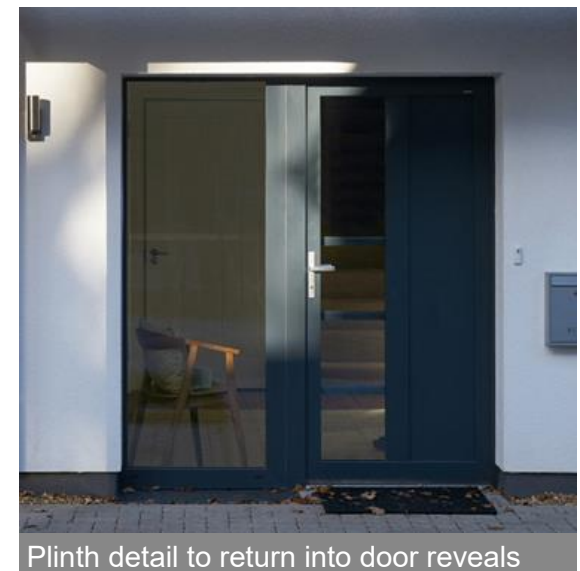
If decking is used in kitchens and bathrooms it is to be 22mm moisture resistant tongue and grooved plywood and care should be used to ensure that floors do not squeak once constructed

Drainage

As a large proportion of the underground drainage system should be adopted by the Local Authority under Section 104 of the Water Services Act 1991 (previously Section 18 of the Public Health Act 1936), this drainage should comply in every respect with the adopting authority specification. In un-adopted drainage, there should be an inspection chamber at



Plinth Detail



Plinth detail to return into door reveals



Bucket handle pointing

Building Fabric and Materials cont. (page 4 of 12)

each change of level or direction.

Soil vent pipe (SVP) access eyes must be provided at each floor level and at the base of the stack. Where SVPs are internal (in ducts or in the roof space) they must be fully lagged and insulated against noise transmission. Wastes from hand basins and baths should not be combined and should lead directly to the stack.

Page 169
Overflow pipes should project 150mm from the face of the dwelling with no backfall, the pipe should slope 10° and the end tee'd.

Bottle traps should be specified to sinks and wash hand basins.

To facilitate the repair and maintenance of gutter installations, fixings should be used which enable replacement without stripping off roof finishes.

Roofs

Valley gutters are only acceptable where they can be maintained easily with overflows provided. Chipboard decking must not be used.

Warm roofs are preferred providing occupants with warm, dry storage space and space in which to run MVHR ducting (note MVHR ducting should not be run outside of the thermal envelope). Loft access must be provided in all dwellings that allows access to every part of the roof.

Where cold roofs are proposed contractor/design teams are expected to recognise the challenge this poses in terms of achieving a draught-free and thermally robust solution. A purpose made product for Passivhaus and low energy dwellings should be specified such as the Designo Loft ladder or Klimatec 160 where fire protection is also required. These must be lockable if in a communal area.

Pitched roof finishes should be Forticrete roofing 'Gemini' interlocking twin plain tile. Or equivalent and approved.

Flashings to be lead (min Code 4).

Fascia - To be timber FSA accredited, painted or stained to match the timber cladding. Painted fascia boards are to be prepared, knotted, stopped, two undercoats and a minimum of one coat gloss finish, fascia to be stained shall be prepared and stain applied in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

Bitumen felt is not acceptable roof as a covering except to sheds.

Doors and Windows

All windows and doors to be triple glazed.

Colour to be agreed between the council and its representatives and the Contractor.



Example of a Passivhaus Loft Ladder

All windows must be provided with security fittings including to upper floor windows, so that they can be locked in a part open position. Window design should allow for safe operation and be cleaned easily from the inside. Glazing lines to be no higher than 810mm above finished floor level in living, dining and bedroom areas. Living rooms must have at least one opening light in addition to other doors or windows provided.

Building Fabric and Materials cont. (page 5 of 12)

Ironmongery must be sufficiently strong and robust and be of long life and low maintenance. The exact design, make and type to be approved by the council and its representatives. All external fittings must be stainless steel in a satin or chrome polished finish.

All window and door designs must be approved by The Council, and its representatives prior to planning permission and manufacture. With the following specification required as a minimum.

Page 170

Doors, associated doorframes, door locks and door hardware

All doors, associated doorframes, locks and hardware shall be designed, constructed and installed so as to reduce the risk of unauthorised entry.

Doors should be fit for purpose and comply with the relevant material standard ie:

- BS 8529 (Composite)
- BS 644 (Timber)
- BS 7412 (PVC-U)

The installation of doors, doorframes, locks, and hardware should be securely fixed in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications.

Connection between door and/or frame components

which can be easily released from outside should not be used, this includes accessible screw connections.

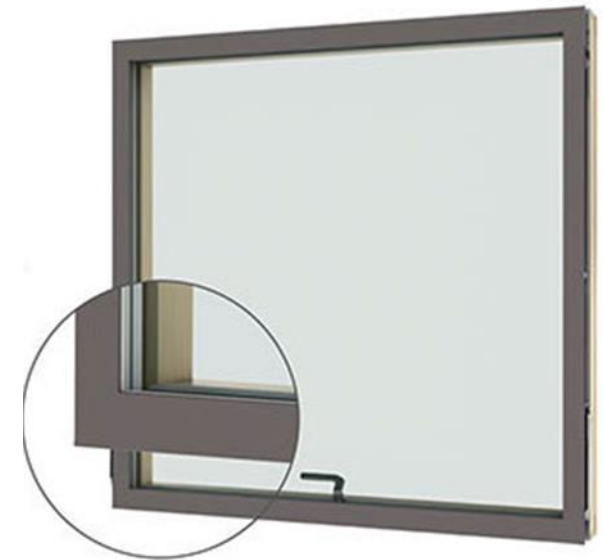
The main entrance door should be fitted with an opening limitation device or door chain which is securely fixed in accordance with the manufacture's specifications and is fit for purpose.

There should be a means of giving a wide angle view of the area immediately outside the main entrance door of individual dwellings. Acceptable ways include one of the following:

- a) A through-door viewer fitted between 1200mm and 1500mm from the bottom of the door.
- b) Clear glazing either to part of the door or a convenient window.
- c) Closed circuit camera-and display.

For the installation of all doors/frames, for lightweight wall construction - to reduce the risk of breaking through the wall finishes and accessing the locking system, on the internal face of the door, timber or light steel framed walls should incorporate one of the following:

- a) Timber sheathing minimum 9mm thick, or
- b) Expanded metal.



Timber/ aluminium composite windows



Front door with clear galzing in door/window

Building Fabric and Materials cont. (page 6 of 12)

The material should be the full height of the door and not less than 600mm measured from the lock (s).

Doors

Front entrance doors must have fitted: 3 hinges, bolts top and bottom, 2 hinge bolts, viewer, security chain, number and knocker. Note the letter box should be provided externally and not penetrate the thermal envelop.

Page 171

Rear doors must be fitted with: 3 hinges, bolts top and bottom and 2 hinge bolts.

All locks to a communal entrance, and to individual flats, to be suited as approved by The Council, and its representatives.

Entrance doors to dwellings should be fitted with one (or more) securely fixed lock(s) and keep(s) or multi-point locking system, which has all of the following:

- a) At least 1000 differs.
- b) A fixing which, if burst open, would not pull out without breaking the door or its frame.
- c) A hardened steel bolt or inserts to prevent sawing.
- d) Latch and deadlocking facility.

Locking devices fitted to entrance doors to dwellings should permit emergency egress without the use of a key when the dwelling is occupied. The locking system to entrance doors of dwellings should also provide all of the following functions:

- a) The locking system should hold the door closed on the latch.
- b) The latch may be withdrawn by a key externally and a thumb turn internally or by a handle both internally and externally. Samples to be provided to The Council, and its representatives for approval before orders are placed as alternatives to thumb turns may be required for the affordable flat and house entrances.
- c) The full deadlocking facility should be engaged and operable with a key externally and non-key operated hardware internally.

Note:

Individual locks which comply with BS 8621 or multi-point locks which comply with PAS 8621 meet these requirements. External handles on multi-point locking systems should be twin or split spindle to avoid operating the latch.

Front door ironmongery (to be approved by The Council, and its representatives prior to placing order) to include:

- Door number

- Night latch
- Door viewer – at standard height where glazed panel is not present.
- Security to comply with standards set out above.

Door knockers are required to the houses. Flats are to be served by audio and visual entry systems, refer to [Electrical Specification on P XX](#) for further details. Samples to be provided to The Council, and its representatives for approval before ordering.

All door glazing to be laminated safety glass.

Communal Doors

Front entrance doors are to have a door-entry system approved by The Council, and its representatives and etched with postal addresses. System to have tradesperson entry facility with adjustable time setting, subject to Secured by Design compliance – if not permitted then robust post boxes to be mounted externally in an appropriate location to be agreed with The Council, and its representatives.

Door Glazing

Any glazing which, if open or broken, would permit release of the locking device on the inside of the door by hand or arm entry should include one pane of laminated glass, securely fixed in accordance with the manufacture's specification.

Building Fabric and Materials cont. (page 7 of 12)

Where a sidelight exists alongside any principal entrance door the glazing should be obscured, pattern to be agreed with The Council, and its representatives.

Windows, associated window frames, window locks and window hardware

For the purposes of security this section covers windows, associated window frames, window locks and window hardware that are easily accessible.

Guidance is also provided to ensure they are fit for purpose.

All windows, associated window frames, window locks and window hardware within the scope of this standard shall be so designed, constructed and installed so as to reduce the risk of unauthorised entry.

Windows should be fit for purpose and comply with the relevant material standard (including the requirements for basic security as defined by Part Q of the Building Regulations)

The installation of windows, frames, locks, and hardware should be securely fixed in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications.

Hinges and fastenings of opening lights of windows should be of a type which prevents them from being opened from the outside when in the closed

position.

Opening lights on all ground floor windows and other windows which are easily accessible from the outside may be fitted with lockable devices which cannot be released without a key.

Ground floor, basement and easily accessible windows (including easily accessible roof lights) should comply with PAS 24:2012 and should include both of the following:

- a) Laminated safety glazing (6.4mm minimum) in windows below 800mm (from floor level) or 1500mm if within 400mm of a doorframe – that complies with BS EN 356:2000 rating P1A.
- b) Non-key locking hardware on designated accessible emergency egress windows together with laminated glazing conforming with the requirements in requirement (a) above.

Windows falling outside the scope of the British Standard eg. Horizontal sliding windows in BS 7950 should be assessed against BS 7950/PAS 24:2012. Any such assessment should include the appropriate fitness for purpose standard.

Rooflights

Where Velux (or similar) roof lights are installed, locking restrictors are to be provided as are

opening devices or poles.

Rooflight glazing should be triple glazed unless otherwise agreed with The Council, and its representatives.

Georgian wired glass is not acceptable in either windows or doors.

Any external door that opens outwards, any communal and any inter communicating doors must be fitted with a restrictor.

Sliding and folding doors should only be used with the express permission of the council and its representatives. In some cases these may be considered appropriate for market sale homes.

House Numbers

House number signage should be provided similar in appearance to the inset image (page 45), affixed to the front of the properties.

Letter boxes

As set out in the [Design Principles](#) letter boxes should not penetrate the thermal envelop. Boxes must be compliant with Secured by Design Homes 2016 Guide. Colour /finish and location to be agreed with The Council and its representatives. Boxes should be big enough for A4 documents and designed to avoid theft through reaching in from outside.

Building Fabric and Materials cont. (page 8 of 12)

Private - an external mail box must be provided instead of a letterbox through the front door.

Communal - internal letterboxes within flat lobby are to be provided to be Multiple, vertical, front retrieval, FR60 fire rated.

Covered Entrances

These can be formed by:

- a) Canopies
- b) Recesses
- c) Porches

The provision of a covered entrance area is important for achieving a design which is suitable for the widest range of occupants.

The Contractor/ consultant team will be expected to submit proposals for the construction of these for The Council and its representatives approval pre-contract. Designs must comply with Secure by Design Standards.

Canopies, as a minimum, should include a GRP canopy with an aluminium fascia and soffit powder coated to match the external windows and doors (RAL 7016 unless otherwise agreed).

Both canopies and porches provide a suitable location for external letter boxes and meters.



Design Intent for number plate



Design Intent for fire rated flat letter boxes

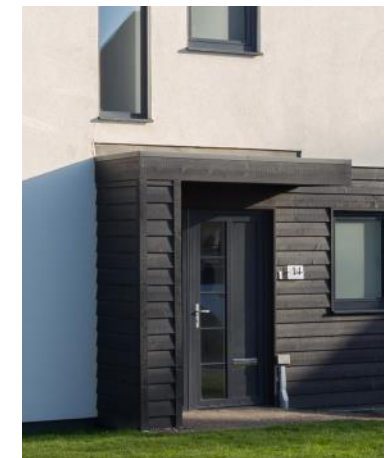
Where possible Electric Smart Meters should be installed on the inside of properties. Where external meters are necessary (all gas meters should be external) these must go on side elevations or in purpose made housings. All to be approved by The council and its representatives.

Internal Walls

Masonry movement joints must be provided and appropriately located within the walls to prevent cracking in accordance with the requirements of the manufacturers supplying the masonry units and to meet with BS 5628 / BS EN 1996-1-1: 2005. Generally, movement joints within



Design Intent for canopy no return



Design Intent for canopy with return

Building Fabric and Materials cont. (page 9 of 12)

brickwork and blockwork must be provided at 12m and 6m maximum centres respectively or at the manufacturers recommended spacing whichever is the lesser dimension.

All movement joint locations and details must be designed and constructed to meet with the The Council/ Architects/ Engineers requirements. Particular attention is drawn to achieving the requirements for acoustic insulation where locating internal movement joints.

Page 174

Timber frame structures require all partitions to bathrooms and kitchens to be sheathed with Plywood, or similar and approved to support grab rails and wall units, up to imposed load of 1.5kN/m² (e.g lined with plywood behind plasterboard).

Partition walls must be capable of supporting radiators, manifolds and future fixing loads.

Partitions may be load bearing Blocks or timber studs where timber frame used. Non-load bearing partitions may be timber studs or metal studs

Acoustic Sound insulation required to all partitions.

Party Walls - Load bearing in bricks, block or Timber frame. Acoustic Sound Insulation required through party wall structures.

Ceilings

Ceilings in bathrooms and main bedrooms are to be designed to take hoists and rails able to support a person of up to 190kg.

Internal Decorations

A high quality finish is required throughout. 10 years minimum - robust and maintenance free.

All decorative finishes to be approved by The Council, and its representatives.

Staircases

Staircases, where timber, shall be softwood or MDF with balustrades, with suitably finished soffit. In flats' staircases, alternative materials may be required.

All staircases to have painted timber stringers.

Handrails shall be waxed hardwood. Wall handrails profiles to be approved, see design intent generally fitted on steel brackets spaced away from the wall to allow for adequate grip.

The staircase is to be designed to allow for the future provision of a chair/stair lift.

Staircase should have closed risers.

Except in timber frame blocks, staircases in purpose built blocks of flats to be reinforced in-situ

or pre cast concrete with steel balustrades and vertical balusters.

In flatted blocks with communal stairs, PIR lights should be provided to each stairway and corridor with sufficient cover by sensors.

Flooring - decoration

Carpet will be included in all affordable homes in addition to slip resistant sheet flooring R10 generally and R12 in wet / shower rooms. With welded joints and sealed edges should be provided to all kitchens, kitchen diners, cloakrooms and bathrooms. Linoleum/ natural rubber should be considered as an alternative specification to vinyl due to its sustainable credentials. Coved skirtings to be provided to where dedicated wet room areas such as flush floor showers.



Design Intent for balustrade with waxed handrail

Building Fabric and Materials cont. (page 10 of 12)

An entrance mat should be provided inside the front door to houses and flats without communal space; and inside individual flat entrance doors accessed off a communal space/corridor. The mat should be to the full width of the door and to a depth to allow for the full opening of the door. Barrier mat should be Heckmondwicke Battleship/Hippo or equal and approved. colour: Anthracite.

Page 175
Hard-wearing, contract-grade carpet to be laid to all halls, stairs and landings (including cupboards) in communal spaces in blocks of flats. Stair treads to be fitted with robust, contrasting nosings.

Walls - decoration

All internal walls to be finished in:

Non Cerlite plaster 15mm thick Plasterboard and skimmed, and with galvanised metal angle beads to all external corners – Moisture resistant plasterboard to be provided in all bathrooms and WCs and aqua panel full height to shower enclosures and 3 sides to baths.

Decorations will be painted with a mist and two coats of water based low VOC matt emulsion generally. Kitchens, cloakrooms and bathrooms to be water resistant low VOC matt finish, colours shall be selected by The Council, and its representatives, generally white for ceilings and off white – Valspar Silver Thistle Down or Similar

approved to all internal walls.

All softwood joinery to be knotted first and painted with at least one coat of primer, one undercoat and one gloss or satin (or in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions). If stain is used it must be applied in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Glazed wall tiling splash backs in:

- Cloakrooms - splashbacks to sinks
- Shower/ Bathrooms - full height in shower compartments and all walls above baths.

Tile adhesives should be water resisting and tiling should be fully bonded.

Grout should be water resisting, grout colour as appropriate for tile choice, to be approved by The Council, and its representatives.

Dow corning or similar sanitary silicon sealant to be pointed around all tile junctions and between the sink and kitchen worktops, bath and wash basin.

There must be a maximum 5mm gap between underside of tiling and bath/ basin/shower tray/ worktop etc. before silicon bead is applied.

Generally above sinks, window cills to bathrooms to be tiled.

Contractor to work to a 2mm tolerance to all tiling.

Skirtings, Architraves etc.

- Softwood or MDF to standard square edged profile section – Contractor/ consultant team to propose sections for The Council, and its representatives approval.

- 70 mm Chamfer edge architrave
- 120mm Chamfer edge Skirting

Ceilings - decoration

All internal ceilings to be finished in non Cerlite plaster Plasterboard – Moisture resistant in bathrooms

Decorations will be painted with a mist and two coats of water based low VOC matt emulsion generally. Kitchens, cloakrooms and bathrooms to be low VOC silk finish, colours shall be selected by The Council, and its representatives, generally white.

Timber/Moisture resistant primed MDF skirtings to be provided to all walls except wet areas.



Building Fabric and Materials cont. (page 11 of 12)

Wall tiling to be in colours and borders as approved by The Council, and its representatives. Hand wash basin to have 450mm splash back, baths and showers to have full height tiling to all sides. Tiles to be fixed with waterproof adhesive and grouted with white waterproof cement.

Internal Doors

Internal doors should be solid core/ heavyweight core, pre-primed, wood grain. All doors to be provided with 1 1/2 pairs of ball bearing hinges.

Page 176

Removable hardwood thresholds are to be provided to all internal doors.

Door stops are to be provided for all external and internal doors where appropriate.

Internal ironmongery to be heavy duty and bolt through lever furniture, AC Leigh 'Chrome/Polished' - SZC010 internal door handle and polished hinges or similar approved. Samples to be provided for The Council, and its representatives approval.

Internal Ironmongery

Bathroom and cloaks shall have locking mortice latches operable from the outside in an emergency.

Doors to have adequate ventilation at foot to allow for through ventilation. Gap under door must take into account the ultimate floor finishes.

All built in cupboards are to be provided with

adequate ventilation.

Any non-standard doors i.e under stair storage doors must aesthetically match the rest of the internal doors.

Joinery

All internal joinery to be prepared, knotted, stopped, primed and painted with a minimum of two low VOC undercoat and one white gloss low VOC paint finish to achieve an even high gloss finish.

Woodwork White Satin Wood low VOC or similar approved, to be used.

Window Boards - 50 x 25mm softwood battens to be fitted over windows and external door openings except in bathrooms. Battens to extend 150mm beyond opening on either side.

For all Affordable units:

- Hat and coat hooks at 2Nr per bedspace to a maximum of 6. Hooks to be chrome to match ironmongery finish and screwed to softwood rail, the location of which is to be agreed with The Council, and its representatives.
- Curtain battens - All windows to be fitted with curtain battens extending minimum 150mm past window openings. Painted.
- Lockable cabinet required as part of kitchen fit out.

- 1Nr shelf and cloths rail is required to every built in cupboard/ wardrobe



Design Intent for internal doors

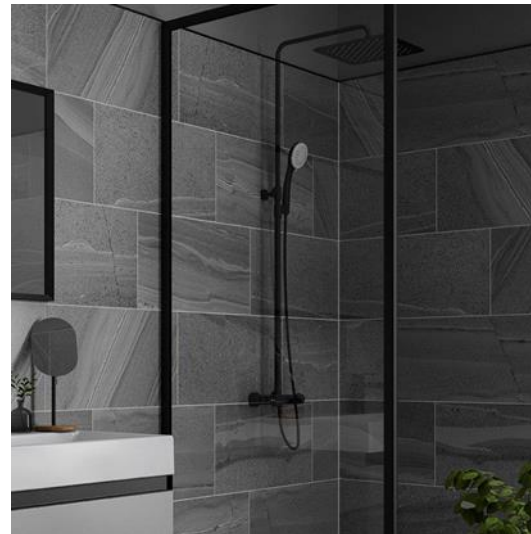


Design Intent for internal ironmongery

Building Fabric and Materials cont. (page 12 of 12)

Design Intent for Bathroom and cloak room tiling. Note appearance, not necessarily quality.

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Services

(heating, lighting, ventilation, power)

The council require well designed, high quality, energy efficient homes that are affordable to run, and provide a healthy living environment for residents which are easy to operate and maintain.

We have a number of important mandatory and aspirational Design Goals which relate to the building services systems. Contractor/ consultant teams are required to comply with all of the mandatory Design Goals, and as many aspiration Design Goals as suitable, viable and beneficial for the project.

All works to be carried-out are expected to be in accordance with the most current regulations, British standards and all other relevant legislation, recommendations, standards and working practices. Manufacturer's instructions and recommendations are to be followed in full for all components, materials and appliances.

Page 178 Utilities Infrastructure

New utility services infrastructure shall be installed to site and the supply capacities / routes shall be verified with the relevant utility companies. All necessary works shall be included for, including applications required in providing the infrastructure on site, making the utility connections to each plot—including all required wayleaves and easements.

Service penetrations shall be made using Pro Clima pipe and cable flanges or equivalent to maintain the air tightness standard required for Building Regulation certification. All service penetrations are to be approved by the design team and signed off by the air tightness coordinator on site. Leakage at any non-approved penetrations will need to be rectified and the contractor shall pay for any retesting.

Fire hydrant coverage shall be checked and

confirmed if the existing as being adequate or if new fire hydrants are required to be installed on the proposed site.

Mains Water

External mains water supplies shall be carried out in MDPE pipework to suit the Water Authority requirements.

Water meters for houses:

A smart-type domestic water meter shall be installed within a proprietary chamber in an appropriate location at the boundary to each property complete with remote display located internally to the property to enable easy meter readings by the occupants.

Water meters for flats:

Smart-type domestic water meters shall be installed within a proprietary chamber in an



Services

(heating, lighting, ventilation, power)

appropriate location at the boundary to the block of flats. The meters shall be complete with remote displays located internally to each flat to enable easy meter readings by the occupants.

A mains water connection shall be provided to serve the landlord areas.

Mains Gas

The use of gas fired systems may only be considered in exceptional circumstances, were other alternative forms of low / zero carbon technologies have been evaluated and deemed not viable.

Whilst it is acknowledged that conventional gas boilers may be banned from new buildings in the near future, it is recommended that gas remains an option until new technologies have been suitably developed, or existing alternative LZC heating systems are financially viable and do not result in fuel poverty.

Where natural gas is required for new buildings, the following shall apply:

External mains gas supplies shall be carried out in MDPE pipework to suit the Gas Authority requirements.

Gas meters for houses:

A smart-type domestic gas meter shall be installed

within a proprietary surface mounted housing to the external wall of each property complete with remote display located internally to the property to enable easy meter readings by the occupants. The meter housing specification and location shall be approved by the client team prior to installation.

Gas meters for flats:

Smart-type domestic gas meters shall be installed within an accessible cupboard in an appropriate location within the ground floors of the block. The location of the metering cupboard shall be as near as possible to the point of mains service entry (max. 2 meters) and must be agreed with the Gas Authority prior to installation. The gas meter cupboard shall be ventilated according to the Gas Safety Regulations. The gas meters shall be complete with remote displays located internally to each flat to enable easy meter readings by the occupants.

Soil & Waste Disposal Systems

The soil & waste drainage systems shall be in UPVC pipe with solvent welded connectors, and fittings and shall comply with the Local Authority's requirements. No "brown" pipework shall be left exposed above ground level.

The waste drainage systems shall be connected to a suitable size soil and vent system.

All internal visible soil, waste and overflow pipes shall be white.

All external visible soil, waste and overflow pipes shall be black.

The use of tundishes shall not be permitted.

Internal soil stacks shall not pass through living accommodation. Where this is unavoidable, pipework shall be adequately insulated within a decorated duct.

All overflow pipes shall discharge to outside the building.

Soil and waste pipes shall be properly supported and include cleaning access points.

Stub stacks must be ventilated with an air admittance valve and easily accessible for cleaning purposes. All surrounding ductwork shall be provided with suitable ventilation and access.

Suitable bottle or anti-syphon traps are to be provided as necessary.

Suitably trapped Waste pipes shall be provided adjacent to washing machine space.

Proprietary flashings are to be fitted to all pipes passing through roofs and a ventilating cowl shall be fixed to the head of each pipe.

Services

(heating, lighting, ventilation, power)

The systems shall be fully designed, supplied, tested and commissioned, including condensate waste drainage and the relief valve discharge pipework from the boilers and hot water cylinders.

Domestic Cold Water

General Water Services must conform to the requirements and recommendations of all the appropriate authorities including:

Page 180

- Building Regulations
- Equipment Manufacturers
- British Standards
- Water Board ~ Model Water by-laws – Environment Agency.

A check must be made with the Water Authority regarding local water composition which may give rise to lime scale or similar problems. Advice should be sought from the Board or other testing Authority if there are problems present and a suitable treatment implemented.

Mains pressure hot and cold water systems will be considered by the Council.

Each unit shall have a separate mains water supply of adequate size and flow to meet demands, with a stop valve where the mains enters the dwelling and a lime-scale inhibitor installed within 2m of the incoming water main. The scale inhibitor shall be

as Scalemaster manufactured by Salamander, which meets the Council's long-term maintenance requirements.

The incoming main must be positioned so as not to restrict the use of the cupboard space. Where boxing-in is provided, suitable identification of the hidden services shall be provided.

Kitchen sinks must always be served directly off the rising main.

A brass bodied external bib tap should be provided in all units with private gardens, fixed to the external wall to the garden. The tap's water supply must be isolated internally with a stopcock, fully insulated, fully drainable and with a non-return valve, hose union and drain cock. The tap should be positioned over a gully/drain where possible.

Pipework should be concealed wherever possible, but should also be reasonably accessible. If pipes are run in floors they should be in ducts, in boxed out skirting or in proprietary trunking. Pipes should not be chased into walls. No micro-bore pipework will be permitted.

All pipework is to be either copper or plastic, with either Conex, Yorkshire capillary or Wavin Push-fit Hep20 fittings.

All exposed pipework is to be in copper.

Pipework must be adequately fixed particularly in

hidden areas.

All pipework along external walls, in roof spaces or floor slabs and below timber ground floors must be insulated with Armaflex or foil faced mineral wool. Phenolic foam insulation shall not be used for the cold water pipework installations. This also applies to overflows and vent pipes. The Contractor shall utilise foil faced mineral wool insulation – as Rockwall or equal and approved.

EPDM flexible hoses shall not be used. Where other flexible hoses are used (e.g. PE, PEX LLDPE or PVC C), they shall be WRAS approved with evidence to have passed BS 6920 test of microbial growth.

Where new or re-located pipework passes through walls, floors or ceilings, tubular pipe sleeves of a non-combustible material compatible with the pipework shall be fitted. The internal diameter of the sleeve shall, except where necessary to allow for expansion and contraction or where otherwise specified, not exceed the outside diameter of the pipework by more than one pipe size and shall project 3mm beyond the finished surfaces.

Stop valves must be clearly labelled with metal or plastic tags, must be easily accessible and should not involve the use of a screwdriver. If placed in an access duct, etc. a hinged cover should be provided. Stop valves and drain taps must be

Services

(heating, lighting, ventilation, power)

Conex brass or gunmetal compression fitting.

In addition to stop valves on each main in each dwelling, a further stop valve should be provided in all flatted schemes located in the common area in a concealed but accessible position. All stop valves must identify the number of the dwelling it serves.

Sure-stop switches should be provided to all accommodation for older people or people with a disability in addition to the main stop valve. Stop valves must be provided at the following points:

- Rising main - on entry to dwelling and shall include a drain tap.
- Rising main - on entry to cold water storage tank.
- On each down service from cold water storage tank.
- To each service connection to all fittings.

All maintenance valves are to be labelled indicating the service affected, with details also being provided in the Health and Safety File. Service valves are to be provided in appropriate locations to allow for isolation of all elements during maintenance and renewal. In line service valves should be provided adjacent to all taps or ball valves and be accessible.

In properties designed for the elderly, quarter turn

stopcocks should be provided.

Each dwelling must contain a drain tap at the lowest point in order that the system can be drained and at sufficient height to allow easy access.

Cold water storage tanks should be located in roof spaces wherever possible. Access to roof spaces must be from communal areas where more than one tank is located within it.

Tanks should be avoided where possible, but if they are used these should be Key Terrain G.R.P. or P.V.C. complete with lid. The Council will not permit the use of Harcopacks or Elson tanks.

All installed cold water storage tanks shall be 'WRAS approved' and to CIBSE guidelines in terms of minimum capacity. Tanks must be accessible and capable of being removed through the roof hatch. Tanks shall be insulated apart from the bottom surface (loft insulation shall be adjusted accordingly) and be provided with a suitable lid. All tanks shall be supported by minimum 18mm plywood and appropriately spaced 75mm x 50mm timber bearers.

Domestic Hot Water

Where conventional hot water storage is provided, it shall be from a fully indirect pre-insulated (minimum 50 mm thick) open vented torpedo cylinder connected to the heat generating plant, all

to current applicable standards, Part L compliant, Grade 3 and to comply with BS 1566. The cylinder shall be high efficiency, of an adequate capacity and fitted with an immersion heater. A suitable and approved thermostat is to be located on the hot water cylinder. The system shall be fully balanced, flushed and commissioned, including earth bonding connections.

Hot water storage cylinders should be installed on a 150mm plinth and be provided with an adjacent, accessible, drain valve stop valve to enable the cylinder to be accessed for maintenance.

Sufficient hot water should be available, as follows:

- Hot water storage should not be less than 115L, except in the case of systems using off-peak electricity, which should generally have at least 200L capacity.
- They must be fully self-lagged or covered with a suitable lagging jacket of minimum size.
- Where conventional central heating is being installed, the cylinder should be fitted with a primary heating coil, a cylinder thermostat and a 3KW thermostatically controlled immersion heater.

Combination cylinders will only be considered where a 'traditional' system would be inappropriate, for example, in flats.

Services

(heating, lighting, ventilation, power)

Where electric immersions are provided they are to be titanium sheathed type suitable for use in hard water areas.

Where gas combination boilers are used to provide domestic hot water, the boiler type and size selected shall be appropriate for the size of property, according to the occupancy, number of bedrooms and bathrooms or shower rooms and the likely demand for hot water. For larger properties, combination boilers with integral hot water storage may be selected to maximise hot water production.

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Where heat pumps are used primarily for domestic hot water generation, they shall be of the high temperature model types, and shall achieve the minimum efficiencies as set out by Building Regulations.

The hot water cylinder shall be sized with an appropriate heat exchanger to ensure maximum heat transfer with the heat pump.

Gas Pipework

Where gas is supplied to a dwelling, a separate brass gas control valve shall be provided to each unit, of back-plate elbow plugged type, as near to the point of entry as possible.

Gas supplies shall be required to the kitchen for the hob, with a purpose made gas connector unit to the

side of the cooker space, and to the boiler position. The cooker gas termination/outlet point shall be provided with a suitable mechanical fitting to allow for both purging and for the future connection of the cooker by a gas safe engineer.

Heating

Whole house heating or equivalent low energy super insulated building solution is required.

Design Criteria:

Design should assume that there is an external ambient temperature of -4°C , saturated.

Standards to be achieved are an even 20°C across the entire dwelling where Passivhaus or equivalent is targeted.

For all other fabric performances, the following temperatures should be achieved:

Living rooms	21°C
Dining/Kitchens	18°C
Bedrooms	18°C
Bathrooms	21°C
Hall Landing	18°C

In old persons' dwellings and wheelchair dwellings, all areas should be 21°C with an external temperature assumption of -4°C .

Design of systems should be included in the consultant's fees and The Council will not pay fees for an additional M&E Engineer unless agreed at the beginning of the works.

Gas Fired Boilers:

Where gas boilers are the agreed primary heating solution, they shall be of the wall hung type—positioned on an external wall.

The boiler shall be manufactured by Worcester Bosch or equal and approved manufacturer. All boilers shall be accurately sized as required for the applicable property. All boilers shall be specifically registered with the manufacturer, to allow for the full available warranty to be activated. Labelling shall be provided at the boiler position, giving the 24hour/7day emergency contact number.

Boilers shall have a minimum seasonal efficiency as set out in current Building Regulations.

Outside weather compensators must be fitted to all new properties. These must be approved & certified as suitable to use with the appliance installed by the appliance manufacturer.

Whole house thermostats are preferred, located where possible in the hall. Programmers should be located in kitchen.

Services

(heating, lighting, ventilation, power)

All boiler flue installations shall be provided within the length recommendations of the manufacturer and with adequate access provisions for maintenance, servicing and inspection. All boiler flue installations shall be core drilled and NOT chased-in.

Flue Gas Heat Recovery System devices shall be fitted to all new gas boilers.

An appointed Gas Safe member must install all gas-fired systems.

All boiler, radiator / heat emitter positions are to be agreed with The Council prior to fixing. The Council does not accept boilers positioned where vents are required to run through lining areas. Boilers should be located on an outside wall. A Spirotech Spirovent or Adey Magnaclean should be provided to all wet heating systems. In addition, a Combimate should be provided where Combi boilers used.

Furnox should be used in all wet systems.

A radiator should be provided to kitchens in preference to an electric plinth heater.

For centralised systems, the preference would be for a gas-fired, wet system. Consideration should be given to a multi-boiler system with thermal stores, external temperature monitors and, where there is a hard water supply, a built-in descaling unit.

Heat Pumps:

Air source and ground source heat pumps shall be considered as alternative heat sources to conventional gas fired boilers. The systems selected shall exceed the minimum efficiency standards set out in the current Building Regulations.

Air source heat pumps (ASHP) shall be accurately sized to match the heating demand—to maximise efficiencies. The outdoor unit(s) shall be situated in an easily accessible space for maintenance with plenty of free air flow, ideally sheltered by an eave, and have at least 5cm elevation to allow adequate drainage. A rigid concrete base shall be provided to avoid excess vibration.

Ground Source Heat Pumps (GSHP) indoor units shall generally be situated within airing cupboards / utility rooms—allowing adequate space for maintenance.

Steel Panel Radiators

Radiators shall be wall hung factory finished Kite marked pressed steel with roll top design, of Stelrad Compact type and installed so as not to impair movement and the placing of furniture and fittings. The preferred supplier shall be “Stelrad Elit”

to BS EN 442 or similar approved.

Radiators shall be of the four tapping type with bottom opposite end connections and a chrome plated air vent incorporated into the top tapping. They shall be complete with concealed mounting brackets, white powder coated paint finish and a minimum 5 year manufacturer’s warranty.

Attention is drawn to the requirement that in the case of radiator substitution, i.e. one manufacturer for another. Substitution shall be made on the basis of output not number of sections or type. Radiators for any one site shall be of the same manufacturer and type, a mixture will not be acceptable.

Generally radiators shall be installed beneath windows where applicable, or elsewhere where they are less likely to conflict with and be obscured by furniture.

Radiators shall be suitably selected to suit the design flow & temperatures of the heating system.

Radiator Valves

Thermostatic radiator valves shall be fitted to all radiators. Valves shall be to BS EN 215 with a chrome plated body and white head. Manual radiator valves shall be fitted to the return connections of all radiators. Valves shall be lockshield type to BS 2767, with integral drain off

Services

(heating, lighting, ventilation, power)

facility on return connection and have a chrome finish. Valves shall be pre-set and balanced during commissioning.

Heating Pipework

The heating pipework shall be concealed wherever possible. Branch risers to each radiator shall rise directly out of the floor into the radiator valve using proprietary radiator connector guides. Main pipe runs from the boiler shall be in copper tube with Geberit Mapress crimp fittings or an equivalent system.

Copper and copper alloy fittings shall be potable, lead free to BS EN 1254 Part 1:1998 and are to be resistant to dezincification.

Micro-bore pipework shall not be permitted. Distribution pipework to radiators may be run in Kuterlex Plus plastic coated copper tube run in continuous lengths with no joints and concealed from view. Alternatively Uponor Q&E PEX shrink-fit pipe system or Wavin Hep2O PB push-fit pipe system may be used and concealed from view using continuous lengths with no joints within the structure. Pipes shall exit the wall behind each radiator using a proprietary terminal box with a cover plate to provide a neat finish.

All pipework shall be supported as recommended by the manufacturer and at a minimum of

1.2m/15mm pipe and 18m/22mm pipe horizontally and 2.0m vertically.

Heating Controls:

Heating controls shall comply with the current Building Regulation standards with respect to:

- Heat source interlocks
- Quantity of separate space heating circuits, independent time controls, rooms thermostats and TRV's
- Independent hot water circuits, time controls and cylinder thermostats
- Flue gas heat recovery controls
- Weather compensation
- Load compensation
- Smart controls with automation and optimisation

Thermostats shall be positioned in buffer/circulation spaces that are not directly heated by radiators or the underfloor heating system, e.g. corridors, staircase etc.

Thermostat mounting height: 1500mm above floor level.

General:

Bathroom radiators should be installed on the heating circuit and not on the hot water primary circuit.

Provision must be made to drain down the system by a drain valve located at the lowest part of the system draining externally.

Pipework should be concealed wherever possible, whilst still being accessible; i.e. not chased into walls or in concrete screed.

An annual estimate of fuel consumption should also be given by the consultant from the appropriate supplier to allow The Council to ensure that economic systems are selected.

Wherever possible, hot water cylinders should be installed in a linen/airing cupboard. Where this is not possible, a small electric heater should be installed in the linen/airing cupboard via the installation of a convector heater, up to 300 watts in size and thermostatically controlled with a guard or heating pipe run through cupboards in gas systems.

Services

(heating, lighting, ventilation, power)

Ventilation

Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) systems are preferred. If this is not being provided the council require a report outlining how air quality will be maintained.

Where MVHR systems are not used, properties should be adequately ventilated using mechanised or passive systems.

Mechanical Extract:

Mechanical extract ventilators are to be provided to all bathrooms, kitchens (unless the hob ventilation is proved to be sufficient) and WC's and shall be overrun timer controlled with a manual override operated by the light switch.

Extract ventilators in bathrooms shall be of SELV type and fitted out of reach of the bath. A 3-pole switched fused spur to isolate the fan, plus transformer is to be located out of reach at high level outside of the bathroom door and bathroom, kitchen and WC lights are to remain operable when fans are isolated at the switched fused spur.

Extract ventilators shall not be the window mounted type and shall be positioned to avoid draughts. Where vertical ducts are used they must be

insulated, fitted with a condensation trap and terminated at roof level with a proprietary ridge vent.

Extract fans are to be fitted in a manner that eliminates vibration.

Electrical Services

The system should be designed to comply with the latest edition of the IET wiring regulations, Statutory and building regulations. Full electrical drawings to be provided to The Council for their approval.

The works shall be carried out by an NICEIC or ECA certified and experienced Contractor. Part P test certificates shall be provided for the complete installation. All equipment and cables used should comply with the relevant British Standards specification and be installed with the British Standards codes of practice where applicable.

Incoming supplies to individual dwellings shall terminate into recessed meter boxes. Meter boxes shall be mounted on side walls wherever possible, or within front door canopy returns if available, lastly to the front elevation if necessary.

All dwellings shall be provided with dual RCD protected 4+4 way consumer units minimum.

External Lighting

External lighting should be provided to sufficiently

illuminate perimeter areas and exits and shall be of a low glare design without light spill beyond the site boundary or onto dwelling windows. Where it is not adoptable it should be controlled using a solar time switch but have an over-ride and be connected to a landlord's supply. All external lighting should be designed and specified at the design stage and be approved by the client.

In flat schemes with communal stairs, permanent lighting should be provided to each stairway and corridor. Two circuits shall be used to allow a 50% lighting provision at selected times and for resilience. Timeclocks and photocells shall be employed (but not presence detection) to ensure lighting during all low light hours or at all times where sufficient natural lighting is not available.

Warm colour LED light sources shall be provided of the same colour temperature and mounted in accessible locations. Luminaire samples shall be approved by the client.

Lighting in dwelling entrance hallways and rooms with more than one entrance to be operated by 2-way switches.

Two-way switching to be provided to all lighting to dwelling staircases.

Wiring

Trip proof mains wired smoke detectors and carbon

Services

(heating, lighting, ventilation, power)

monoxide detectors are to be provided to the hallways and near boilers as appropriate in each dwelling.

Consumer units should be situated in hallways or non-habitable areas.

A secure socket outlet to be provided on each floor of communal areas of flats connected to landlord's supply.

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One fuse spur to be provided at high level in the dwelling hall for future security alarm and one to be suitably positioned at low level in the hall for possible future stair lift.

All sockets below worktops for appliances should be controlled via switches above worktop labelled as to which appliance they serve. Labelling shall be permanently etched or factory applied.

The following tables set out The Council's minimum design requirements. All sockets should be positioned conveniently to suit proposed and probable furniture layouts and agreed with The Council. All sockets are to be RCD protected. All sockets should be double socket outlets where possible. Double outlets count as one socket in the table i.e. 3 sockets = 6 outlets.

Area	Double Sockets
Kitchen	4
Dining	2
Living	4 (one with USB charging)
Main Bedroom	3 (one with USB charging)
Double Bedroom	3 (one with USB charging)
Single Bedroom	3 (one with USB charging)
Upper Landing	1
Hall	1
Bathroom	1 x shaver socket and light fitting
Communal corridors in flats	1 x secure socket in every corridor

In each lounge and bedroom at least 1Nr socket shall be equipped with USB integral charging socket.

In addition to the above, provision should be made for a home office space, with 2Nr additional double sockets and a dual telephone and data socket all at 1200mm. Office data sockets should link to a matching data socket at the probable location of the occupier's broadband router, probably the lounge room. This enables a wired data port to be patched to the office location or vice versa.

All general socket outlets should be switched and mounted into securely fastened metal recessed back boxes

Socket outlets to general-purpose dwellings will be located at least 450mm above finished floor level and always a minimum of 150 above surfaces.

Lighting requirements:

Area	Code Service Illuminance (Lux)
General lighting for rooms and areas used either infrequently and/or casual or simple visual tasks	+100
General lighting for working interiors	+750
Lighting to both entrance doors of the property to be provided and controlled by a photoelectric cell with internal switch	
Switched lighting shall be provided in stores over 1.2m ²	

Media Services

Houses and bungalows – dual satellite and TV/FM (quadplex) outlet to be provided in the lounge and TV/FM (duplex) outlet to each bedroom. Each outlet individually co-axial cabled to the roof space and connected to a digital capable aerial via amplifier with inputs for satellite TV.

Flatted schemes – an IRS satellite dish sharing system, including the aerial, should be included on all schemes, with outlet in the lounge and each bedroom as for houses. This should be able to facilitate 4K Ultra HD TV and Sky Q.

Services

(heating, lighting, ventilation, power)

All installations should include digital amplifiers and wide band television aerials as appropriate for digital television. Where necessary boosters must be provided in order to ensure a clear picture is received for all Freeview channels.

In shared accommodation or supported housing schemes, TV and satellite points are to be installed in all bedrooms.

Where a communal system is used each outlet shall be served by a dedicated cable. Shared systems shall be fed via a dedicated accessible landlords power supply.

The system shall be tested and commissioned prior to handover to the CAI (Confederation of Aerial Industries Limited) standards and the certificate given to The Council confirming that this has been carried out and all is satisfactory.

Telephone Points

Provision of telephone services should be made in all schemes and dwellings as follows:

- Outlet in entrance hall and living room plus main bedroom.
- Data port provided adjacent living room telephone point linked to data port in home office locations for distribution of wired data

Lifts

Shafts and motor rooms should be sited away from dwellings to limit noise transmission and nuisance. The lift motor should be suppressed to avoid radio and TV interference.

Lifts should be not less than eight persons and manufactured in accordance with the appropriate British Standard.

Lifts should be capable of accommodating a wheelchair and all lift buttons should be operable from a wheelchair. A mirror should be provided on the wall opposite to the entrance.

The lift should be internally faced with laminate or stove enamel, with washable floor finish. Entrance columns should be in stainless steel. All finishes to be agreed with The Council prior to manufacture.

Provision should be made for the Warden Call System or a BT connection to an off-site call centre to be linked into the lift.

Handrails should be provided to the rear of the car and a car seat situated to the side or rear. The door should give a clear opening width of 800 mm.

Each landing entrance should be protected by sliding doors of stainless steel construction with a full height safety sensor.

Should the lift sump be below drain level then it must be pumped to avoid flooding.

Fire Alarms

Full consultation should take place with the Chief Building Control Officer and Fire Officer as appropriate. The position and specification of all fire alarms should be approved by The Council. All dwellings shall be provided with mains powered, battery backed, linked smoke detector to each level, with additional carbon monoxide detection within kitchens. Common areas shall be protected by a landlords system of linked smoke detectors. Automatic opening vents where specified shall be operated automatically by smoke detectors.

On sheltered schemes Redcare links will be required. Their requirements should be established in writing and accompany any negotiation or tender documents for the scheme against which costings have been made. All systems should be of an open protocol and/or be able to be maintained by any competent engineer.

Door Entry Systems

In flats with communal access and common entrance, a two way audio and colour video door entry system must be provided. If flats have individual letterboxes in the flat doors the system should incorporate a time lock for deliveries. Publicly accessible part shall be vandal resistant

Services

(heating, lighting, ventilation, power)

Warden Call Systems

For any older persons' scheme a request should be made to The Council for a separate brief that will be provided to take into account the particular circumstances of the scheme and the local authority in which it is situated. A warden call system will normally be required. All systems should be of an open protocol and/or be able to be maintained by any competent engineer.

Electric Vehicle Charging points

Provide an electrical car charging point to all new in-curtilage car parking areas and install the infrastructure to support the future installation of electrical car charging areas were out of curtilage parking is provided. The infrastructure shall be planned and installed to avoid subsequent new penetrations to the building envelope.

For flatted schemes with shared parking, infrastructure shall be installed to allow for at least 1Nr public electric vehicle charging point per 10Nr dwellings, with the infrastructure designed to accommodate further expansion to serve additional vehicles as the demand increases.

Developers shall make allowance for determining the projected demand for vehicle charging at planning stages and setting provision appropriately to meet projected demand.



Visual Intent for video entry systems



Visual Intent for external lighting

Efficiency, Resilience and Durability

We have a number of important mandatory and aspirational [Design Goals](#) which relate to Efficiency, Resilience and Durability. Contractor/ consultant teams are required to comply with all of the mandatory Design Goals and as many aspiration Design Goals as suitable, viable and beneficial for the project.

A key requirement for all projects is for the design proposals to be durable and create long-term affordability for residents. The following mandatory Design Goals must be met in this regard:

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- Adopt a fabric first approach for all new buildings to reduce the need for energy consumption reducing fuel poverty and make best use of the efficient renewable energy
- Select building materials considering their carbon footprint whole life cost and ease of repair and maintenance.
- Provide sustainable features that are utilised and can be operated with ease by the occupants.

- Create a legacy of buildings where communities establish a sense of ownership and belonging
- Plan for long term stewardship by all stakeholders for buildings that can adapt to the changing needs of the occupants and evolving technologies.

The operational efficiency will be monitored as required in the mandatory design goals to ensure the specific designed performance targets are being achieved, monitoring must follow the methodology set out in [section 6.0](#).

Design proposals should consider that a building will be de-constructed at some point. Facilitating the deconstruction process will bring financial and environmental savings as recovery and reuse potential for materials increases.



Specification of Fittings (page 1 of 5)

The Contractor/ consultant team will be expected to provide The Council, and its representatives with a full specification list of their proposals within the formal Contractor Proposals submission for approval.

Design life = 15 years minimum – appropriate for use, capable of withstanding normal wear and tear and fixed in a manner so as to remain serviceable

Note any appliances provided must have a minimum A rating. Kitchen layouts and cupboard space to comply with standards set out in the Housing Standards Review. All designs must comply with the Technical Design Principles set out in [Section 3.0](#).

Fixtures and fittings with respect to water consumption must comply with the guidance in Table 2.2 of Approved Document G, achieving the 110 litre person per day target for efficiency.

Kitchens

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A choice of colours within the range specified will be required and four weeks is to be allowed within the construction programme to enable The Council to select colour schemes for each dwelling.

All appropriate water connections for washing machines in the kitchen as required should be easily accessible and enable the incoming resident to connect their appliance without any additional work. The following is required:

- 3x50mm pre drilled holes are required inside base units, close to the wall, 100mm below the worktop for services where adjacent to washing machine or dishwasher spaces.
- Removable base units for future installation of washing machines to be fitted with additional end panels either side to create required 630mm wide space when removed.

Kitchen sink to be formed in minimum of 0.83 gauge stainless steel and braced underneath for additional support.

Draining boards to be supported on reinforcing.

To minimise water consumption where dishwashers and washing machines are provided they should comply with the following:

- 18ltr maximum volume dishwasher
- 60ltr maximum volume washing machine

Any worktops that cover designated areas for appliances (e.g. washing machine and dishwashers) need to be 650mm minimum depth.

Base units to be 900mm high x 600mm deep and include drawers of varying depths.

Wall units to be 600mm high and 300mm deep. All doors shall have 180 degree hinges. End units to have suitable end panels where required.



Specification of Fittings (page 2 of 5)

All doors to be provided with a soft close system and suitable hinges.

Under cupboard LED lighting required.

Cornice and pelmets required.

Carcass end panels are to match facing door finish.

Where no MVHR system is installed a direct cooker extract is required above the hob.

Where MVHR is provided a recirculating cooker hood is required above the hob. An extract point for the MVHR system should be located in the kitchen. This should not be placed too close to the hob to prevent it becoming clogged with cooking grease.

Additional Requirements:

Cookers, microwaves and refrigerators will be provided in elderly persons' dwellings and the contractor should provide a specification for approval. All appliances should have an A rating

under the EU Energy Efficiency Labelling Scheme.

For rented housing the Council will choose the worktops, cupboard doors and colour of tiling from a range. For shared ownership and market sale units buyer options may be required for:

- worktops
- cupboard doors
- Handles
- choice of tiles



Specification of Fittings (page 3 of 5)

Bathroom and WC layouts to comply with standards set out in the Housing Standards. Water saving sanitary fittings are welcomed throughout.

Bathrooms

Sanitary fittings are to be provided with provision of the following to be included as a minimum:

Accessories for all homes:-

All fittings to be white vitreous china with chromium plated furniture.

55-60cm pedestal basin to Bathrooms

45cm basin to ensembles and ground floor WCs.

Smooth close coupled WC suite with 6/4 Dual Flush (push button) with slow close seat and cover

Chromium plated steel heated towel rail required to all bathrooms and ensembles.

Bath – to be 130litre, water saving, 1700 x 700mm heavy duty enamelled pressed steel with thermostatically controlled shower attachments and shall be slip resistant.

A separate shower mixer and bath tap are required to family bathrooms.

Shower head to have removable 8 litres per minute eco flow regulator. To be supplied as a kit

to include as a minimum single function 100mm. handspray, 600mm rail & 1.35m hose. Plus hose retainer and chrome soap dish.

Bath shower screens to be supplied as part of bath set to ensure a good watertight fit

All duct casings to have removable access panels where appropriate. Framed plastic finish will be acceptable in cupboards but any visible covers / panels in habitable rooms and bathrooms generally are to be frameless plaster or tiled finish. Samples to be provided for client agent approval.

Tiling to be agreed between Contractor and Employer. Shared ownership and market housing should be able to select from a range.

When showers are to be provided they should be approved by The Council. As a minimum shower tray 1200x800mm or 900 x 900mm quadrant is required. Design strategy is set the trays low, riser kits should be avoided.

A separate, additional WC is required for all dwellings of two storeys and above.



Specification of Fittings (page 4 of 5)

If over bath showers are provided, a shower rail and curtain or glass screen must also be supplied.

Toilet roll holders, towel rail and mirror 450x450mm over basin with shaver socket and light.

The Council does not accept black toilet seats.

All bathroom and WC doors to be fitted with a privacy bathroom lock set.

To minimise water consumption the following should be specified:

- Flow Reducing/Aerating taps throughout;
- 6-9 litres per minute shower (note that an average electric shower is about 6/7 litres per minute)

Additional Accessories to social rent properties only:

- Toilet roll holders
- A towel holder next to each wash hand basin if heated towel rails are not provided.

- Bathrooms and cloakrooms to be provided with 450 x 600mm safety glass mirror.
- Lockable cabinet

For all tenures pipework boxing should be avoided. For upper floor bathrooms all pipes should run in the floor. In ground floor WC's for basins, pipes should run in walls or service voids.



Specification of Fittings (page 5 of 5)

Visual Guide to fittings



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Pedestal basin



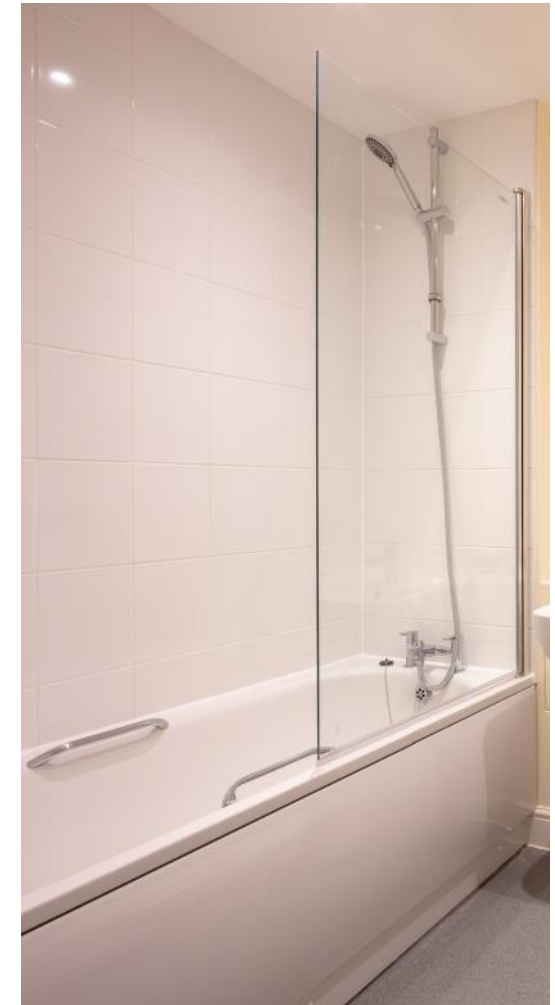
Accessories



Towel rails



Shower enclosures



Bath with glass screen



Close coupled WC



Basin Tap



Bath Tap Mixer

Projects with Additional Requirements

Additional Design Requirements for Housing for Older People

For very sheltered and sheltered housing the 'SUFFOLK VERY SHELTERED DESIGN BRIEF' should be used. Contact The Council for a copy.

Reference should also be made to the 10 HAPPI design recommendations:

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1. Generous/ and flexible internal space standards
2. Plenty of natural light in the home and in circulation spaces
3. Avoidance of internal corridors and single aspect dwellings for light and ventilation
4. Adaptability with Care Ready homes to accommodate emerging healthcare technologies
5. Circulation that encourages interaction, avoiding an institutional feel
6. Shared community hubs providing multi-purpose social spaces that link with the community
7. Engagement with the street through planting, trees and the design of the natural environment
8. High levels of energy efficiency

9. Adequate storage inside and outside home
10. Homezone design of outside spaces that give priority to pedestrians

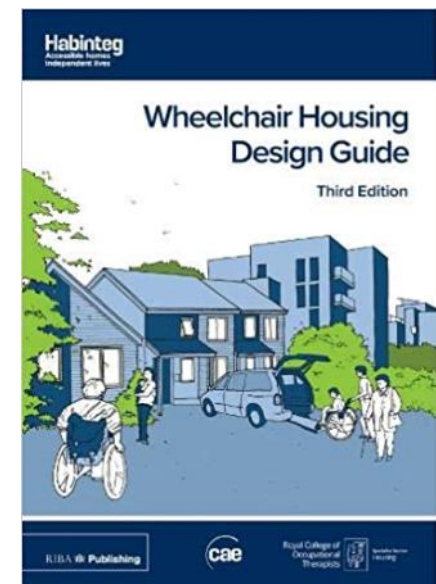
An audit of how a scheme considers each of the HAPPI 'ten components for the design of housing for older people' should be prepared during the design stage.

Additional Design Requirements for Wheelchair Housing

When designing soft landscaping, consideration should be given to ensuring that a wheelchair user can access all of the private garden including the shed. The provision of raised beds accessed off an area of hardstanding is preferred. The Suffolk Wheelchair Design Brief and Habinteg Wheelchair Housing Design Brief should be used.

Additional Design Requirement for Shared Equity Housing

Individual car parking spaces are to be provided to each property. No communal/open space should be proposed unless it is to be adopted by the local authority.



5.0

Construction

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Modern Methods of Construction (MMC)

The council is not prescriptive in the method of construction used. This section is included to highlight MMC as an option to be considered.

Off-Site Construction

This sector of the construction industry is growing in confidence with a number of companies having now been established for many years.

In 2019 the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, categorised off site construction (referred to as 'Modern Methods of Construction or MMC) into 7 sections to standardised the terminology;

- 1: Pre manufacturing – 3D primary structure systemised approach (volumetric)
- 2: Pre manufacturing – 2D primary structure systemised approach (panelised)
- 3: Pre manufacturing – non-systemised primary structure (individual components)
- 4: Additive manufacturing – advanced digital design site based manufacturing
- 5: Pre manufacturing – non-structural assemblies

and sub-assemblies (pods)

6: Traditional building products – site labour reduction /productivity improvements

7: Site process led labour reduction/productivity / assurance improvements

Pre manufacturing - 3D (volumetric) and 2D (panelised) primary structure

The volumetric and panelised approaches (MMC categories 1 and 2) should be explored for appropriate developments. These two approaches provide varying levels of flexibility in terms of design opportunity, timescales and availability.

Housing developments lend themselves to utilising a standard systemised approach which brings recognised economies.

Where MMC approaches are being considered, early consultation with MMC suppliers is crucial to maximise potential and ensure successful

procurement.

Off-site construction is an assembly process rather than the 'piece on piece' method of traditional construction. Where MMC it being considered designs should be devised to support the efficiencies of the assembly 'flow' thereby achieving cost effective and sustainable homes.

Pre manufacturing – non-structural assemblies and sub-assemblies (pods)

Where developments are of a suitable scale, MMC category 5 can be considered for delivery of a standardised range bathroom, WC and kitchens, as pre manufactured pods.

If these layouts were utilised for future projects, this could become a viable cost effective option.

MMC manufacturers / developers should be BOPAS registered.

Construction Safety (CDM2015)

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In all aspects of design and specification, architects and designers should always comply with the obligations under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 and seek to eliminate hazards.

All elements of these delivery requirements are to be met and included in any contractor's tender submission.

The Architect will produce a detailed specification which is appropriate to the form of contract to be used. This specification will cover materials and workmanship and will be approved by The Council prior to any tender process.



Building Regulation Compliance

Early engagement with building control is encouraged and is key to avoiding any potential issues with regulatory compliance and to provide a degree of independent oversight of the work. Pre-construction plan checking and a comprehensive site inspection regime to be confirmed and included in the contractors tender submission.

Pre-construction plan checking

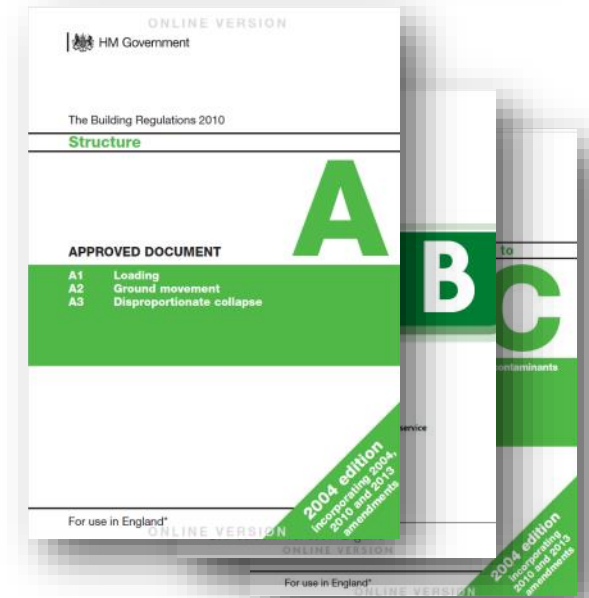
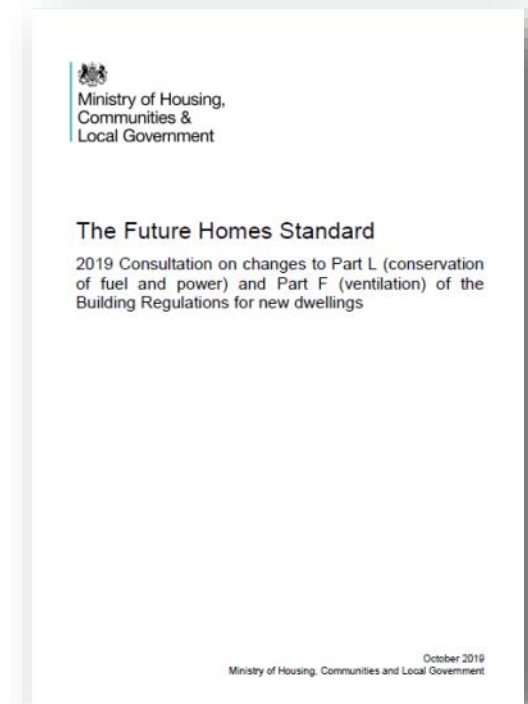
Prior to work commencing on site a full plans approval notice / plans certificate should be obtained.

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Minimum Provision for Inspection Regime

For an effective inspection regime to provide independent oversight it will need to consist of physical inspections on all foundations, external drains, structural carcass and completions as a minimum.

An on-site inspection record to be maintained and provided at handover to the owner / occupier.



Site Requirements

All site inspection records should be made available to The Council, and its representatives at the monthly site meeting and a copy of the site records should be sent to the council on Practical Completion.

Training of site operatives, undertaking detailed site inspections, provision of robust feedback and the inclusion of a dedicated, on site quality assurance champion are all constituent parts of a successful delivery process for all low energy homes.

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These processes are set out in the '**How to build a Passivhaus: Rules of thumb**' guidance document and are summarised below.

Key Stage Design Reviews

- Examine buildability
- Identify risks
- Provide an opportunity to formulate strategies and resolve risks

Training of site operatives

- Tool box talks specific to low energy and Passivhaus construction requirements
- Create an atmosphere of collaboration

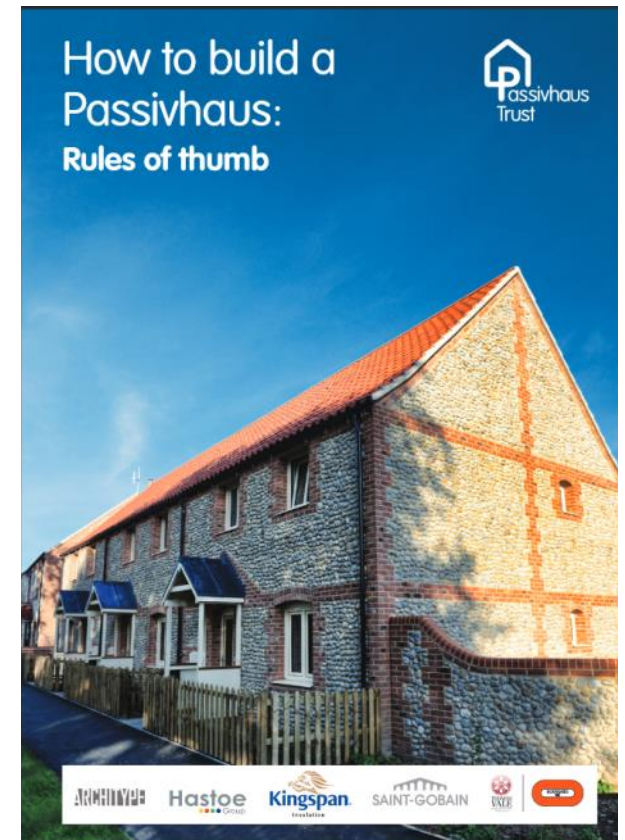
A dedicated, on-site Quality Assurance Champion

Key role to ensure the home will meet the **airtightness target**, by ensuring:

- Continuity of insulation
- Wind barrier installed correctly
- Airtightness products installed correctly

In addition they:

- Arrange pressure tests
- Arrange tool box talks
- Review buildability/ sequencing
- Carry out daily site inspections
- Responsible for material specifications being adhered to



Site Requirements

For our zero carbon aspirations to be met an enhanced site inspection process is required to ensure our new homes perform to their design targets.

Enhanced site inspections for Zero Carbon Homes

Buildings that are designed, constructed and certified to the Passivhaus Standard have repeatedly been shown to perform “as-predicted” because they have rigorously adhered to stringent **quality assurance standards**.

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Enhanced site inspection requirements should be applied to all developments and not be restricted to those aiming for Passivhaus Certification. In an attempt to eliminate the performance gap across the board.

“Detailed site reports that support a useful, practical and fully functional feedback loop are invaluable. Discussing the contents of the reports with site managers, rather than simply handing over the document, is critical to establishing this feedback loop. The key thing here is the fact that, compared to standard practice, a closer working relationship is required for Passivhaus projects.”¹

A typical Project Checklist is shown, right. This highlights the key elements to be covered in detail in the site inspection reports. It is important that a photographic record is held of all materials on site with their labels visible. A strict **change control procedure** is required to prevent substitutions undermining the energy performance of the completed homes.

1 - How to Build a Passivhaus - Rules of Thumb

Core components of a Passivhaus Project Management checklist

By failing to recognise the boundary between a certification process and the design and construction process individual projects are at risk and may encounter difficulties. In part this may be because the industry has become used to certification systems that are less rigorous and have permitted this gap to go unobserved.

Listed below are the major components that are included on a Passivhaus Project Management checklist. Each component, and its constituent sub-components, should be coordinated with relevant BS EN standards. When a building is to be certified it is vital that this checklist is developed and agreed with an approved Passivhaus Certifier.

Photographic evidence of the construction should be gathered at key stages by appropriate members of the design and construction team. The Passivhaus consultant should assist with agreeing the regime for compiling evidence, on a project specific basis.

Training/toolbox talks (pre-start)

- Site storage
- Workmanship
- Activities to be undertaken
- Sequencing of activities

Ductwork protected from site debris during storage.



Insulation installation – materials and workmanship

- Walls, roof, floor, windows
- Junctions
- Services

Check construction tolerances. Insulation is encapsulated tightly between internal and external leaf to avoid thermal bypass.



Windtightness – materials and workmanship

- Primary wind barrier system
- Window installation
- Service penetrations

Wind barrier installed in a manner that allows easy inspection and remediation during construction.



Airtightness – materials and workmanship

- Primary air barrier system
- Window installation
- Service penetrations

Air barrier installed in a manner that allows easy inspection and remediation during construction.



Services – materials and workmanship

- MVHR unit installation
- MVHR ductwork & silencers
- DHW
- Pipes and plumbing
- Heat sources
- Controls

Ductwork protected from site debris during installation.



Builders' work

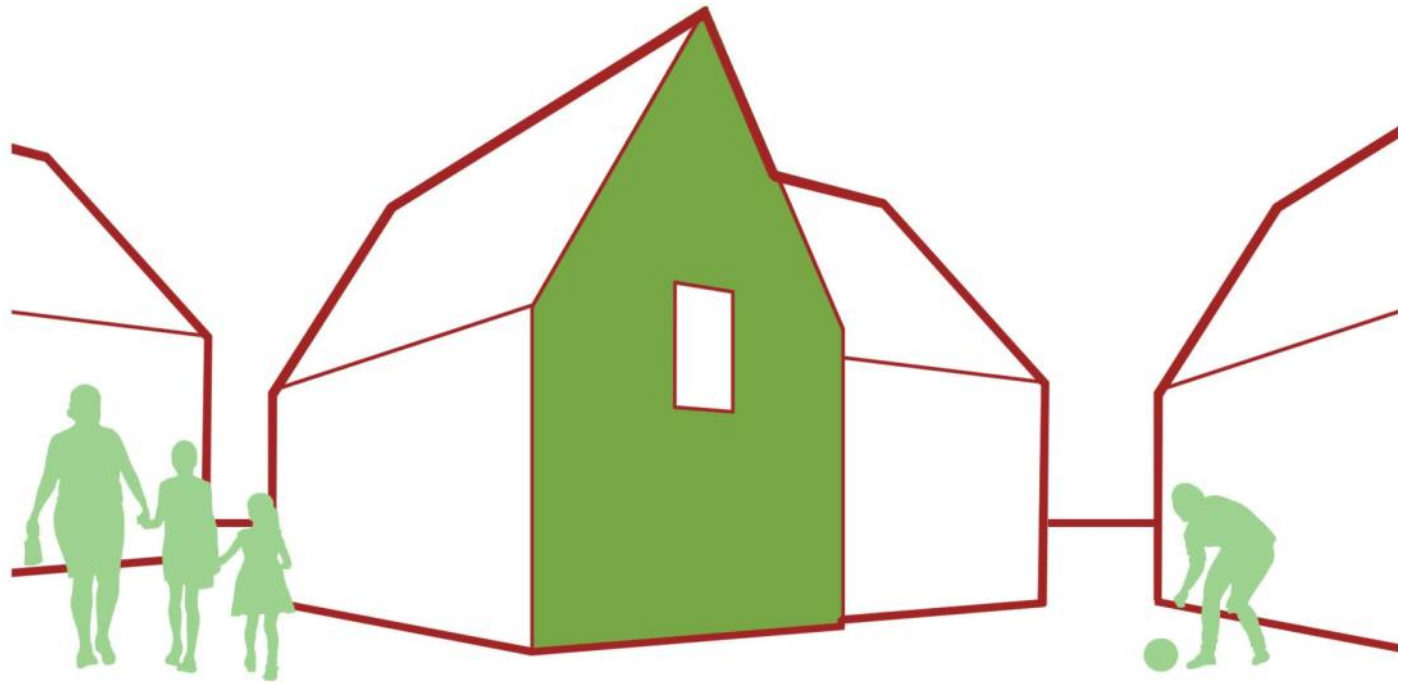
- Joinery (door over/undercuts etc)

Air transfer provision is checked against design drawings and specification.



6.0

Post Completion



Soft Landings and Post Occupancy Evaluation



This section outlines the minimum requirements to meet the Mandatory Design Goal to ‘continue to monitor a selection of completed houses to ensure the specific levels that they were designed to perform at are being achieved’. While this is a requirement for all projects, major developments are expected to utilise the full BSRIA Soft Landings Framework¹.

There is clear evidence that the actual energy performance of our new homes in the UK does not match with the design. A recent report by the Passivhaus Trust² sets out the evidence and demonstrates that the average home is likely to use around 40% more energy than predicted, with heating demand sometimes 2 to 3 times greater.

The council is committed to monitoring completed homes to better understand the performance being achieved. Findings from this important work will be used to inform future developments and future iterations of this Technical Specification.

Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE) Soft Landings (Stage 5)

POE is part of our continuous improvement process as a council and at its best can impact all the parties involved in the creation of our projects. It:

- Develops insights

- Sets and manages expectations
- Provides follow-through and feedback throughout the life cycle of a building
- Informs and learns from related projects

There is no universal approach, the POE must be tailored to suit the needs of each project.

The questions we are aiming to answer through our POE:

- How well is the building working?
- How well does it compare with its peers?
- Where can it be improved?
- What lessons can be learned?

For all projects

A post occupancy support statement will be required to demonstrate how residents and estates teams on a scheme will be supported post

construction. This will need to include detail relating to the green elements of buildings in particular and how people will be supported in using this technology, all technology requires education no matter how ‘simple’.

The following POE must be provided as a minimum:

1. **An occupant survey** (can be an online survey) – so one can tell what people think and feel about the buildings and the internal environment.
2. **An energy survey** (can be via bills)
3. **A walk-through survey** (site attendance required) – where the building is examined by experts in discussion with users.

These three techniques form the backbone of our POE.

1 - BSRIA Soft Landings Framework: <https://www.bsria.co.uk/services/design/soft-landings/>

2 - Passivhaus: the route to zero carbon, March 2019

Soft Landings and Post Occupancy Evaluation



1 - Occupant Surveys

The structured online survey will be sent out after 12 months of occupation so responses can cover occupant experiences across a full annual weather cycle. the following topics should be covered:

- Thermal comfort and ventilation (summer and winter)
- Lighting and noise
- Personal control
- Space, design and image
- Lifestyle
- Environmental issues

Note for major projects this should be a licenced BUS¹.

Following analysis of survey responses, a report will be presented to the council with a diagnosis of outcomes and recommendations for remedial action where appropriate.

2 - An Energy Survey (can be via bills)

This survey will throw light on much more than one might think: not just energy performance and greenhouse gas emissions, but specification, build quality, commissioning, control, management, maintenance, record-keeping and occupant satisfaction.

Ideally bills/ data will be collected at 6, 12, 18, 24, 30, 36 months after initial occupation, providing 3 years of data. This data should be presented back to the occupants and design team every 12 months. The occupant newsletter is a good forum to feedback this back to the occupiers.

If the evaluation highlights a significant discrepancy between design and operational performance, then recommendations should be made for further diagnosis and/or remedial work to resolve the issues and close the performance gap.

3 - A walk-through survey

An initial walk-through and semi-structured interview conducted with a selection of the new home owners shortly after occupation. During the walk-through the building is examined by experts in discussion with the occupants. Experts in this instance can be a number of professionals from the project team.

Topics from the walk-through and semi-structured interview are included here for reference:

1. House
 - ⇒ The handover process/ user manuals
 - ⇒ Flexibility and use of space
 - ⇒ Comfort and control
 - ⇒ Lighting and noise
2. Heating and Ventilation
 - ⇒ Understanding
 - ⇒ Use
 - ⇒ Maintenance
 - ⇒ Comfort and control

Soft Landings and Post Occupancy Evaluation



Additional Soft Landings (Stage 5) requirements for all major developments

Defined as ten or more dwellings or a site area of 0.5 hectares or more, the **BSRIA Soft Landings Framework** should be utilised to provide support from the design stage through to the post occupancy stage.

This will require the development and implementation of a Soft Landings Plan and subsequent reporting through the provision of Soft Landings Reports.

Feedback to residents must be incorporated into the Soft Landings Plan. As a minimum this should include a residents bi-annual newsletter. This must be provided to the council for us to distribute to residents. The newsletter can be used to:

- Request energy bills
- Include seasonal tips for getting the most out of the homes
- Include MVHR filter change reminders, where this is not carried out by the council
- Provide information on renewables or other technologies in the homes
- Provide performance updates

Enhanced Monitoring for Major Developments

In the buildings sector, data enables decision-making. Organisations that measure and manage their energy use are more likely to implement energy efficiency improvements. Good data on domestic building energy use enables owners to compare themselves to their neighbours and enables the delivery team and developers to learn about the energy efficiency of their buildings.

There are two key areas where major developments are required to incorporate monitoring, these are:

1. Energy in kWh/m².year broken down into space heating, hot water and total energy use (and by energy source if this varies)
2. Health through indoor air quality monitoring of: Temperature, Relative Humidity (RH), Carbon Dioxide levels (CO₂)

In addition, where possible water use should be monitored.

If renewable and/ or low carbon technologies are designed the performance of these must be monitored.

To demonstrate compliance implementation of a Post Construction Monitoring and Evaluation

Framework should be submitted to the council, setting out which key performance indicators will be monitored and the mechanics of how this monitoring will be undertaken.

Monitoring reports to be submitted for discussion and review following a year's post occupation monitoring. Monitoring may continue for up to 3 years Post Completion, to be agreed with the council pending the outcome of the first year of post occupation monitoring.

Handover Requirements



This section looks at the processes and protocols required to ensure a smooth handover of homes, setting them up to achieve their optimum performance

Pre-handover Stage (Soft Landings Stage 3)

The main purpose of the pre-handover stage is to help to ensure that by the time the homes are handed over they are not just physically complete, but ready for operation.

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A building readiness sub-programme therefore needs to be developed in good time, and well ahead of the start of commissioning work. Activities by the design and building team must also include static commissioning (such as inspections of airtightness details and envelope pressure tests).

Commissioning of building services needs extending to include, for example, MVHR, metering installations and effective user interfaces. Great care needs to be given to demonstration, training and documentation.

The contractor is expected to manage the **building readiness programme**. This needs to be prepared well in advance of any of the residents moving in.

Site completion and commissioning activities need to be coordinated, guides written, and other records finalised. This should include the setting-up of energy meters and the verification of data recorded by any energy monitoring software, where included.

Handover and Initial Aftercare Stage (Soft Landings Stage 4)

The contractor is responsible for providing a programme for anticipated property handovers. Written notice is to be forwarded to the Council at least eight weeks in advance of any forthcoming handovers (12 weeks in respect of very sheltered housing schemes). The Council lets most of its properties a week or less after handover or shortly after. Any alteration to the handover schedule must be informed at least four weeks prior to the expected handover date.

Handover meetings will be held on site and must be attended by the Development Agent, consultant,

contractor, representatives from The Council's Development and Housing Management Departments and representatives from the BDC/MSDC Property Services Team. At this meeting instruction on the operation of the heating system, other appliances and any ongoing servicing requirements will be demonstrated by the contractor.

The contractor should allow for potential residents to view their properties prior to handover. If access to all properties is not available then at least one of each property type should be available for viewing. It is expected that viewings would be at least one month prior to handover.

The properties viewed will remain in the possession of the contractor throughout the viewing period. The contractor will ensure that the company's insurances fully cover visitors to the site.

Prior to handover the Council and its Development

Handover Requirements



Agent will require an extremely high standard of finish and expect that:

- All work and services have been completed and access provided.
- All windows, external door, internal doors, cupboard and drawers should open and close satisfactorily.
- All locks, handles and catches should operate easily and all necessary keys should be supplied.
- Sanitary fittings and glass are free from damage and manufacturer's labels and have been thoroughly cleaned.
- Splashes of mortar, paint and the like have been removed from internal and external surfaces.
- Floors have been cleaned and are suitable to accept floor coverings.

- Rubbish and debris have been removed from the property and all communal areas.
- The property should be thoroughly cleaned to The Council's satisfaction including a 'sparkle' clean so the property is ready for a tenant to move straight in.

Building User Guidance

In addition the operating instructions set out in the subsequent section, contractors are required to provide specific User Guidance, appropriate for the design.

Information should be presented to be as engaging as possible. By using visual material, and clear succinct text, information can be presented in a way that is accessible and appropriate for the intended audience.

User Guide Contents

- **Introduction** – this should be brief and cover what is different about this house and how to live in / use / manage this home.
- **How to Look After your Home** - description of how this building is designed to work, key systems, what maintenance is required
- **What to do if...?** - FAQ type section describing what to check and what to do if it's a bit cool, or too warm, or stuffy etc.
- **How to fix things** - details of what to do and/ or who to contact if things aren't working (e.g. changing the MVHR filters)

Handover Requirements



Posters should be provided to supplement the User Guide to cover any other 'unusual' features in the home. Posters must be provided laminated or printed on plastic board and mounted inside of the cupboard containing the technology/ feature being explained, where this is not possible it should be mounted inside the main storage cupboard. Some poster content examples are provided below.

Key information for the MVHR Poster:

- Contact numbers for faults, general queries, filter changes
- Summary of basic operation
- Diagram for filter changes

Key information for a Passivhaus Poster:

- Summary of:
 - ⇒ what a Passivhaus is
 - ⇒ blind controls
 - ⇒ below internal door ventilation
- Heating System with images (boiler/ ASHP. HWC, control panel, electric shower)
- Ventilation with images (fresh air vent, extract air vent, control panel, MVHR unit, windows, future provision of services)
- Airtightness summary and wall diagram explaining wall fixings

Warranties and Guarantees



All works are to be designed and executed in accordance with the requirements of the designated warranty provider (designated by the Council and its representatives), Building Regulations, and the Construction Design & Management Regulations 2015 as in force at the date of commencement of contract.

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A building guarantee, will be provided including contractor's insolvency cover and 12 years structural defect insurance, professional fees and ancillary costs.

All registration and insurance fees are the responsibility of the contractor and must be in place prior to the certification of the first valuation. Evidence will be required.

All consultants' and contractor's appointments will be executed under a deed and will required to carry Professional Indemnity Insurance as follows: -

Scheme Value	Cover Required
Under £800,000	£1m
£800,001 - £1,800,000	£2m
£1,800,001 - £2,800,000	£3m
£2,800,001 - £3,800,000	£4m
£3,800,001 - £4,800,000	£5m
£4,800,001 - £5,800,000	£6m

Collateral Warranty will be required for any design function carried out by the contractor or their sub-contractors. The Council accepts un-amended forms of the JCT or CIC suite of warranty documents and will be executed as a deed. All warranties (Architect, Engineers, Contractor, Sub-Contractor etc.) will be required to be in place before consultants' fees will be paid. The Council reserves the right to withhold any amounts due to the contractor in respect of the works to be undertaken by the relevant consultant, sub-contractor, etc. where said Collateral Warranty is

outstanding. Collateral Warranties will be signed and in place prior to handover.

The Employer's Agent will be responsible for checking that requirements, such as insurances, warranties, performance bond, etc. are provided as stated in the Contract Documents; and will highlight to The Council any payment request inclusive of consultant, sub-contractor, etc. work where said Collateral warranty is outstanding.

Contractors will be required to carry Public Liability Insurance cover of £10,000,000, unless stated otherwise in the Employer's Requirements.

Once the New Homes Ombudsman is operational, all developers will be required to be registered under this scheme. At the time of writing the date for this new role, as set out in the Building Safety Bill is unknown.



Contract Defect and Rectification Procedures (page 1 of 3)

At least two weeks prior to handover the developer/contractor will provide the Council with a 24-hour emergency telephone number for emergency defects. If the developer/contractor fails to respond within the required time The Council will carry out the repair and re-charge the developer/contractor or deduct the cost from the retention held.

The Council's response times for day to day repair and maintenance matters are to be included as a contract requirement, and will include the payment of compensation by contractors where they fail to perform to the required standards, or the deduction of retention should the defect have to be rectified by an alternative contractor.

The Council's requirements in respect of this matter are as right.

Priorities
E (emergency) - 24 hours (including 1 day RIGHT TO REPAIR)
U – 3 day RIGHT TO REPAIR
1 (urgent) - 5 working days (including 7 day RIGHT TO REPAIR)
2 (routine) – 20 days
12 (other) – 60 days

Rectification of Defects – Right to Repair

The prescribed periods are detailed as follows:-

Defect	Prescribed period (in working days)
Total loss of electric power.	1
Partial loss of electric power.	3
Unsafe power or lighting socket, or electrical fitting.	1
Total loss of water supply.	1
Partial loss of water supply.	3
Total or partial loss of gas supply.	1
Total or partial loss of space or water heating between 31 October and 1 May.	1
Total or partial loss of space or water heating between 30 April and 1 November.	3
Blocked or leading foul drain, soil stack, or (where there is no other working toilet in the dwelling house) toilet pan.	1
Blocked sink, bath or basin.	3
Tap which cannot be turned.	3
Leaking from water or heating pipe, tank or cistern.	1
Mechanical extractor fan in internal kitchen or bathroom not working.	5

Contract Defect and Rectification Procedures (page 2 of 3)

The Council's and/or its Development Agent and the contractor will record all meter readings on the day of handover and send copies to The Council. Payment of services used prior to handover and informing the services provider of the change of occupier will be the responsibility of the contractor.

All services are to be left connected for the in-going resident but turned off at the mains. During the winter months, however, heating systems are to be left on tick-over in all properties to prevent freezing up.

The Council will not accept handovers in the last two full weeks of December prior to Christmas or until the Friday of the first full week in January.

All de-snagging should be completed by the day prior to handover and contractor's compound and equipment should be removed.

Three sets of keys are to be provided for collection prior to handover. All keys are to be properly labelled with the postal number of the property. In addition, all window, meter box and radiator bleed keys should be left in the kitchen drawer or as agreed with The Council and/or its Development Agent.

All operating instructions for the heating system, together with information packs from the water authority, electricity, gas and oil to be provided for incoming residents, must be given to The Council. Full copies of all instruction documents should be provided in the Health and Safety file and handed to The Council upon handover. The contractor will arrange a demonstration of the heating system and other technologies.

It must be ensured that any system full commissioning procedures are carried out including flushing out the system and balancing as required. As well as providing the instruction manual, a full system description manual in bound copy format showing workings, names and makes of principal components should be provided to The Council.

Prior to handover and again at the end of the defects period, a test must be made of the distribution pipework to check for water loss.

All appropriate test certificates must be provided to the Council the day before handover. Failure to produce these may result in the handover being refused and the contractor being charged for any temporary accommodation required by incoming

tenants.

On completion of the works, the lead consultant/contractor shall provide the information listed in Appendix 2 at practical completion or before to enable The Council to meet its funding conditions, maintain its properties in the future and ensure that its Quality Assurance procedures are maintained.

Should any of the contractor's requirements not be met, The Council reserves the right to refuse handover in accordance with the JCT contract. If handover is refused, the contractor may be liable for reasonable costs incurred by residents unable to take occupation of the property on the notified date.

Defects Period

At the end of the defects period, the contractor and lead consultant should arrange for all properties to be inspected. The Council will expect to be represented at the inspection and agree the final defects list.

All works identified during the defects inspection

Contract Defect and Rectification Procedures (page 3 of 3)

should be completed within an agreed timescale reasonable to the level and type of defects to be rectified. If the contractor fails to complete these works within the agreed time period, The Council or its Development Agent will agree one further date and if the works remain outstanding beyond this new date, The Council will undertake such works and deduct the cost from the retention monies held.

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7.0

Appendices



Appendix 1

Design Guide

Housing Design Guide

May 2022





This document has been prepared by multidisciplinary design practice Hamson Barron Smith on behalf of, and in close collaboration with, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and is designed to work alongside existing council policies.

This document is due for review 2024

"Places affect us all - they are where we live, work and spend our leisure time.

Well-designed places influence the quality of our experience as we spend time in them and move around them.

We enjoy them, as occupants or users but also as passers-by and visitors. **They can lift our spirits by making us feel at home, giving us a buzz of excitement or creating a sense of delight.**

They have been shown to affect our health and well-being, our feelings of safety, security, inclusion and belonging, and our sense of community cohesion."

National Design Guide; Open Government Licence



Introduction

Our Councils are committed to delivering a housing pipeline to benefit the residents of Babergh and Mid Suffolk. We recognise the important role that the Council play in defining emerging housing quality, design and sustainability to provide a positive legacy for the places in which we reach, together with the environment and standard of living for residents.

This Housing Design Guide sets out a clear and ambitious design framework which captures characteristics in design that we will aim to adopt generally in our projects, and further aspirational objectives that we hope to incorporate where suitable, viable and beneficial.

This Housing Design Guide reflects the high-level design outcomes we aspire to and shall be used to redefine the Councils developments in the future. The Guide is to be read in conjunction with the Technical Specification.

The Housing Design Guide and Technical Specification respond to industry movement in design standards, residents expectations and the recently declared Climate Emergency.

This Design Guide is established around four key design topics, referencing the National Design Guide Characteristics:

- Context and Identity
- Movement, Nature and Public Spaces
- Homes and Buildings (Including the Build Form and Uses)
- Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan)



Introduction

Context and Identity

Context and Identity looks at how our work can enhance the existing surroundings with attractive and distinctive developments. This relates to the holistic design character of the development. It explores aspirational objectives and common themes that we will actively look to incorporate.

Movement, Nature and Public Spaces

Movement, nature and public spaces covers specific principles relating to these topics. It looks at ways we can enhance accessibility and ease of movement around our developments. The ways in which we can both enhance and optimise the role of nature in our built environment. And the ways we will champion a safe, social and inclusive public realm.

Homes and Buildings (Including the Build Form and Uses)

Homes and Buildings looks at principles we will incorporate to develop a coherent pattern of development, which is both mixed and integrated. It sets goals to ensure our buildings will be functional, healthy and sustainable.

Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan)

In 2019 all Suffolk Local Authority members declared a 'climate emergency'. As part of this, the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, SCCP, will work together with partners across the county and region towards the aspiration of making the county of Suffolk carbon neutral by 2030. This section sets positive and ambitious goals for meeting this pledge, delivering efficient and resilient developments made to last.



All Developments

Innovation is encouraged across all scales of development, with Design teams encouraged to meet as many 'we aspire to' statements as practical in addition to all of the 'mandatory' statements. With additional requirements for major developments as outlined below.

The approach taken will vary dependent on the nature, scale, location and context of each proposal. The 'we aspire to' statements are included to inspire innovation and the pursuit of higher standards by providing examples of how the councils development objectives can be addressed. These approaches are all underpinned by industry best practice.

Major Developments

Classification

Major developments are defined as ten or more dwellings or a site area of 0.5 hectares or more.

Additional Requirements

At least **one 'we aspire to' statement** must be met under each of the following topic headings:

- Movement, Nature and Public Spaces
- Homes and Buildings (including Built Form and Uses)

And at least **two 'we aspire to' statements** must be met under:

- Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan)

Design teams will be expected to outline their approach to meeting the selected aspirational goals and how these will be monitored to ensure success and to inform future council projects and iterations of the Design Guide.





Context and Identity

We will...

- Consider not just the past but also the future ways we will live and interact within our communities for the 21st Century.
- Design our new homes so they are visually attractive and delight their occupants and other users.
- Create neighbourhoods that have a positive influence to their surrounding context.
- Design our new homes to enhance and compliment the surrounding context.
- Develop neighbourhoods through public engagement that provides a cohesive environment (extending beyond the built form) that everyone can identify with.
- Design homes that create character and identity in form and build.





Movement, Nature and Public Spaces

We will...

- Promote walking and cycling that connects to local community facilities.
- Design public spaces that feel safe, secure and attractive for all to use and enjoy.
- Detail all external fixings and street furniture to be robust and hard-wearing to minimise ongoing maintenance and repairs.
- Incorporate home zones within our neighbourhoods to promote fully inclusive environments that are focused on the pedestrian and the aging populations.
- Integrate and enhance existing natural environments to enrich the sense of place to the local community.
- Provide a calculated net gain for biodiversity on all our developments

We aspire to...

- Provide a range of good quality outdoor spaces that will encourage a wide variety of activities, well-being and interaction, social and civic inclusion.
- Use permeable surfaces and sustainable urban drainage to reduce and manage water run-off. Create green corridors throughout new neighbourhoods to encourage areas of play, food production and recreation.
- Prioritise areas of nature within new developments to address climate change mitigation and resilience.
- Provide external areas that range from public parks to shared spaces and private gardens.
- Provide opportunities for food growing on all our developments





Homes and Buildings (Including the Built Form and Uses)

We will...

- Take account of the demographic profile and specific needs of our occupants.
- Design our homes to respond to the ageing population and ensure high levels of accessibility and adaptability are incorporated throughout all new developments.
- Provide housing to good design quality with high levels of naturally daylight that connects with its private external environment, to promote health and well-being to its occupants.
- Design our homes to be practical and last for generations with a minimum design life of 60 years.
- We will promote recycling through well designed and integrated storage areas which facilitate ease of use and collection.
- Design a variety of housing types that are tenure blind and socially inclusive, affordable housing will not be visually distinguishable from market housing in terms of build quality, materials, details or levels of amenity space or privacy.
- Provide homes and developments where people feel safe and secure.

We aspire to...

- Create areas of new sustainable development that are accessible to local public transport, services and facilities.
- Design comfortable housing that exceeds the minimum National Space Standards.
- Provide dedicated Working From Home, WFH, space in all of our new homes.





Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan)

We will...

- Adopt a fabric first approach for all new buildings to reduce the need for energy consumption reducing fuel poverty, make best use of the efficient renewable energy creating homes that are 'zero-carbon ready'.
- Select building materials considering their carbon footprint, whole life cost and ease of repair and maintenance.
- Provide sustainable features that are utilised and can be operated with ease by the occupants.
- Continue to monitor a selection of completed houses to ensure the specific levels that they were designed to perform at are being achieved.
- Work with the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, SCCP, and our partners across the county and region towards the aspiration of making the county of Suffolk carbon neutral by 2030.
- Reduce water use within homes through carefully specified fittings and water butts.
- Create a legacy of buildings where communities establish a sense of ownership and belonging.
- Plan for long term stewardship by all stakeholders for buildings that can adapt to the changing needs of the occupants and evolving technologies.
- Use Space Heating Demand as the primary metric to drive improvements in energy efficiency.
- Install the most appropriate renewable energy resources and consider renewable energy supplies.





We will...

- Meet the requirements of the Building Regulations Part L 2022, developments must achieve a reasonable reduction in carbon emissions of at least 31% measured against the 2016 amendments to Building Regulations Part L
- Provide an electrical car charging point to all new in-curtilage car parking areas.
- Out of curtilage parking will include the installation of infrastructure for EV charging

We aspire to...

- Meet Zero Carbon targets in all our future new homes.
- Reduce water use within homes through grey water recycling.
- Meet the Passivhaus Standard or equivalent.
- Provide all our new homes with filtered fresh air with heat recovery (MVHR)

Appendix 2

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Appendix 3

List of Abbreviations

ACH@50Pa - Air Changes per Hour at 50 Pascals

ASHP - Air source heat pumps

BMSDC - Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils

CHP - Combined Heat and Power

D&B - Design and Build

D&QT - Design and Quality Team

EDPM - ethylene propylene diene monomer

ER's - Employer's Requirements

GSHP - Ground source heat pumps

HBS—Hamson Barron Smith

JV - Joint Venture

LED - Light Emitting Diode

LETI - London Energy Transformation Initiative

M&E - Mechanical and Electrical

MMC—Modern Methods of Construction

MVHR - Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery

NHBC - National House Building Council

NDSS - Nationally Described Space Standard

PHPP - Passivhaus Planning Package

PVC-U - Poly Vinyl Chloride, un-plasticised

SAP - Standard Assessment Procedure

SCCP - Suffolk Climate Change Partnership,

SuDS - Sustainable Drainage Systems

SVP - Soil vent pipe

TRVs - Thermostatic Radiator Valves

VOC - Volatile Organic Compound

WFH - Working From Home

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Agenda Item 11

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: BABERGH CABINET	REPORT NUMBER: BCa/22/9
FROM: Councillor Jan Osborne Cabinet Member for Housing	DATE OF MEETING: 4 th July 2022
OFFICER: Gavin Fisk – Assistant Director for Housing	KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB328

EMPTY HOMES POLICY 2022

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To approve the proposed Empty Homes Policy that sets out how we will deal with long-term empty properties within the Babergh District.
- 1.2 To consider the feedback from Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 25th April 2022 and agree the response to each recommendation.
- 1.3 To support the strategic priorities of providing more homes to meet local need and maximising the use of existing private sector housing.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Option 1 – Adopt the new Empty Homes Policy to ensure a fair and consistent approach to owners of long-term empty homes. To agree the response to each Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendation as set out in paragraph 4.11.
- 2.2 Option 2 – Recommend to Cabinet not to implement the new Policy. If the Council chooses not to consider the approval of the policy, then it is highly likely an increasing number of houses will fall into a state of dilapidation and anti-social behaviour will increase.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Option 1 - Approve the new Empty Homes Policy, as set out in Appendix A of this report and considering the recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 25th April 2022.
- 3.2 The Assistant Director for Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing has delegated authority to make minor changes to the Empty Homes Policy.

REASON FOR DECISION

- 3.3 There is a demand for housing in the Babergh District and long-term empty properties, which could otherwise be made available for; sale, rent or owner occupation are a wasted housing resource and give rise to complaints.
- 3.4 If a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) is applied for, the Empty Homes Policy will help satisfy the Secretary of State of the process the Council has taken.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 From data supplied by the Shared Revenues Partnership in March 2022, there were 446 long term empty properties which had been empty for longer than six months in Babergh and for comparison 528 in Mid Suffolk.
- 4.2 Babergh Council Tax legislation identifies a property as a long-term empty home when it has been unoccupied and unfurnished for 6 months or more. Currently, if a property remains empty for more than two years a Council Tax premium is applied as set out below:

Empty properties in Babergh District Council

From 1st April 2019, when a property has been empty for over 2 years, a 'long-term empty premium' of 100% is applied. The rate of Council Tax payable is 200%. Prior to this date, the premium charge was 50%, making the previous rate payable 150%.

For the financial year beginning on 1 April 2020 the maximum premium is;

- Long Term Empty 2-5 years – 100%
- Long Term Empty 5 years and over - 200%

For the financial year beginning on 1 April 2021 the maximum premium is;

- Long Term Empty 2-5 years – 100%
- Long Term Empty 5 -9 years - 200%
- Long Term Empty at least 10 years and over – 300%

From 1st April 2021, properties that have been unoccupied and unfurnished for more than 10 years will be charged 4 times the standard amount. See the example below;

Council Tax	£1,500
300% Premium (10 Years & Over)	£4,500
Council Tax Payable	£6,000

- 4.3 A full-time Empty Homes Officer was recruited for Babergh & Mid Suffolk at the end of November 2021, following a restructure within our Private Sector Housing Team. A designated officer to now focus solely on bringing empty homes back into use, is a sustainable way of increasing the overall supply of housing, and to reduce blight on neighbourhoods.
- 4.4 In December 2021, there were 783 active applications on the housing register for Babergh District Council and 631 for Mid Suffolk. Bringing empty properties back into use will increase the supply of housing to help to meet local housing need and demand.
- 4.5 Tackling empty properties is a slow and complex process. There are a wide variety of reasons for owners not wishing, or not being able to return the property to use. Engaging and negotiating with these owners is key to success. The Council wants to engage positively and work with owners to find solutions.

- 4.6 The Empty Homes Toolkit sets out how we will proactively support owners, depending on their circumstances as to why a property might be empty. The Toolkit provides template documentation to support the Officer with potential enforcement options, should these be required. Enforcement options are limited but the Council can consider those outlined in the Policy at Appendix 1. The Policy outlines the different toolkit options.
- 4.7 A policy is essential to provide clarity to residents on how the council will act, as well as providing clarity around formal and informal options it may pursue, to bring an empty property back into occupation. It is important the policy is kept up to date to ensure it follows operational changes within the Council and legislative changes that may come into force. The policy must remain robust and be able to stand up to scrutiny should a member of the public, or a business, makes a complaint relating to the way the Council has handled their case and/or when the Council submits a Compulsory Purchase Order application to the Secretary of State.
- 4.8 Overview & Scrutiny Committee reviewed the draft Empty Home Policy at its meeting on the 25th April 2022 and made 7 unanimous recommendations. The recommendations are listed the table below with a response for each.
- 4.9 Overview & Scrutiny Committee Recommendation and Proposed Response:

No.	Recommendation	Response
1.	That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee compliments the officers on the report and presentation and recommends to Cabinet that the policy be adopted taking in to account the following recommendations	For NOTING
2.	That Overview & Scrutiny considers that the maxim loan of £20k is insufficient and asks that Cabinet raises the level of loans and consider if a nominal rate of interest should be applied	The current loan of £20k is set out in the current "Housing Renewal Policy 2014". When the policy is next reviewed, the maximum loan & interest charge will be considered. RECOMMEND loan value is considered when the Renewal Policy is next reviewed. Date for review to be confirmed.
3.	That loans for works to improve for energy efficiency of homes should also be available.	To NOTE a range of grants and loans are already available to Homeowners. (see 11.2)
4.	That the information in the communication plan is strengthened including publicity via Parish Councils and local community groups	RECOMMEND these suggestions are considered for the Communications Plan

	and that a briefing note be circulated to Councillors when the policy is adopted.	when the Policy is approved.
5.	That Cabinet be asked to monitor the budget for empty homes this year and consider whether an increase is required for 2023/24	To NOTE and the budget is monitored via performance reports to Cabinet.
6.	That further quantitative information is provided to Members of the Committee on the Empty Homes' loans and the financial implications for the Councils.	To NOTE and Overview & Scrutiny can be updated in 12 months' time via a briefing paper to committee
7.	That close working is encouraged with the Homelessness Outreach officers.	To NOTE and this is already well-established working practice.

Babergh District Council

No.	Recommendation	Response
1.	That the Empty Homes workload be kept under review by Cabinet to explore additional funding options for an Empty Homes officer	To NOTE and consider in 12 months time.

5. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 5.1 The Empty Homes Policy aligns with the vision set out in the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy (2019-2024),

Aim 1: The housing market functions effectively, providing homes which are as affordable as possible; to meet the needs of residents and support the local economy; and

Aim 6: Best use is made of private sector land and private accommodation across the districts.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This policy has an existing allocated Capital Budget. Historically this budget has been underspent and this new Policy will increase expenditure against budget.
- 6.2 The 2022/23 capital budget for the issue of Empty Home Renovation Loans are shown in the table below. A covenant is applied to the deeds of the property to ensure the loan is repaid when the property is sold or transferred.

Capital Budget	Babergh
-----------------------	----------------

2022 / 23 Allocation	£100,000
Underspend c/f*	£222,000
TOTAL Budget 22/23	£322,000

* Estimate as per 2022/23 budget, pending finalisation of the 21/22 outturn position

- 6.3 Overview & Scrutiny Committee requested consideration for charging of a nominal interest rate on loans. This is not recommended due to the disproportionate amount of additional resource required against the income generated. The social value to provide the loans interest free is of greater benefit to bring the homes back into use. For example, issuing one loan will bring a property back into use, reduce anti-social behaviour, create employment opportunities and improve the aesthetics of the local community.
- 6.4 If a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) is required, legal expenses will be incurred to complete the legal process plus the purchase cost of the property. These costs will vary dependent on each case and a separate report would come to Council for approval. For the same reason, repayment terms of any sort are not recommended.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. The Legal Service has been consulted on the policy.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Corporate / Significant Business. Key risks are set out in the table below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Failure to bring empty homes back into occupation can result in complaints from neighbouring properties.	4 – Highly Probable	1 - Minimal	Members approve the proposed Empty Homes Policy, to ensure Officers can take proactive steps using the Toolkit.
If a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) is required, the Secretary of State will expect a Policy to be in place before making an Order.	4 – Highly Probable	4 - Disaster	Approve policy to enable CPOs to proceed with less challenge
Housing Need & Demand –	4 – Highly Probable	1 - Minimal	Approve the policy to help facilitate

Returning long-term empty properties back into use will help meet housing need.			properties being brought back into use
The Councils may be perceived to be untrustworthy and have a poor reputation by allowing long term empty properties to cause a nuisance and or annoyance.	4 – Highly Probable	1 - Minimal	Approve the policy to help facilitate properties being brought back into use

- 8.2 This policy aims to ensure that empty homes are brought back into use and seeks to reduce risks and enhance the Councils' reputation by working with owners of empty private residential properties to ensure that the homes are brought back into use. Without this policy owners of empty private residential properties would not receive support to help them to bring the property back into use. Consequently, empty homes may attract anti-social behaviour and/or criminal activity and have a detrimental impact on the surrounding community and impact the Councils' reputation. The implementation of this policy will ensure that these risks are monitored and mitigated through the consistent implementation of this policy. There are no unintended effects, consequences or risks envisaged from the implementation of this policy.

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 Consultation has begun with our Shared Revenues Partnership (SRP) team to set up regular exchange of information to allow tracking of empty homes. Collaboration with SRP will assist with joint investigations into properties that may be classed as furnished and allegedly occupied when they could be a long-term empty.
- 9.2 Consultation has taken place with our Assets and Investment Team in how certain sections of the policy toolkit can impact upon and overlap with them, particularly with enforcement options and CPO's.
- 9.3 Communication is underway with our Planning and Heritage Teams to establish good working links for a more streamlined approach to investigations, identification of empty properties and potential solutions that may require planning consents.
- 9.4 Consultation with our Shared Legal Services Team has taken place as part of the process to bring this policy to Members. Parts of the Policy and Toolkit will impact upon and overlap with them, particularly enforcement options.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required because the policy is focused on buildings rather than individuals with a protected characteristic.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Council currently receive complaints about long term empty homes. The complaints include the accumulation of waste, harbourage for rodents, pigeons and other pests. Long term empty properties are unsightly and attract ASB. Returning properties back into use will resolve these complaints and improve the local area.
- 11.2 Homeowners carrying out renovation work and improvements will be encouraged to increase the thermal efficiency of the property to a minimum EPC C if practicable and feasible. The cost of these works can be included in the Empty Homes loan alongside the applicant applying for other Energy Efficiency grants available. The Empty Homes Officer would help advise and signpost the applicant to available loans and grants.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Empty Homes Policy 2022	Attached

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 13.1 Compulsory Purchase Guidance [Compulsory purchase process and the Crichel Down Rules \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- 13.2 The Housing (Empty Dwelling Management Order) (Prescribed Period of Time and Additional Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Order 2021 [The Housing \(Empty Dwelling Management Orders\) \(Prescribed Period of Time and Additional Prescribed Requirements\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Order 2012 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)
- 13.3 Housing Renewal Policy 2014 - [Empty Homes Renovation Loan » Babergh Mid Suffolk](#)

14. **REPORT AUTHOR** *Amanda Todd, Senior Environmental Health Officer*

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Working Together

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL AND
MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL
EMPTY HOMES POLICY



Published July 2022

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Introduction

There are many definitions of an empty home. Council Tax legislation identifies a property as a long-term empty home when it has been empty of people, furniture and or possessions for six months or more.

Since April 2019, if a property remains empty for more than two years, an Empty Homes Premium is applied, and additional Council Tax is payable. This policy will concentrate on returning properties that have been empty for over six months, back into use.

A long-term Empty Home is also defined as a property that has been unoccupied for six months or longer and has nobody occupying it on a regular basis, whether it is furnished or not. This is the definition Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils will use.

The government wants to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use, as a sustainable way of increasing the overall supply of housing, and to reduce blight on neighbourhoods. The government wants builders, investors, and local councils to increase the supply of repurposed empty homes.

In Babergh and Mid Suffolk, there are approximately 974 long term empty homes (February 2022). See Table 1 for a breakdown by Council. This is an unacceptable situation especially considering the pressure for affordable homes.

Table 1: Long Term Empty Homes by Council, based on Council Tax Data

	Babergh District Council	Mid Suffolk District Council
6-23 months empty	372	415
+24 months empty	74	113
Total	446	528

In some districts, evidence has shown that one empty house in a neighbourhood can cause significant blight, attracting vandalism, fly-tipping and resulting in adjacent houses becoming difficult or impossible to let out or sell.

Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council have a large number of privately rented housing, but there is still a need for affordable housing for those with young families and people wanting to get a foot on the property ladder.

By writing, publicising, and making full use of an empty homes policy, Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council will work towards preventing a property being left empty and bring an empty property back into use as affordable accommodation.

Aims & Objectives

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils aim is to reduce the number of long-term empty properties within the districts by bringing empty properties back into use and discouraging owners from leaving them empty.

By achieving this, it will help alleviate a growing national housing need, offer more choice to the market, and prevent empty properties from becoming a blight within their residing neighbourhoods, improving the overall look of the area.

To achieve this aim, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' objectives are:

- Raise awareness of private sector empty properties across the districts, and commit appropriate resource within the council and utilise external partners, where appropriate, to tackle issues that arise
- Promote a range of advice and assistance available to owners of empty home residential properties
- Promote a loan that will financially assist owners of empty home residential properties with work to bring it back into use
- Bring empty properties back into use and increase the local and national housing supply
- Limit the number of empty properties becoming long term empties by utilising early initiatives and early intervention as part of investigations

To meet our objectives, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' will:

- Proactively utilise the empty homes toolkit including the use of enforcement action such as Compulsory Purchase Orders, Enforced Sale Procedures and Empty Dwelling Management Orders
- Target properties that are having an adverse impact on the neighbouring community or the sustainability of that neighbourhood
- Contact all owners of empty residential properties and advise them of the range of initiatives, options, and assistance available to them
- Monitor the number of empty properties within the districts of Babergh and Mid Suffolk and proactively contact any property owner where it is believed the property has been empty for a period exceeding six months
- Develop further initiatives and investigate ongoing legislation or resource that will allow us to proactively target and return long term empty properties to use

Most properties that become empty will often be returned to use via usual avenues (sale and lettings via local or national agents). However Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' needs to have a range of responses and options available for properties that do not return to use via those methods.



Above left & right:
The same empty property before and after council intervention.

Background

There is a high demand for housing in Babergh and Mid Suffolk. Empty properties which could otherwise be made available for sale or rent are a wasted resource. In December 2021, there were 783 active applications on the housing register for Babergh and 631 for Mid Suffolk. Bringing empty properties back in to use will increase the supply of housing to help to meet local housing need and demand.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council's has had an Empty Property Strategy since 2013.

Since then, a lot of work has been undertaken in bringing homes back into use through advice, the provision of renovation loan assistance, and the consideration and or action of compulsory purchase.

Initially, the Council's powers were limited with the only enforcement action available being compulsory purchase, which due to its complexity and resource required would only be used as a last resort.

The Housing Act 2004 introduced the use of Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO's), these provided an additional enforcement tool to assist with bringing empty homes back into use. In January 2022, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils implemented its Empty Homes Toolkit. The toolkit will help to increase the number of empty homes being brought back into use.

Empty Homes in Babergh and Mid Suffolk

Babergh District Council has approximately 446 homes (February 2022) homes that have been vacant for more than six months and Mid Suffolk District Council has approximately 528 homes (February 2022) homes that have been vacant for more than six months. These homes are left empty for a variety of reasons, but there is a high demand for housing in the district that makes this figure difficult to understand.

Owning an empty home is not an acceptable choice for an owner, as all too often, the empty property becomes an eyesore and becomes an attraction for anti-social behaviour. The garden becomes overgrown, and the house begins to slip into a state of accelerating disrepair. A slipped slate or clogged gutter may cause rainwater to penetrate an adjoining property, whilst doing untold damage to the vacant house. Neighbours will become disgruntled at the increasing eyesore and local children may develop an interest in playing around the garden. Eventually someone may break in causing vandalism and anti-social behaviour, sometimes being occupied by squatters or a venue to sell or use drugs.

An empty, perhaps fire damaged, house may prevent a neighbour from selling or letting out their house. Consequently, a second house may become vacant in what ought to be a desirable street. If the council does not tackle empty homes, an increasing number of houses will fall into a state of dilapidation and anti-social behaviour will increase.

Targeting the problem

The Councils will target action against all houses that have been vacant for longer than six months. In special circumstances, action may be taken in respect of houses that have been vacant for less than six months, for example where an enforcement notice is outstanding.

The Councils will identify an empty property by liaison with the Council Tax service and the maintenance of an empty property database. The database will include all houses that have been empty for six months or longer. The database can also be used to electronically map the location of empty houses to identify any concentrations.

The public can report homes that are suspected to be empty via the 'Report Empty Homes' page on the Councils website:

Babergh - (<https://www.babergh.gov.uk/housing/private-sector-housing-grants/empty-homes/report-empty-homes/>)

Mid Suffolk - (<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/private-sector-housing-grants/empty-homes/report-empty-homes/>).

Once a report has been made, the Councils will investigate the ownership of the property and if necessary, make contact with the owner. The Private Sector Housing team may also receive reports of empty homes from other council departments such

as planning or building control, or outside organisations such as the police or fire and rescue service.

Identifying and implementing solutions

Due to the varying reasons for an empty home being left vacant, there are no “quick fix” solutions to the problem of empty residential properties.

The Councils have a range of options available for dealing with empty homes. They will endeavour to initially advise owners on the ways they can bring a property back into use.

Where an empty property is causing a nuisance, or is affecting neighbouring houses, the councils will make use of current legal powers to minimise any nuisance whilst it continues to progress bringing the property back into use. This action may include securing the property or carrying out works to rectify disrepair that is affecting neighbouring properties e.g. dangerous structure, broken sewer.

Where a property has been empty for longer than six months, the councils will contact the owner to ask what they plan to do with the house and offer advice and assistance to help them return the property back into use. If the owner does not respond, or does not appear to be taking steps to bring the house back into use, the Councils will consider making use of one of the following options to ultimately bring the property back into use:

Empty Homes Toolkit

In January 2022, Babergh and Mid Suffolk's Private Sector Housing Service launched its Empty Homes Toolkit. The toolkit has:

- The most recent council tax list of properties that are registered with the council tax department as being empty,
- A calculator for scoring the level of risk an empty property poses to the community,
- A list of estate agents agreed to offer reduced fees for promoting, selling and letting empty homes,
- A list of a loan and schemes that are available to help bring empty homes back into use,
- A database of the long-term empty properties in Babergh and Mid Suffolk and a record of the actions that have been taken to bring them back into use,
- A number of letter templates that can be used to generate letters that provide advice and assistance to empty property owners,
- A log of the properties that have been brought back into use.

The Councils will use the toolkit to find empty properties, bring them back into use and to monitor and evaluate progress. The toolkit is designed to include schemes that can resolve every reason for a property being empty. If the property owner

wants to sell the property, the toolkit has contact details for estate agents who offer reduced fees for the sale of empty homes. If the property owner would like to renovate and rent the property, the toolkit contains contact information to agencies that may be able to help.

Empty Dwelling Management Order

When a property has been unoccupied for at least 12 months, and the Councils feel that the property is unlikely to be occupied in the near future the Councils will consider making an Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO).

An EDMO allows the Councils to effectively 'step into the shoes' of the owner of an unoccupied dwelling. The Councils considers EDMO's to be a significant tool in tackling an empty property, preventing it falling into a state of disrepair and becoming a nuisance to neighbours.

An EDMO will be used when the property is in a habitable condition, or can be made habitable at a reasonable cost, and is likely to become occupied if an EDMO is made.

Private Sector Housing will work in partnership with Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council's Property Asset Services Team who will take over the management of any properties that are subject to an EDMO. Those on the Council's housing register will be given the first opportunity of occupying the property.

Voluntary Purchase

Where contact has been made with an owner of a property that is in a very poor state of repair, the Councils will consider purchasing the property. A property that has been purchased voluntarily will be sold via the open market in a fair and transparent manner. This will allow other prospective home buyers an opportunity to own that property and to create a broader choice of properties available for purchase on the open market.

The use of voluntary purchase will only be used where all other enforcement action is deemed unsuitable or not cost effective.

Enforced Sale

Where the Councils are required to spend money in default following the service of a Statutory Notice (against the property/owner), if the owner does not repay those costs, the Council we will consider forcing a sale of the property to recover our costs.

Compulsory Purchase

The Councils will consider the compulsory purchase of a property where it is satisfied that the house is in a poor state of repair and/or it is unlikely to be brought back into use by the owner, and a clear public benefit would be achieved.

Such a benefit would include provision of affordable housing, improving the appearance of the neighbourhood and reducing anti-social behaviour.

Other Enforcement Powers

The Councils will use other available powers and work with other departments where additional or alternative powers are required, such as;

- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 s29 to take action to secure an insecure property
- Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 allows the Council to require and undertake works on behalf of an owner or occupier to prevent damage to buildings being caused by rats and mice (can include works to property or gardens)
- Public Health Act 1936 allows the Local Authority to require and undertake works on behalf of an owner or occupier to improve filthy and verminous properties
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990 s215 allows the Council to take action to require improvement of an unsightly building (including gardens).
- Sections 77 & 78 Building Act 1984 (dangerous structures).
- section 265 Housing Act 1985 (demolition orders).

Private Sector Housing – Empty Homes Renovation Loan

The Councils have a Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy that offers assistance to empty homeowners, to bring properties back into use.

Empty Homes Renovation Loan

How a loan is determined:

An Empty Homes Renovation Loan is considered following a survey and where a property has been empty for six months or longer and fails Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The HHSRS is a legislation tool, under the Housing Act 2004, the Council uses to determine if a property is fit for human habitation. The HHSRS consists of mainly two important levels for local authorities to consider. These are what type of hazard is presented in a property, and the level of likelihood and risk to harm. The level of a hazard outcome is known as; Category 1 and Category 2 hazards and each determine the action the Empty Homes Officer must or should take.

- A Category 1 hazard determines action 'must' be taken to reduce the seriousness it presents

- A Category 2 hazard gives an Officer the 'power' to consider action.

Further to the HHSRS, there is another part of the Housing Act to consider, the Decent Homes Standard. As empty homes are commonly left for long periods of time, old kitchen and bathrooms over 30 years old must be taken into consideration.

The Empty Homes Officer determines the level of essential works required for a property to make it habitable and which works will be covered by the Empty Homes Loan. The maximum empty homes loan Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council currently offer an owner is £20,000.

How to apply for an Empty Homes Loan:

The owner must complete an application and obtain at least two quotations for the works outlined by the Empty Homes Officer. Once the Officer has checked and is satisfied with application, the owner agrees and signs a 'Deed Agreement', which outlines the conditions and repayment of the loan. The application form and further information is available on the Councils websites.

Repayment of a Loan:

The Deed Agreement outlines the loan being repaid on the disposal of the property in question e.g. sale or transfer of the property. The loan conditions are recorded with Land Charges.

When a property is sold, the solicitors contact the Councils, clarifying sum to be repaid and the loan is repaid to the Councils.

The repayment timescales of a loan can vary, sometimes an owner's situation changes quicker than others but, its normally five years or more.

A loan is subject to the Council's application process, terms and conditions and the levels of grant aid available. Only in exceptional circumstances will the Councils consider giving financial assistance once enforcement action has commenced against an owner.

Example Loan Terms and Conditions

Written approvals for financial assistance will contain the terms and conditions which are attached to the loan. A Deed will be signed by the owner and sealed by the Councils prior to written approval being issued.

1. Information provided to the Councils by applicants as part of the application process will be thoroughly checked and verified. Applicants will be required to sign a declaration as to the accuracy of the information provided.
2. Applicants will normally be expected to submit at least two quotations for the eligible work. However, additional quotations may be requested. A single

quotation may be acceptable where the Councils deems that the work is of a specialist nature.

3. The loan is issued on the proviso the property is occupied for either an Assured Short-hold Tenancy or Occupation by the Applicant on completion of the works. The Property must not be used for a Commercial purpose, Holiday Lets or Short-term rentals. e.g. Airbnb.
4. Where fraudulent applications are received, the Councils may put forward a case for prosecution.
5. All applicants must provide proof of ID, address and National Insurance number.
6. Discretionary financial assistance can be withdrawn at any time or approvals deferred subject to budget provision.
7. Applicants must be 18 years old or older.
8. Prior to approval of any financial assistance proof of ownership will be required. This will usually be through a Land Registry proof of title.
9. Applications will not be accepted for works that have already started or have been completed.
10. The cost of preliminary or ancillary services, fees and charges can be included in the calculation for assistance. However, costs will be considered on an individual basis and considered for reasonableness. Any payment is conditional on the loan being approved and the completion of the specified works.
11. Where there are alternative external sources of funding available, applicants may be referred to these schemes.
12. The eligible work must be carried out by one of the contractors who provided a quotation. Where none of the contractors who submitted quotes are able to carry out the work, further quotations will need to be sought.
13. Except in exceptional circumstances, the lowest priced quotation will be used to determine the financial assistance approved.
14. Where work is carried out by the applicant, or someone related to the applicant, financial assistance will only be available for the cost of the materials, not labour costs.
15. Upon completion of work, it will be expected that the property will meet the minimum statutory standards.
16. The costs of unforeseen work will only be considered where it is considered that it is essential for the completion of the eligible works, up to the maximum

£20,000 loan limit. Payment will only be made where written approval for the additional costs have been obtained from the Councils.

17. All payments shall be conditional upon receipt of an acceptable invoice. Payment will be made direct to the contractor following agreement from the applicant and the Councils that the work has been satisfactorily completed. Where the applicant has paid the contractor, payment will be paid to the applicant upon receipt of proof of payment.
18. The applicant employs the contractor to undertake the eligible work and the Councils have no contractual liabilities in that relationship. The role of the Councils is to administer the financial assistance process.
19. The applicant has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the quality of the completed works.
20. Interim payments will be considered.
21. Work must be completed within 12 months of approval unless additional time allowed at the time of approval.
22. It is the applicants' responsibility to obtain all necessary approvals for the work being undertaken. This includes Planning Permission, Building Regulations and Listed Building Consent.
23. Where repayment of a loan is required and the applicant fails to make the necessary arrangements, the Councils will seek to recover the money through the courts which may involve obtaining a charging order.
24. Applicants will not be entitled to financial assistance if they have deliberately or unreasonably worsened the condition of their property.
25. On completion of the work, a local land charge will be registered. The full loan amount will be repayable upon sale or transfer of the property.

Approach to enforcement

In line with the Councils enforcement policy, a graduated approach to enforcement will be taken when bringing empty homes back into use. The Councils will contact the owner if the property has been empty for more than six months. The Councils will treat properties that have been empty for more than 12 months as a priority. The Councils aim to educate first, encourage second and then, if necessary, enforcement action will be considered. This maximises the opportunity for the property owner to take action themselves to bring the property back into use, without enforcement action from the Councils.



Second Homes

There are instances where properties are listed as second homes for Council Tax purposes (furnished) or are described as second homes for various reasons by their owners.

The Council acknowledges that there are genuine legitimate reasons for properties to be used as a second home, however there are instances where this is not the case, and a property is simply remaining empty and unused.

This section therefore aims to set out guidelines as to when Private Sector Housing, aside from any Council Tax declarations, will apply the Empty Homes Policy and Toolkit for investigation as an empty home, rather than conclude that the property is used as a second home.

Table 1 outlines factors for and against a property to be considered as a second home and Table 2 sets out examples of evidence that owners can provide to support the use of a property as a second home.

Properties where owners cannot demonstrate the use of the property as second home will be investigated in line with the Empty Homes Policy and Toolkit.

Properties that are reported to the Councils as potential empty homes that are listed as second homes will be investigated, unless previously investigated and a decision was made not treat as an empty home within the last 12 months.

Table 1 – Factors for and against a property used as a second home

Factors For	Description
Holiday Homes	Holiday homes for those who live outside of Suffolk or are rented by the owner as a holiday let.
Weekday or Weekend Home	Second homes for those living outside of Suffolk but working in the Babergh/Mid Suffolk area and thus utilising the property as weekday or weekend accommodation. Or vice versa where the Suffolk property is their main residence, but the owner is accommodated elsewhere on weekdays/weekends.
Closer to local services	Second homes for those who live in or outside of Suffolk but use the property for weekday or weekend accommodation for closer access to healthcare arrangements or such other essential facilities deemed appropriate. Owners may be eligible for Council Tax carer exemptions and should therefore contact with the Council Tax department as to whether a second home classification is most appropriate.
Factors Against	Description
Distance from main residence	Second homes where the owner's main residence is also in the Suffolk boundary or close to Suffolk with no reasonable reason why a second home would be needed may be considered as an empty home. A property claimed as a second home, but where the owner's main residence is a considerable distance from Suffolk might also suggest that the property is not being used as a second home legitimately.
Inherited properties	Inherited properties that remain empty and unused because they are desired to be kept within the family name or being left empty as a potential investment. The property should not be left empty indefinitely and interim plans such as rental should be considered.
Furnished but not used properties	The presence of furniture does not show a property is used and other factors such as energy usage must be provided for the property to be considered a second home. Properties used simply for storage are a wasted asset that could be used as a home.
Disrepair/condition of the property	Properties that do not have the essentials for use as a home such as water supply, fixed heating, working electrics etc.

	A property not maintained and gradually falling into disrepair such as slipped tiles, leaking guttering and rotten timbers is likely to be more indicative of a property not used as a second home and indicative of an empty home.
Boarding	Boarded windows or doors brings the appearance of a neighbourhood down and is likely to attract unwanted attention to the property. Boarded properties are likely to be more indicative of a property not used as a second home and indicative of an empty home.
Rubbish accumulations/ Overgrown gardens	Unmaintained gardens and fences, properties attracting littering or used for hoarding of objects are indicative of an empty home.
Complaints	Complaints from local residents and immediate neighbours about a property remaining empty are more indicative of an empty home. Use of the property, bin collections and other factors against suggest an empty home rather than one used as a second home.
Anti-social behaviour/Squatters	Anti-social behaviour from unauthorised access or squatters accessing the property provide evidence that a property is not being used as a second home.

Table 2 - Examples of evidence to support the use of a property as a second home

Type of proof	Description
Gas usage	Copies of actual (not estimated) gas bills for the last 12 months showing the property in use for a minimum six months of the calendar year. Use may constitute 26 weekends throughout the year or mid-week usage equivalent to six months usage.
Electric usage	Copies of actual (not estimated) electric bills for the last 12 months showing the property in use for a minimum six months of the calendar year. Use may constitute 26 weekends through the year OR mid-week usage equivalent to 6 months usage.
Water usage	Copies of water meter reading bills (not set tariff) for the last 12 months showing the property in use for a minimum six months of the calendar year. Use may constitute 26 weekends through the year OR mid-week usage equivalent to six months usage.
Booking Confirmations	Copies of booking confirmations for use of property as a holiday home, or equivalent information
Officer inspection	A Council Officer inspection to help evidence the property's internal condition and suggest use as a second home.

Contact Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council – Private Sector Housing, Housing Solutions, for more information.

Email: housingstandards@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

Address: Empty Homes Officer, Private Sector Housing, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2D

Policy will be reviewed every 36 months if not before. Next review date January 2025.



Agenda Item 12

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Babergh Cabinet & Mid Suffolk Cabinet	REPORT NUMBER: BCa/22/10
FROM: Cabinet Member for Housing	DATE OF MEETINGS: 05/07/22
OFFICER: Gavin Fisk	KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB292

RENT AND SERVICE CHARGE POLICY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This briefing note outlines the content of a proposed new Rent and Service Charge Policy. It should be read in conjunction with the Policy which can be found in Appendix A. Further information about rent setting and service charging can be found in Appendix B.
- 1.2 The Policy, once adopted, will ensure that Babergh & Mid Suffolk Councils (BMSDC) comply with current legislation, recognised best practice, the requirements of the Housing Regulator, and our tenancy agreements.
- 1.3 The policy proposes to enhance and expand the charging for services to tenants, to maximise income for the Councils and ensure that service charging is fair and transparent to all tenants. The policy proposes that in future Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils will:
 - Maximise income by charging for services where possible
 - Charge tenants for services in a fairer and more transparent way for services which they receive
 - Create opportunities for the provision of new and improved services

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The policy sets out how the Councils comply with legislative and regulatory requirements for the most part, although consideration was given to:
- 2.2 **A. Apply rent flexibility, or not**
 - 2.2.1 Rent flexibility is described in section 4.4 of Appendix B, and in paragraph 3.7 of the draft policy. The Government's Rent Policy Statement recognises the need for discretion over rent levels to take into account local factors and concerns. In summary, Councils have the option to apply an increase to social rents above 'formula rent' at the point of letting a property, to generate additional income for the HRA. Use of the flexibility should take account of local conditions and be used following consultation with tenants and other key stakeholders.
- 2.3 **B. Rent setting in Temporary Accommodation Excluded from the Rent Standard**

2.3.1 Leased properties used for temporary homeless provision are excluded from the requirements of the RSH Rent Standard if certain criteria are met. This is described in paragraph 4.7 of this briefing, section 4.10 of Appendix B, and 3.21 of the draft policy. The option is to set these rents at formula rent, or at a higher rate to match LHA.

2.4 C. 'De-pool' service charges, or not.

2.4.1 Where a service is not fully accounted for in a service charge to the tenant receiving the service, the service is funded (partly or in full) by the general rent pool. Changing this approach, to charge for services only to tenants who receive them is referred to as 'de-pooling'.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 That Cabinet approves the Rent and Service Charge Policy attached in Appendix A with the following decisions:

A – That rent flexibility is not applied.

B – That rents in certain Temporary Accommodation, which is excluded from the rent standard, may be set at LHA rates

C – That service charges are de-pooled.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

A – That rent flexibility is not applied. Due to the current economic climate and challenges around affordability for the Council's tenants, Rent Flexibility will not be used for any new tenancies. Should there be a requirement to change this decision and adopt any level of Rent Flexibility, a decision will be taken by full Council and will have a clear rationale, considering local circumstances and affordability. Tenants will be consulted about the proposals and their views taken into account by the Councils.

B - That rents in certain Temporary Accommodation, which is excluded from the rent standard, may be set at LHA rates. The Policy provides for both BMSDC to continue to set rents at LHA in circumstances such as this, where the Rent Standard and Rent Policy Statement do not apply. Doing so provides greater opportunity to provide temporary accommodation in new settings and maximise income for the HRA.

C - That service charges are de-pooled. It is generally considered to be inequitable to fund or to subsidise the cost of services from the general rent pool, and fairer to charge the cost of services to those tenants who benefit directly, referred to as 'de-pooling'. De-pooling service charges will free-up limited funds of within the HRA budgets which are currently subsidising services to meet changes in national housing policy which benefit all tenants. Exemptions to this rule could be made if its application meant that a service became unaffordable, as could be the case with some support services. In these cases, the service charges would be pooled across multiple locations.

4. KEY INFORMATION

4.1 The key points of the draft Rent and Service Charge Policy are as follows:

- 4.2 **Formula Rents.** General needs, temporary accommodation and sheltered housing properties which are let on 'social rents' will have their rent levels set according to requirements contained set out in the Government's Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing. This contains the formula that is used to determine these rent levels.
- 4.3 **Rent Flexibility** Due to concerns about affordability for our tenants amidst a rising cost of living, the Councils will not exercise the ability to apply an increase on formula rents offered by 'rent flexibility' in the Government's Rent Policy Statement (+5% in general needs, +10% in supported housing). The Councils may wish to consider this option in future in consultation with tenants.
- 4.4 **Affordable Rents.** General needs accommodation let at Affordable rents will be set at 80% of a market rent valuation as determined by a RICS compliant methodology. Where the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate is lower than 80% of the market rent, the rent will be capped at LHA.
- 4.5 **Shared Ownership** Leases are not covered by the Rent Standard. There are variations in how the rental element is calculated between leases. The rent of all shared ownership properties is reviewed annually in April in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI) (in the previous September), plus 0.5%.
- 4.6 **Temporary accommodation** is provided in the main by letting Council-owned dwellings. In Council-owned properties, the rent must be set at formula rent levels on re-let as prescribed in the Rent Standard and Rent Policy Statement.
- 4.7 **Temporary Accommodation excluded from the Rent Standard.** If units of temporary accommodation meet certain criteria they are excluded from the Rent Standard, and a higher rent may be charged if required to sustain the accommodation provision. Currently this applies to just one House of Multiple Occupation in Babergh.
- 4.8 In these instances the rent charge may be set at LHA at the point of re-let and increased annually in line with LHA rates each April. Being able to charge a higher rent will increase options for providing temporary accommodation in new settings (e.g. to lease a property for homeless accommodation and charge a higher rent to make it financially viable).
- 4.9 BMSDC will ensure that the rents in these settings remain below market rate levels in order for them to meet the definition of low-cost housing/social housing as outlined in section 69 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. At the point of increasing the rent, a valuation will be obtained using a RICS recognised methodology and the rent capped if necessary.
- 4.10 **Ground rent** is a small charge that leaseholders must pay, for the renting of the land on which their flat stands. The amount charged is determined by the Housing Act 1985 and is invoiced annually.
- 4.11 **Service charges.** It is recommended that service and utility charges are based on the actual cost of service provision at any given location. The proposed method is for the charges that are set from April each year to be based on the actual costs for the year up to the previous September. Exemptions to this rule could be made if its application meant that a service became unaffordable, as could be the case with some support services. In these cases, the service charges would be pooled across multiple locations.

5. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 5.1 The Rent and Service Charge policy contributes to our Housing Vision, supporting our strategic aim to be an 'effective social landlord for delivering quality service'. The additional capacity generated in the HRA budget (by charging tenants for services they receive rather than funding them from the general rent pool) will support improved investment of our limited fund into improvements to estates, properties and services.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Once the Policy is approved we will set about bringing the policy to life in revised service charging methodologies. This is a complex undertaking and it is intended that this assessment and recovery of costs will be developed as a project over the next 1-4 years. We are aware that large scale introduction of additional service charging could become a matter of concern for tenants. Residents will always be consulted before any new services are introduced, or existing services changed, that will lead to an increased or additional service charge. It is proposed that we will implement changes in two stages;
- 6.2 (1) Review the setting of service charges in sheltered and temporary accommodation and propose amendments at full Council in the normal manner ahead of rent increase in April 2023.
- 6.3 (2) Build the foundations for de-pooling service charges in general needs accommodation, and improving service charge setting in leasehold accommodation, and produce an implementation plan to be signed off by Council prior to implementation.
- 6.4 The total costs of providing some key services in 2020/21 which may be, in part, recoverable through service charging in future years is set out below for indicative purposes.

2021/22 Tenancy Services	Babergh £	Mid Suffolk £
Heating Costs	215,860	202,005
Fire Prevention	141,207	130,868
Grounds Maintenance	103,843	105,661
Tree Maintenance	42,720	32,631
Cleaning	28,127	11,317
Water Charges	24,211	92,916
Improvements	18,713	4,866
Community Alarm Costs	14,380	4,834
Furniture	2,379	1,574
Total:	591,441	586,671

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The policy sets out how BMSDC will comply with all regulatory and legislative requirements, including:
- 7.2 The relevant sections of the Housing Act 1985 are section 24 (Rents) and section 47 (Service Charges).
- 7.3 Registered providers must set rents from 1 April 2020 in accordance with the Government's Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing 2019, published by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- 7.4 The Regulator for Social Housing 'Rent Standard' applies to Local Authorities from April 2020.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Housing Delivery 1BO1: If policies or procedures are not robust enough or complete, then we may breach legislative or regulatory requirements	3	4	The Policy will ensure that Babergh & Mid Suffolk Councils comply with current legislation, recognised best practice, the requirements of the Housing Regulator, and our tenancy agreements.
Reputational risk: Increasing charges to tenants during cost of living crisis	4	1	It is proposed that rent flexibility is not applied during cost-of-living crisis, this shows consideration. If adopted at a later stage, the higher rate would only be for new tenants and our approach would be justified by a direct link between additional income and improvements to tenants homes and services. De-pooling of service charges is a well established and common/best practice in the sector represents the fairest approach to meeting the costs of providing services. Fairness and transparency would be well evidenced. Decisions about how service charges would be implemented would be taken at Full Council.
The HRA budget is negatively impacted by changes in	2	4	In October 2017, the government announced its intention to set a long term rent deal for both local authority landlords and housing

Government policy in rent increases			associations. This would permit annual rent increases on both social rent and affordable rent properties of up to 'CPI plus 1 percentage point' from 2020, for a period of at least five years. There is a risk that Government policy will change after April 2025 in light of rising inflation, which could have an impact income to the HRA budget, which would in turn threaten our ability to meet the aims of the HRA business plan.
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9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 The policy in the most part, sets out how BMSDC will comply with all regulatory and legislative requirements. Residents will always be consulted before any new services are introduced, or existing services changed, that will lead to an increased or additional service charge.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Screening (EQIA) has been undertaken (Appendix C).
- 10.2 The service charges will not be (and are not currently) set differently relating to any individuals' characteristics however they will vary between different accommodation types, where members of protected groups may be in a higher proportion e.g. a higher proportion of older tenants in sheltered housing and in general needs accommodation.
- 10.3 A full EQIA will be undertaken to review the impact on different individuals and groups when new service charges have been calculated and in preparation for approval by Full Council at a future date (as described at 6.1 - 6.3).

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The policy sets out how enhancing and broadening service charging to tenants will generate capacity in the HRA to support meeting national carbon targets all housing, including council housing, must meet net zero carbon levels by 2050, and all Council homes meeting EPC C by 2030.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) BMSDC Rent and Service Charge Policy	Attached
(b) Extended Rent and Service Charge Policy Briefing Note	Attached
(c) EIA Screening	Attached

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

13.1 N/A

14. REPORT AUTHORS

Robert Longfoot, Tenant Services Corporate Manager

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- 3. Rent setting**
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 - Property category
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 - Changes to rent
 - Temporary accommodation
 - Temporary Accommodation excluded from the Rent Standard
 - Shared ownership
 - Ground Rent
- 4. Service charge setting**
- 5. Appeals process**
- 6. Review and Monitoring**

Policy approval date	
Replacing/Updating	N/A
New review date	July 2027
Responsible Assistant Director	Gavin Fisk
Author	Robert Longfoot

1. Introduction

1.1. This policy sets out our approach to the setting of rent and service charges. Its aim is to ensure that we comply with all relevant legislation, Regulator of Social Housing regulatory requirements and recognised best practice.

2. Policy Statement

2.1. The policy will ensure that a consistent approach to rent and service charges is adopted, regardless of tenure. With this policy, rents will be affordable, comply

with relevant legislation, regulatory standards, and ensure the financial stability of the District Councils' HRAs.

- 2.2. The policy applies to Babergh and Mid Suffolk tenants and leaseholders of any Council-owned accommodation. It also applies to people we house under licenses in temporary accommodation, be it Council-owned or leased accommodation.
- 2.3. The Council will comply with all relevant legislation and regulatory requirements.
- 2.4. We shall provide clear information to tenants that explains how their rent and any service charge is set, and how they are changed.

3. Rent Setting

- 3.1. **Frequency of charging.** In line with the Babergh and Mid Suffolk tenancy agreement, rent will be charged weekly every Monday.
- 3.2. **Property category.** The setting of rent will be determined according to the following categories and the Regulator of Social Housing's Rent Standard:

Category	Rent based on
Existing general needs properties	Formula rent
Sheltered housing	Formula rent
Properties bought on open market or through s.106 process	Typically affordable rent, provided that the terms for purchase or development meet with the requirements of Affordable Rent under the Rent Standard i.e. with an agreement via Homes England or Secretary of State. Otherwise, formula rent shall be charged.
Properties developed by Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils	Either affordable rent or social rent. Charging affordable rent only where the development meets with the requirements for Affordable Rent under the Rent Standard i.e. with an agreement via Homes England or Secretary of State.
Temporary accommodation	Formula rent
Temporary accommodation which fully meets the criteria of the	The rent charged shall be set at the relevant Local Housing Allowance

Temporary Accommodation excluded category within the Rent Standard 2020	(LHA) rate, provided this does not exceed current market rents for similar properties in the locality
Shared ownership	Set at 2.75% of the value of the unsold equity at the point of initial sale
Garages	Garage rent setting is not included within the scope of this policy.
Ground Rent	Fixed by the lease, is an annual charge and not subject to review.

- 3.3. **Formula rent.** Formula rents are set in accordance with the formula set out in the Government's Rent Policy Statement and the Rent Standard 2020.
- 3.4. The formula rent for each general needs or sheltered housing property will be applied at the point of re-let and the issuing of a new tenancy agreement. Formula rent will also be applied in this way for temporary accommodation unless it is accommodation which is excluded from the Rent Standard.
- 3.5. For clarity, the rent will not change in the case of assignments, including mutual exchanges, or in the case of successions (unless the successor moves to alternative accommodation). In these cases, the existing rent level will continue to be charged.
- 3.6. If the number of bedrooms within a property changes as a result of an extension or alteration to the property, a new formula rent will be determined based on a revised 1999 valuation of the property. The new rent will be charged to the existing tenant at the time of the next annual rent increase following completion of the works.
- 3.7. **Rent flexibility.** The Government's Rent Policy Statement recognises the need for discretion over rent levels to take into account local factors and concerns. As a result, the policy allows the Council to use some flexibility in setting rents up to 5% above formula rent or 10% above formula rent for supported housing.
- 3.8. This therefore permits Babergh or Mid Suffolk District Councils to increase rental income in order to respond to local factors and enable to the provision of a better service to our tenants, for example, to increase investment in services or accommodation, to tackle local issues, respond to the climate emergency or to reduce the carbon footprint of our homes.
- 3.9. Rent Flexibility has been utilised in the past for a relatively small number of properties.

- 3.10. Due to the current economic climate and challenges around affordability for the Council's tenants, Rent Flexibility will not be used for any new tenancies. Should there be a requirement to change this decision and adopt any level of Rent Flexibility in the future, a decision will be taken by full Council and will have a clear rationale, considering local circumstances and affordability. Tenants will be consulted about the proposals and their views taken into account by the Councils.
- 3.11. **Rent cap.** The Government's Rent Policy Statement sets out limits to formula rent charges which is known as a Rent Cap.
- 3.12. Where the formula rent would be higher than the rent cap for a particular size of property, the rent cap will be used instead.
- 3.13. **Affordable rent.** Affordable rents are typically higher than social rents. The intention behind this rent model is to generate additional capacity for investment in new affordable housing. The rent for affordable rent housing (inclusive of service charges) must not exceed 80% of gross market rent.
- 3.14. 'Gross market rent' means the rent (inclusive of any applicable service charges) for which the accommodation might reasonably be expected to be let in the private rented sector. Valuations of market rents will be established for each new property, or at re-let, using a RICS recognised methodology. Affordable rents will be set at 80% of this market rent or capped at the relevant Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate if the LHA rate is lower.
- 3.15. An affordable rent should be no lower than the potential formula rent for the property. In cases where the rent would be lower than the formula rent, the formula rent constitutes a floor for the rent to be charged.
- 3.16. **Changes to rent.** The weekly rent will usually be changed in April each year. Tenants will be given at least 4 weeks' written notice of a rent increase or decrease.
- 3.17. Both formula and affordable rents will be reviewed annually and will be increased or decreased in line with the guidance contained within the Government's Rent Policy Statement and Rent Standard 2020.
- 3.18. Temporary accommodation which is excluded from the Rent Standard will have rents increased to the relevant LHA rate annually.
- 3.19. Annual changes to rent will be put to elected Members each year at full Council for their agreement prior to implementation.

- 3.20. **Temporary accommodation.** Rents will be set at formula rent in accordance with the Rent Standard 2020 where it applies.
- 3.21. **Temporary Accommodation excluded from the Rent Standard.** If units of temporary accommodation meet the criteria to be excluded from the Rent Standard a higher rent may be charged to as required to sustain the accommodation provision.
- 3.22. The rent charge may be set at LHA at the point of re-let and increased annually in line with LHA rates each April.
- 3.23. BMSDC will ensure that the rents in these settings remain below market rate levels in order for them to meet the definition of low cost housing/social housing as outlined in section 69 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. At the point of increasing the rent, a valuation will be obtained using a RICS recognised methodology and the rent capped if necessary.
- 3.24. **Shared ownership.** Shared ownership properties are not covered by the Rent Standard 2020 but are covered by the Capital Fund Guidance for Shared Ownership.
- 3.25. As per Homes England guidance, the annual rent will be set at 2.75% of the value of the unsold equity at the point of initial sale.
- 3.26. The rent of all shared ownership properties is reviewed annually in April in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI) (in the previous September), plus 0.5%.
- 3.27. **Ground Rent.** Ground Rent is not covered by the Rent Standard 2020.
- 3.28. Where Ground Rent is applicable this is stated within the lease, the majority being fixed to the annual sum of £10.
- 3.29. Due to Ground Rent being a fixed amount, it is not subject to an annual review.

4. Service charge setting

- 4.1. A service charge is a charge payable by tenants or leaseholders to pay for services such as housing-related support and the provision of communal area services. Tenants do not pay for repairs and maintenance or capital costs as these are met by the landlord and paid for through rents. However, leaseholders do pay their share of these costs.
- 4.2. Service charges may include the following, although this list is not exhaustive:

- housing management services
- caretaking
- communal power and water supply
- communal heating systems
- communal cleaning including window cleaning
- door entry maintenance
- lift maintenance
- grounds maintenance
- management costs.

- 4.3. The determination of service charges for leaseholders will be in accordance with the provisions in their lease. However, residents of a shared building or estate will be charged on an equal basis for the same service, irrespective of their tenure.
- 4.4. Charges for all services will be based on the actual cost. For tenanted properties, fixed service charges will be set from April each year will be based on the costs for the year to the previous September.
- 4.5. Charges will be for services provided at the property or to the communal areas in the locality of it, from which the tenant, license holder or leaseholder benefits. Exemptions to this rule could be made if its application meant that a service became unaffordable, as could be the case with some intensive housing management services. In these cases, the service charges would be pooled across multiple locations.
- 4.6. Where new properties are built or acquired, to which chargeable services are provided, or properties are remodelled, resulting in a significant change in services, then service charges will be based on an estimate of actual cost until the end of the first full year of provision. Charges for subsequent years will be based on the actual cost.
- 4.7. New or extended service charges will be introduced where there is a requirement to further maintain communal facilities or provide new services. Babergh & Mid Suffolk Councils will consult with tenants and leaseholders regarding such changes. Charges for these services will initially be set on an estimate of the actual cost.
- 4.8. It is important that services, and the charges for them remain affordable for tenants. Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils will maintain oversight of service charges increases and annual changes will be put to elected Members each year at full Council for their agreement prior to implementation.

5. Appeals Process

- 5.1. We commit to ensuring that tenants and leaseholders understand how their charges are set and relate to the services provided. If a tenant or leaseholder remains dissatisfied and believes that rent or service charges have been set incorrectly, they can raise a complaint via the complaints process.

6. Review and monitoring

- 6.1. Income from rent and service charges is detailed in the quarterly financial reports and provided as a quarterly performance indicator.
- 6.2. The policy will be reviewed every five years or as legislation changes.

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APPENDIX B

Rent and Service Charge Policy

Extended Briefing Note

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1. Introduction

1.1. This briefing note outlines the content of a proposed new Rent and Service Charge Policy, and reasons for its creation. It should be read in conjunction with the Policy.

1.2. The Policy, once adopted, will ensure that Babergh & Mid Suffolk Councils (BMSDC) comply with current legislation, recognised best practice, the requirements of the Housing Regulator, and our tenancy agreements. In addition, the Policy will enable us to continue to provide high quality and affordable housing to households across both Districts.

2. Summary

2.1. The key points of the draft Rent and Service Charge Policy are as follows:

2.2. **Formula Rents.** General needs, temporary accommodation and sheltered housing properties which are let on 'social rents' will have their rent levels set according to guidance contained in the Government's Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing. This contains the formula that is used to determine these rent levels.

2.3. **Affordable Rents.** General needs accommodation let at Affordable rents will be set at 80% of a market rent valuation as determined by a RICS compliant methodology. Where the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate is lower than 80% of the market rent, the rent will be capped at LHA.

2.4. **Service charges.** It is recommended that service and utility charges are based on the actual cost of service provision at any given location. The proposed method is for the charges that are set from April each year to be based on the actual costs for the year up to the previous September.

3. Legal Requirements

3.1. BMSDC will comply with all regulatory and legislative requirements, including:

3.2. The relevant sections of the **Housing Act 1985** are section 24 (Rents) and section 47 (Service Charges).

3.3. Registered providers must set rents from 1 April 2020 in accordance with the **Government's Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing 2019**, hereafter referred to as "the Rent Policy Statement", published by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

3.4. The **Regulator for Social Housing (RSH)'s Rent Standard** applies to Local Authorities from April 2020.

3.5. The **Landlord and Tenant Act 1985** provides a legislative framework for service charging

3.6. The **Housing and Regeneration Act 2008** sets out the requirements for a property to be considered social housing.

4. Rent Setting

4.1. The accurate setting of rent is vital to ensure that HRA income is maximised, and the correct level of rent is charged to our tenants, in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements. Different categories of property will have their rent charged according to different methodologies (see Table 1), each of which is explained in more detail below.

4.2. Table 1: rent setting method & rent frequency.

Category	Rent setting method	Rent frequency
Existing general needs properties	Formula rent	Charged weekly on a Monday
Sheltered housing	Formula rent	Charged weekly on a Monday
Properties bought on open market or through s.106 process	Typically affordable rent, provided that the terms for purchase or development meet with the requirements of Affordable Rent under the Rent Standard i.e. with an agreement via Homes England or Secretary of State. Otherwise, formula rent shall be charged.	Charged weekly on a Monday
Properties developed by Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils	Either affordable rent or social rent. Charging affordable rent only where the development meets with the requirements for Affordable Rent under the Rent Standard i.e. with an agreement via Homes England or Secretary of State.	Charged weekly on a Monday
Temporary accommodation	Formula rent	Charged weekly on a Monday
Temporary accommodation which fully meets the criteria of the Temporary Accommodation excluded category within the Rent Standard 2020	The rent charged shall be set at the relevant Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate, provided this does not exceed current market rents for similar properties in the locality	Charged weekly on a Monday
Shared ownership	Set at 2.75% of the value of the unsold equity at the point of initial sale	Charged weekly on a Monday
Garages	Garage rent setting is not included within the scope of this policy.	Charged weekly on a Monday
Ground Rent	Fixed by the lease, is an annual charge and not subject to review.	Charged annually

4.3. Formula rent

4.3.1. The majority of BMSDC's general needs, temporary and sheltered Council housing is let on social rents. The calculation of the social rent is by way of a formula found in the Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing, published by the DLUHC [\[LINK\]](#). For this reason, social rents are also known as formula rents.

- 4.3.2. Formula rent is calculated using 1999 property values, national average rents, number of bedrooms, relative local earnings, and a series of increases and decreases that have been applied by Government Policy to the rent level since 1999. These annual changes usually take the form of an increase based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as of the previous September, plus a percentage (typically 1%). The exceptions to this were the years 2016/17 to 2019/20 when the rent was decreased by 1% per year.
- 4.3.3. As required by the Government policy, when a new tenancy agreement is issued for a social rent property, BMSDC will ensure that the formula rent is applied.
- 4.3.4. A new tenancy is issued if a property is directly let, let via the Gateway to Homechoice allocation system. A new tenancy is not issued in the case of assignments (an existing joint tenancy becomes a sole tenancy, or a mutual exchange), or where a person succeeds to an existing tenancy at the same address.
- 4.3.5. The current social rent that BMSDC charge for the general needs or sheltered housing may differ from the actual formula rent, these differences are small and within acceptable tolerances and permitted rent flexibility (outlined below). Over time, these differences will be removed, and all social rents for new tenancies will align with the formula rents without the requirement to utilise any rent flexibility. This will take time as formula rent can only be applied at the point of re-let and cannot be altered during an existing tenancy except for where the property is subject to major structural alterations (such as adding extra bedrooms or extending the property).

4.4. Rent Flexibility

- 4.4.1. The Rent Standard allows social landlords to deviate slightly on the amount of formula rent charged within certain limits. These limits allow for a 5% increase in formula rent for all “general needs” properties, and 10% for all “supported” accommodation. This includes sheltered housing.
- 4.4.2. Use of the flexibility should take account of local conditions and be used following consultation with tenants and other key stakeholders.
- 4.4.3. It is reflected in the policy that whilst some flexibility in rent setting was applied previously, BMSDC will not adopt rent flexibility in future, owing to the rising cost-of-living crisis affecting our tenants.
- 4.4.4. Should there be an appetite for flexibility in future, an increase on the formula rent could be applied at the issuing of new tenancies indefinitely or for a set period of time, to generate additional income. This income could be committed to efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of our homes through retro-fit and energy efficiency projects. The flexibility may also assist us in future to safeguard the HRA fund, by mitigating the impact of changes in Government Policy for rent setting (for example, if our ability to increase the rent by CPI+1% was taken away or reduced).

4.5. Rent Cap

- 4.5.1. The Government's Rent Policy Statement sets out limits to Formula Rent charges which is known as a 'Rent Cap'. The rent caps are set nationally, based upon the number of bedrooms a property comprises.
- 4.5.2. Where the formula rent would be higher than the rent cap for a particular size of property, the rent cap will be used instead. While the rent caps will increase annually by CPI + 1.5%, the annual change in rent for the tenant in a 'rent capped' property must still be governed by the CPI + 1% limit on rent changes.
- 4.5.3. The rent cap prevents formula rents from rising above a certain level. The rent cap will also increase annually alongside the formula rent, but at a faster rate. It is not anticipated that any Babergh or Mid Suffolk formula rents would be impacted by the rent cap in the foreseeable future.

4.6. Affordable rent

- 4.6.1. BMSDC properties that are designated 'affordable rent' are those that are let at 80% of the market value, subject to the rent not exceeding Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates.
 - Affordable rent properties differ from formula rent properties in three ways:
 - The rent tends to be higher with affordable rent than with formula rent
 - Affordable rent is inclusive of any costs associated with services at that property (service charges).
- 4.6.2. The amount of rent charged is recalculated to current market conditions whenever a new tenancy agreement is issued.
- 4.6.3. During the lifetime of a tenancy, affordable rents will increase in the same way as social rents (currently Government policy set this at CPI + 1%). However, upon re-let, unlike social rents where the rent for the new tenancy is set at 'formula rent', the rent is recalculated based on the local private rented market.
- 4.6.4. Affordable rents are set at 80% of a market rent valuation. The Rent Standard 2020 states that 'market rent' means "*an estimate of its market rent inclusive of all service charges at the time the tenancy is granted that is based on a valuation in accordance with a method recognised by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors*". This is achieved by use of an online Rental Valuation tool provided by Rightmove. The tool is widely used across the housing sector and provides real-time data on market rental values by postcode and property type which are updated monthly.
- 4.6.5. Higher rents in the private rented sector will lead to affordable rents increasing, while falling private sector rents will see affordable rents falling. In cases where the

rent would be lower than the formula rent, the formula rent constitutes a floor for the rent to be charged.

- 4.6.6. It should be noted, that private market rents in Suffolk are high, with Babergh being higher than Mid Suffolk.

4.7. Capping affordable rents at Local Housing Allowance

- 4.7.1. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is most relevant for people renting in the private-sector. Tenants in the private sector are unable to claim housing benefits above the LHA rate.
- 4.7.2. LHA rates vary dependant on location and how many bedrooms the household are entitled to. England is divided up into 152 Broad Rental Market Areas (BRMA), these are not linked to District or County Council boundaries. Each BRMA has its own fixed rates of Local Housing Allowance.
- 4.7.3. Map showing BRMA areas in East Anglia, along with current LHA rates is available in appendix B.
- 4.7.4. Whilst the LHA rates do not apply to Council tenants¹ housing benefit claims, it is a recommendation of the Regulator that affordable rents have regard to the LHA that would be applicable for the size of property. It is good practice to cap at LHA rate as this ensures a degree of affordability for tenants moving off benefits and into work. BMSDC will ensure that in setting affordable rents, the rent does not exceed the Local Housing Allowance limit.

4.8. Annual changes to the rent

- 4.8.1. The Housing Act 1985, Section 103, requires that at least 4 weeks' notice of a change to the rent is provided for the change to take effect. The annual change applies to all properties covered by the Rent Standard and occurs irrespective of any moves to the correct formula rent, or recalculation of an affordable rent. Temporary accommodation which is excluded from the Rent Standard is increased in a different way, as described in paragraph 4.10.2 of this briefing note.

4.9. Temporary Accommodation

- 4.9.1. Temporary accommodation is provided in the main by letting Council-owned dwellings. In Council-owned properties, the rent must be set at formula rent levels on re-let as prescribed in the Rent Standard and Rent Policy Statement.

¹ The only exception being for people housed in temporary accommodation which is excluded from the Rent Standard. Please refer to paragraph 4.10 for further information about how and when this applies.

4.10. Temporary Accommodation which is excluded from the Rent Standard

4.10.1. There are exceptional circumstances for leased properties where the Rent Standard, and therefore the Rent Policy Statement and do not apply:

- The property is provided for persons owed a homeless duty
- The property is not within the HRA
- The property is leased for a period of between 2 and 30 years

4.10.2. In these instances the rent of may be reviewed annually in April in line with LHA rates. We currently have one HMO in Babergh which is excluded, at 1-5 Old School House, Market Place, Hadleigh which is a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) leased from the reformed church. The LHA rate for a shared room in this BRMA is £71.34 per week.

4.10.3. The Policy provides for both BMSDC to continue to set rents at LHA in circumstances such as this, where the Rent Standard and Rent Policy Statement do not apply. Doing so provides greater opportunity to provide temporary accommodation in new settings and maximise income for the HRAs.

4.10.4. Temporary accommodation has higher housing management costs due to the nature of the housing-related support that is provided and this is recovered via service charging in much the same way as we do for sheltered housing.

4.10.5. . The rent charge may be set at LHA at the point of re-let and increased annually in line with LHA rates each April. BMSDC will ensure that the rents in these settings remain below market rate levels In order for them to meet the definition of low cost housing/social housing as outlined in section 69 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. At the point of increasing the rent, a valuation will be obtained using a RICS recognised methodology and the rent capped if necessary.

5. Shared Ownership

5.1. Shared Ownership Leases are not covered by the Rent Standard. There are variations in how the rental element is calculated between leases. The rent of all shared ownership properties is reviewed annually in April in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI) (in the previous September), plus 0.5%.

6. Ground Rent

6.1. Ground rent is a small charge that leaseholders must pay, for the renting of the land on which their flat stands. The amount charged is determined by the Housing Act 1985 and is invoiced annually.

7. Service Charges

7.1. Aims

“A service charge is a payment made by a tenant or leaseholder for services received in connection with occupation of their home. The payment is in addition to the rent.” - The National Housing Federation

“Rent is generally taken to include all charges associated with the occupation of a dwelling, such as maintenance and general housing management services. Service charges usually reflect additional services, which may not be provided to every tenant, or which may be connected with communal facilities rather than being particular to occupation of a dwelling... Ministers have decided that (landlords) should retain discretion to decide what services to charge for separately, and what services should be included within rent, within a broad framework.” - Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy

7.1.1. This policy proposes to enhance and expand the charging for services to tenants, to maximise income for the Councils and ensure that service charging is fair and transparent to all tenants. The policy proposes that in future Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils will:

- Maximise income by charging for services where possible
- Charge tenants for services in a fair and transparent way for services which they receive
- Make opportunities for the provision of new and improved services

7.1.2. To achieve the aims, the proposal is to ‘de-pool’ service charges from the general rent pool and to charge fixed service charge to tenants where services are provided, based upon the costs of those (locally provided) services. Where a landlord has not traditionally levied service charges but has recovered the costs of services through the general rent pool, but then decides to introduce service charges this is often called ‘de-pooling’. By de-pooling service charges tenants only for the services that they receive directly in the building that they occupy and/or in the neighbourhoods in which they live.

7.1.3. We current seek Cabinet’s approval of the Policy. Once the Policy is approved we will set about bringing the policy to life in revised service charging methodologies. This is a complex undertaking and it is intended that this assessment and recovery of costs will be developed as a project over the next 1-4 years. We are aware that large scale introduction of additional service charging could become a matter of concern for tenants, for this reason, it is proposed that we will implement changes in two stages;

1. Review the setting of service charges in sheltered and temporary accommodation and propose amendments at full Council in the normal manner ahead of rent increase in April 2023.
2. Build the foundations for de-pooling service charges in General Needs accommodation, and once more detail is known, produce an implementation plan to be signed off by Council prior to implementation.

7.1.4. Residents will always be consulted before any new services are introduced, or existing services changed, that will lead to an increased or additional service charge.

7.2. Background

“Service Charges are worth millions to local authorities and housing associations but are often not given enough importance. Housing Associations in England alone raised £1.4billion in service charges in 2018/19. However, this is not enough to recover all the costs of providing services with 12% of costs typically not being recovered. The situation is similar in local authorities” [Waite, A. (2020) Introduction to Service Charges]

- 7.2.1. With the introduction of the Right To Buy in 1980, Local Authorities found themselves managing flats with an increasing number of leaseholders. They therefore introduced service charges for leaseholders and incorporated requirements into leases.
- 7.2.2. The introduction of social rent reform in 2002 led many authorities to review their policies regarding service charges for tenants. The social rent formula (as described in paragraph 4.3) does not take into account the cost of services and with central Government controlling rate of increase, there is no opportunity to increase the rents to cover the costs of providing services. Consequently, local authorities began to realise that if they wished to continue to provide services, they would have to introduce service charges in addition to the rents.
- 7.2.3. The introduction of the self-financing settlement in 2012 assumed that local authorities would recover their service costs through service charges, resulting in more local authorities reviewing their approach to service charging.
- 7.2.4. BMSDC is typical of many local authorities in that it has traditionally not levied separate service charges on the majority of tenants but instead, has recovered the costs of providing services from the general rent pool.
- 7.2.5. It is also typical in that sheltered housing and temporary accommodation are exceptions to this, with service charges being levied because a significant level of service is being provided. The service charges these tenants pay are intended to cover the cost of the support provided, the running costs of services (such as laundries), cleaning provision and utilities.
- 7.2.6. To summarise, service charges are currently charged in three ways in BMSDC housing stock:
 - 7.2.6.1. Sheltered housing service charges: paid by tenants for additional services associated with the sheltered housing
 - 7.2.6.2. Temporary accommodation service charges: paid by license holders for additional services associated with the provision of homeless accommodation.
 - 7.2.6.3. Leaseholder service charges: paid by the leaseholders for services, repairs and maintenance associated with the building they live in

7.2.7. BMSDC does not currently apply a service charge to tenancies in general needs accommodation. Any services provided in these settings are paid for out of the general rent pool.

7.2.8. Currently, in sheltered housing, the Councils do charge for services but costs are shared between all schemes. The amount of charge levied for services is agreed at full Council and takes the form of a fixed increase applied across all tenancies. However, this approach does not take account of the inevitable fluctuations in service costs from year to year, and scheme to scheme, and can result in tenants either paying too little for the services they receive, or too much.

7.3. Service Chargeable Items

7.3.1. Appendix B shows a more comprehensive list of service chargeable items, and their eligibility for housing benefit or universal credit.

7.3.2. Housing Benefit and now Universal Credit usually cover service charges where tenants are eligible. However, it does not cover charges for services to individual homes such as heating and hot water, lighting and water charges within a dwelling or TV licences. A tenant needs to pay for these separately through their own resources. Neither does housing benefit cover services of a personal nature such as cleaning nor services where the tenant can opt out of the service and therefore the charge.

7.3.3. In general needs housing, it is typical that only communal services that are eligible for housing benefit and universal credit are charged for. In other settings such as sheltered housing and temporary accommodation the service charge may include both eligible and ineligible charges. The extent to which eligible charges are included depends entirely on the property, for example; a communal heating system will provide heating to tenants flats as well as the communal areas, therefore the service charges for the total utility cost will need to be apportioned between communal (eligible for benefit) and personal use (ineligible for benefit).

7.4. Drivers for de-pooling

7.4.1. National Policy Drivers

7.4.1.1. De-pooling service charges will free-up limited funds of within the HRA budgets which are currently subsidising services to meet changes in national housing policy which benefit all tenants, including:

7.4.1.2. *The Social Housing White Paper 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents'*. The key principles embedded within this include increased resident voice and empowerment to shape services, increased redress for residents, increased regulation across the whole social housing sector including in-house

council housing services, improved quality of homes, improved fire safety and an increased focus on new build with options for home ownership.

7.4.1.3. A *Building Safety Bill* was published in July 2020. There is clear guidance within the bill about the direction of travel – greater accountability for fire safety, improved standards and greater regulation.

7.4.1.4. Further national developments focus on the review of the *Decent Homes Standard* that sets the minimum standards for council owned homes. This is expected to report in 2022 and to focus on how councils' impact on wider "place" and communities across its stock and the delivery of measures to improve energy efficiency across all council owned stock.

7.4.1.5. Council owned stock will also be subject to the wider national policy statements around energy efficiency as well as the local declaration of the climate emergency. To meet national carbon targets all housing, including council housing, must meet net zero carbon levels by 2050, and all Council homes meeting EPC C by 2030.

7.4.1.6. The White Paper and the focus on regulation is also being supported by an enhanced role for the Housing Ombudsman. The development of thematic reviews, 'naming and shaming' providers with poor standards and taking a more aggressive approach where the benefit of the doubt no longer rests with the landlord, suggest a time of greater focus on the quality of experience of the resident than has been seen for the past 10 years nationally.

7.4.2. Fairness and Transparency

7.4.2.1. Where a service is not fully accounted for in a service charge to the tenant receiving the service, the service is funded (partly or in full) by the general rent pool. It is generally considered to be inequitable to fund or to subsidise the cost of services from the general rent pool, and fairer to charge the cost of services to those tenants who benefit directly.

7.4.2.2. The exception to de-pooling may be the sheltered housing intensive housing management service, the costs of which will be divided equally across all sheltered housing tenants in each district. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, it will ensure that the support service remains affordable for all tenants, particularly those in relatively small schemes where the support service costs could work out much higher. Secondly it reflects the reality of the service in that Officers frequently cover absences in the team or support their colleagues. This makes it very difficult to determine accurately how many hours a week a particular scheme may benefit from the work of a Sheltered Housing Officer.

7.4.3. Protecting the future health of the HRA budgets

7.4.3.1. As outlined in the HRA business plans, the decisions taken around rent increases and service charging have a significant impact on the health of the HRA budgets in 30 – 50 years time. We need to consider not only the impact of these decision in year

one, but the exponential impact they have on financial forecasts into the future. Service charging is one key element to maintaining the HRA budgets for the benefit of our tenants, an area we can develop in years to come.

7.4.3.2. A look at outturn for 2021/22 for just some of the high level budget expenditure which service charging would offset is below:

2021/22 Tenancy Services	Babergh £	Mid Suffolk £
Heating Costs	215,860	202,005
Fire Prevention	141,207	130,868
Grounds Maintenance	103,843	105,661
Tree Maintenance	42,720	32,631
Cleaning	28,127	11,317
Water Charges	24,211	92,916
Improvements	18,713	4,866
Furniture	2,379	1,574
Total:	577,060	581,838

7.4.4. Providing new, and enhancing existing services

7.4.4.1. The introduction of service charges to general needs accommodation will enable the delivery of new and improved services to tenants.

7.4.4.2. Residents will always be consulted before any new services are introduced, or existing services changed, that will lead to an increased or additional service charge.

7.4.4.3. A hypothetical example:

1-6 Acacia Avenue is a typical block of general needs flats, comprising 6 flats, a communal stairway, bin store, communal car park and communal garden at the rear. Over the course of 12 months, the communal areas might receive:

- Routine grounds maintenance services to keep the gardens looking attractive and remove leaves and moss from the hard standings
- Removal of several fly-tipped items which present a hazard to users of the car park
- A clearance of the bin store owing to tenant misuse
- 2 x ad-hoc cleans of the communal areas to maintain minimum standards of cleanliness
- One tree to be felled in the communal garden and another having its crown reduced

Quarterly health and safety inspections by the Neighbourhoods team of the communal parts

Prior to de-pooling service charges, the cost of these services is paid for by the general rent pool. This means the tenants pay a small percentage of the costs by default, but so too do the other tenants living in the district. In the absence of service charging to tenants, the cleaning service is reduced to ad-hoc cleans only to keep costs down.

By de-pooling the service charges, and charging the tenants for the service they receive, the costs would be split between the six tenants who receive the services. Services can be improved at the request of, and by consultation with, tenants in the block to make the block a more attractive place to live. Further, the reduction in expenditure from the general rent pool means the money can be reinvested into building and service improvements.

7.4.5. *“By de-pooling rents, a landlord can ensure that its tenants receive services at a fair price. In addition, there is the potential to increase the quality of the service provided. This could lead to improvements in resident satisfaction and... provide an additional opportunity to engage with tenants about other issues, when consulting on service standards.... When staff understand the services that are being charged for and the agreed standards for them, they can more easily ensure those services are provided and that customers are kept satisfied.”- CIH, 2013*

7.4.6. A more thorough assessment of the service charges and fair increases (or decreases) each year will ensure that homes remain affordable, and the locality is of a high quality. It will also have the added benefit of linking a payment by the tenant directly to a service they are receiving. We would expect tenants to demand more as a result and drive improvements enabling services that are tailored to local need and aspirations. In this way service charging will support sustainable and thriving communities.

7.5. Calculating service charges

7.5.1. There are a variety of methods for achieving this, however, it is proposed that Babergh and Mid Suffolk service charges are calculated using the actual costs from October to September. This ensures accuracy and fairness without the need for subsequent adjustments to be made.

7.5.2. *i.e. A new service charge is set in April 2022, the charge will be to set recover the costs for services delivered between October 2020 and September 2021.*

7.5.3. Good practice suggests that service charging for tenants should echo leaseholder service charging in that actual costs and an administration charge are recouped; no more, no less.

7.5.4. Where it is not possible to apply actual costs to determine the service charges, an estimate will be used instead. The subsequent year's charges will then be adjusted to recover any underpayment from the first year or return any overpayment.

7.5.5. It is recommended that the service charge for the year April to March is based on the actual costs of the period October to September in the previous year. For example, the service charges for 2021-2022 would be based on the actual costs of from Q3 & Q4 in 2019-2020, plus the actual costs for Q1 & Q2 in 2020-2021.

7.5.6. This method reduces the period between the costs being incurred and the charges being levied, and it is based entirely on actual costs.

7.6. Other local housing providers

7.6.1. It may be useful to consider the process followed by other local housing providers by way of comparison.

7.6.2. **Eastlight Community Housing** (formally Colne Housing Society and Greenfields Community Housing.)

7.6.3. Charges for all services are based on the actual cost. For tenanted properties, the charges set from April each year will be based on the costs for the year to the previous September. As the charge is calculated on an actual cost, no subsequent adjustment will normally be needed.

7.6.4. **Colchester Borough Homes** (arms-length management organisation responsible for Colchester Borough Council's housing)

7.6.5. Service charges for both Tenants and Leaseholders are based on the actual costs from the financial year two years previous, plus an inflationary increase and/or additional economic forecast to bring charges to present year costing, an admin fee % is also applied. Example: The service charge for 2017/18 = Actual Cost of service 2015/16 + inflation and or economic forecast + admin fee %.

7.6.6. Clarion Housing

7.6.7. Service charges are estimated by looking at the cost of services for a property in previous years and then working out a projected cost for the coming financial year. Annual service charges are either fixed (payment is a set amount regardless of the year's actual costs) or variable (payment changes depending on the year's actual costs). Where variable service charges are used, residents are informed of the actual annual cost within six months of the end of the financial year, and appropriate adjustments made to the following year's charges.

Appendix A

Map showing BRMA areas in East Anglia, along with current LHA rates

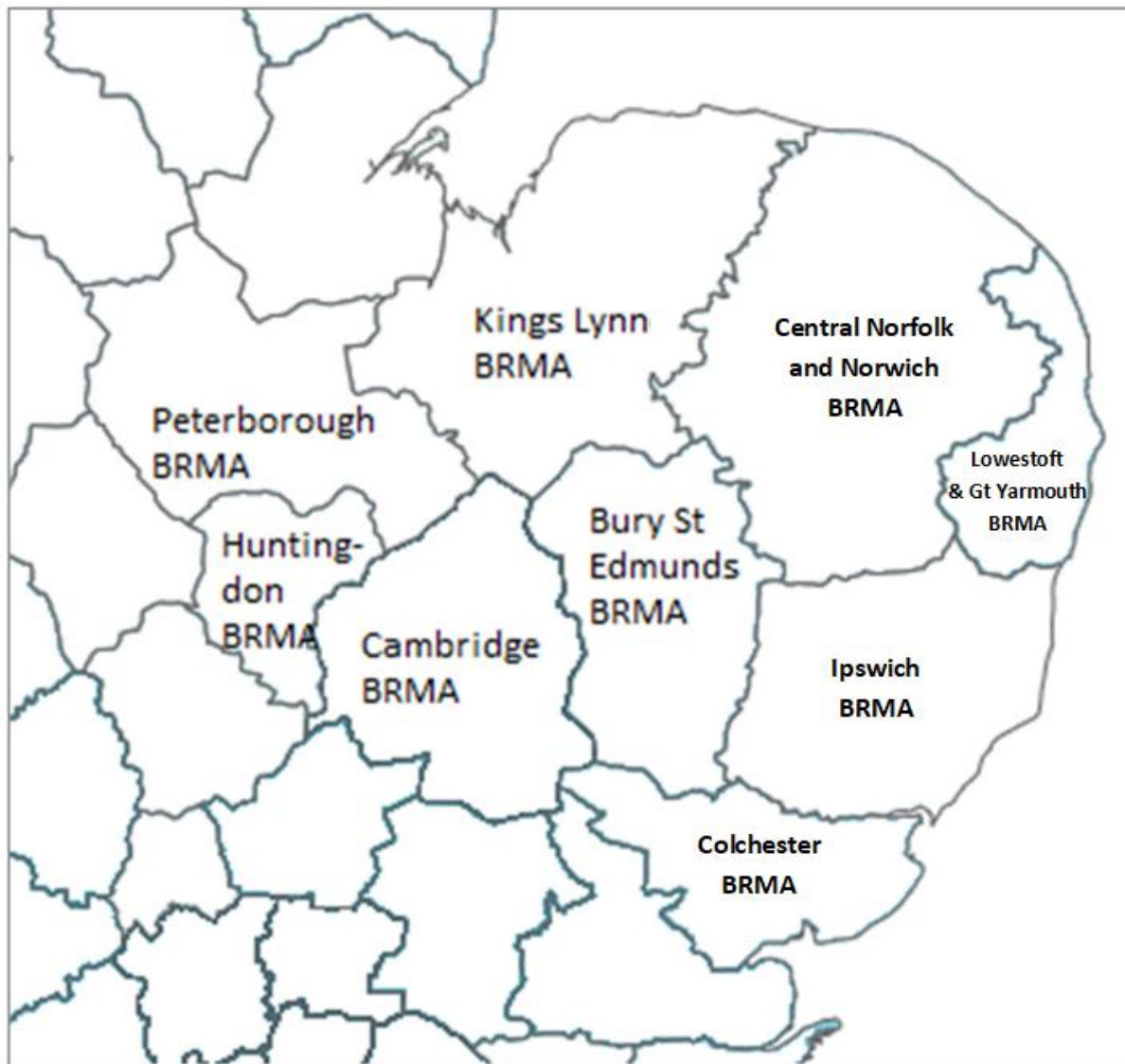


Table showing the LHA rates in each BRMA, and in which Council districts they apply

Councils		BRMA	Room in Shared Accommodation	1 Bedroom	2 Bedrooms	3 Bedrooms	4 Bedrooms
BDC	MSDC	Bury St Edmunds	£82.85	£120.82	£149.59	£184.11	£276.16
BDC	MSDC	Ipswich	£71.34	£112.77	£140.38	£164.55	£205.97
BDC		Colchester	£71.34	£120.82	£158.79	£195.62	£253.15
	MSDC	Central Norfolk & Norwich	£82.85	£113.92	£138.08	£163.40	£218.63

Appendix B

Service charges and benefits

Some service charges are eligible for housing benefit while others are not. Generally, to qualify for housing benefit a service charge must be for a housing-related service as opposed to a personal service, and it must be a compulsory condition of the tenancy agreement that the resident receives the service and pays the service charge. Housing Benefit assumes that Service Charges are eligible unless they are specifically ineligible.

Under the Housing Benefit system, local authorities are allowed significant discretion in the interpretation of the housing benefit regulations. However, the Department for Work & Pensions is now phasing out Housing Benefit and phasing in Universal Credit. There is no local discretion with Universal Credit as there is with Housing Benefit.

Local authority Housing Benefit departments will continue to manage an ever-reducing number of Housing Benefit claims which will continue to be paid to pensioners and administered by local authorities.

Universal Credit assumes service charges (not the service itself) are ineligible unless they meet the criteria. There are four conditions of eligible service charges:

- The right to occupy the accommodation is dependent upon the tenant paying service charges, for example where it forms part of the tenancy agreement.
- The service charge wholly falls into one or more of the following categories:
 - The right to occupy being dependent on paying Service Charges.
 - Maintaining general standards.
 - Maintaining areas of communal use with basic communal services.
 - Tenant accommodation specific charges.
- The costs or charges are reasonable and that they relate to such services as it is reasonable to provide.

Below is a table setting out a non-exhaustive list of services which could be charged back to tenants, and their eligibility for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit:



Potential service chargeable item	Notes	Eligible service charge under housing benefit rules?	Eligible service charge under universal credit rules?
Administration fees can be based on either actual costs (the cost of the staff employed in administering service charges plus appropriate on cost) or estimated costs (an on-cost on the cost of the other service charges, i.e. 10% - 15%)	This charge could be used to cover the cost of a dedicated member of staff in the same way that the Leasehold Service is paid for by leaseholders. However, this role does not currently exist within Tenant Services.	Yes	Yes
Housing Management Services	This charge could also be used to cover some of the cost of the Neighbourhood Team undertaking routine inspections and fire alarm testing, removing flytips etc.	Yes, must be a communal service relating to the provision of adequate accommodation	Yes, must be a communal service relating to the provision of adequate accommodation
Intensive Housing Management	Intensive housing management is provided to tenants with support needs in temporary and sheltered housing. Intensive housing management is a catch all term and includes a number of activities.	Yes	Yes
Heating, Lighting, Energy, Water	BSMDC could apportion the total bills within a building between flats based on floorspace or number of bedrooms.	Yes – communal utility costs only. Any charges for utility provision to tenants' homes can be charged for but is not eligible for benefit.	Yes – communal utility costs only. Any charges for utility provision to tenants' homes can be charged for but is not eligible for benefit.
Cleaning Communal Areas	Currently this is only undertaken in sheltered housing and newly built general needs flats. This can include window cleaning.	Yes, but for the outside of non-communal windows, only those that no-one in the household can do	Yes, but for the outside of non-communal windows, only those on first floor and above

Potential service chargeable item	Notes	Eligible service charge under housing benefit rules?	Eligible service charge under universal credit rules?
Pest Control	Treatment of pests can be in the communal area, or outside of it providing that it is undertaken to prevent pests accessing the communal areas.	Yes	Yes
Laundry	includes rental, maintenance & repair of communal laundry equipment including water rates and opening / closing the facilities (if applicable)	Yes	Yes
Lifts	Lifts have been a contentious issue with service charging, central Government dissuaded the practice in 2002 as lifts were 'integral to the tenancy', but some have later brought lifts maintenance into the service charge.	Yes	Yes
Communal furniture	Repair and replacement of furniture in communal spaces, e.g. sheltered communal lounge	Yes	Yes
Grounds Maintenance and Tree surgery	Costs of managing greenspaces can be recovered through service charges, a methodology to calculate the apportionment of charges between tenants can be created using GIS mapping.	Yes	Yes (general basic gardening for communal gardens such as lawn mowing, tree management, hedge maintenance, litter removal etc)
Health & Safety	H&S checks can include; legionella testing; ventilation systems, electrical inspections, fire detection, fire risk assessments, fire fighting equipment, alarm service, secure building access door entry systems, emergency lighting etc.	Yes	Yes

Potential service chargeable item	Notes	Eligible service charge under housing benefit rules?	Eligible service charge under universal credit rules?
CCTV	CCTV may be installed to deter and record crime and anti-social behaviour	Yes	Possibly not (DWP may consider a luxury). Can be eligible if provided for the purpose of maintenance of areas of internal or external communal use (to help maintain the availability of an eligible communal service or facility).
Children's play areas	Childrens play areas may be within the communal grounds of a housing scheme	Yes	Yes

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Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Initial Screening Form



Screening determines whether the policy has any relevance for equality, ie is there any impact on one or more of the 9 protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership*
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

<p>1. Policy/service/function title</p>	<p>Rent and Service Charge Policy</p>
<p>2. Lead officer (responsible for the policy/service/function)</p>	<p>Robert Longfoot, Tenant Services Corporate Manager</p>
<p>3. Is this a new or existing policy/service/function?</p>	<p>New policy covering an existing function</p>
<p>4. What exactly is proposed? (Describe the policy/service/ function and the changes that are being planned?)</p>	<p>The Policy, once adopted, will ensure that Babergh & Mid Suffolk Councils (BMSDC) comply with current legislation, recognised best practice, the requirements of the Housing Regulator, and our tenancy agreements.</p> <p>The policy proposes to enhance and expand the charging for services to tenants, to maximise income for the Councils and ensure that service charging is fair and transparent to all tenants.</p>
<p>5. Why? (Give reasons why these changes are being introduced)</p>	<p>Where a service is not fully accounted for in a service charge to the tenant receiving the service, the service is funded (partly or in full) by the general rent pool. Changing this approach, to charge for services only to tenants who receive them is referred to as 'de-pooling'.</p> <p>It is generally considered to be inequitable to fund or to subsidise the cost of services from the general rent pool, and fairer to charge the cost of services to those tenants who benefit directly, referred to as 'de-pooling'. De-pooling service charges will free-</p>

	<p>up limited funds of within the HRA budgets which are currently subsidising services to meet changes in national housing policy which benefit all tenants. Exemptions to this rule could be made if its application meant that a service became unaffordable, as could be the case with some support services. In these cases, the service charges would be pooled across multiple locations.</p> <p>The policy proposes that in future Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise income by charging for services where possible • Charge tenants for services in a fairer and more transparent way for services which they receive • Create opportunities for the provision of new and improved services
<p>6. How will it be implemented? (Describe the decision making process, timescales, process for implementation)</p>	<p>1.1 Once the Policy is approved we will set about bringing the policy to life in revised service charging methodologies. This is a complex undertaking and it is intended that this assessment and recovery of costs will be developed as a project over the next 1-4 years. We are aware that large scale introduction of additional service charging could become a matter of concern for tenants. Residents will always be consulted before any new services are introduced, or existing services changed, that will lead to an increased or additional service charge. It is proposed that we will implement changes in two stages;</p> <p>1.1.1 (1) Review the setting of service charges in sheltered and temporary accommodation and propose amendments at full Council in the normal manner ahead of rent increase in April 2023.</p> <p>1.2 (2) Build the foundations for de-pooling service charges in general needs accommodation, and improving service charge setting in leasehold accommodation, and produce an implementation plan to be signed off by Council prior to implementation.</p>

7. Is there potential for differential impact (negative or positive) on any of the protected characteristics?

Yes

Whilst the service charges will not be (and are not currently) set differently relating to any individuals' characteristics however they will vary between different accommodation types, where members of protected groups may be in a higher proportion e.g. a higher proportion of older tenants in sheltered housing and in general needs accommodation.

Following approval of the Policy, a substantial piece of work is required to calculate how we will 'de-pool' the service charges and apply charges in a fair and affordable way for tenants and leaseholders.

As per the briefing, the proposal is to...

- (1) Review the setting of service charges in sheltered and temporary accommodation and propose amendments at full Council in the normal manner ahead of rent increase in April 2023.
- (2) Build the foundations for de-pooling service charges in general needs accommodation, and improving service charge setting in leasehold accommodation, and produce an implementation plan to be signed off by Council prior to implementation.

Changing the way service charges are calculated and implementing service charges in new settings will have a financial impact on our tenants. De-pooling will result in differing outcomes for tenants, for example:

1. Changing the way sheltered housing and temporary accommodation services are charged for (de-pooling) will result in tenants paying either less, the same, or more for services provided at their scheme only. Regardless of the outcome, the result will be more equitable.
2. Tenants in general needs who do not currently pay a service charge will pay more when service charging is implemented in addition to their rental charge.

In preparing recommendations for Council approval, we will undertake an EQIA review of who will be charged and what the impact may be on any person or group with a protected characteristic.

	This review will form part of a later recommendation not Council.
8. Is there the possibility of discriminating unlawfully , directly or indirectly, against people from any protected characteristic?	No
9. Could there be an effect on relations between certain groups ?	No
10. Does the policy explicitly involve, or focus on a particular equalities group , i.e. because they have particular needs?	No

If the answers are 'no' to questions 7-10 then there is no need to proceed to a full impact assessment and this form should then be signed off as appropriate.

If 'yes' then a full impact assessment must be completed.

Authors signature 

Date of completion 15th June 2022

Any queries concerning the completion of this form should be addressed to the Equality and Diversity Lead.

* Public sector duty does not apply to marriage and civil partnership.

Agenda Item 13

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO:	BABERGH CABINET	REPORT NUMBER: BCa/22/11
FROM:	Councillor Jan Osborne Cabinet Member for Housing	DATE OF MEETING: 5th July 2022
OFFICER:	Gavin Fisk – Assistant Director - Housing	KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB342

GATEWAY TO HOMECHOICE ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To discuss the proposed amendments to the Gateway to Homechoice, Sub-Regional Allocations Policy for the assessment and Allocation of Social Housing in the Districts.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The proposed changes are predominantly related to National Legislative or Policy changes, therefore, to ensure compliance with our Statutory Framework, these changes are recommended and there are no other options to consider at this time.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To approve the Allocations Policy amendments, as set out in Appendix A of this report.
- 3.2 The Assistant Director for Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing has delegated authority to make minor changes to the Allocations Policy.

REASON FOR DECISION

- 1.1 To ensure that the Allocations Policy meets legal requirements.
- 1.2 To clarify wording in the policy so that key decisions are made fairly and consistently by all Gateway Local Authorities.
- 1.3 Delegated Authority for minor changes to reduce the burden of committee work, improve efficiency and be more responsive to minor changes required.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 Gateway to Homechoice is a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme which operates across the following seven local authorities:

- Babergh District Council
- Braintree District Council
- Colchester Borough Council
- East Suffolk Council

- Ipswich Borough Council
- Maldon District Council
- Mid Suffolk District Council

- 4.2 Choice Based Lettings requires people seeking social housing from Local Authorities or Registered Housing Providers to bid for empty homes that are advertised by the relevant landlord. The person with the highest priority who has bid for a given property will generally be made the offer.
- 4.3 Gateway to Homechoice was launched in May 2009; Waveney District Council joined the scheme on 13 January 2011; Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council merged on 1 April 2019 and formed East Suffolk Council.
- 4.4 The scheme has one allocations policy which governs which properties applicants are eligible for. It also includes the relative priority applicants are awarded to reflect their need for housing under the policy.
- 4.5 An allocations policy is a legal requirement for bodies allocating social housing. Some categories of applicants are given preference under legislation (called 'Reasonable Preference' categories). These include those with medical or welfare needs to move, homeless households and those living in overcrowded or unsuitable conditions. Other categories of applicants can then be given preference to reflect local circumstances, for example under the existing policy preference is given to existing tenants wanting to move to a smaller property.
- 4.6 Most applicants, apart from those owed the main homeless duty are permitted to bid on properties in all seven local authority areas; controls are also in place to ensure that no more than a certain proportion of homes in one district can be allocated to households migrating inwards from other areas.
- 4.7 The original policy was devised through consultation with members, applicants, tenants and partner organisations during 2008.
- 4.8 The table below sets out the changes made to the Allocations Policy, since its original adoption in 2008/9.

Year	Type of changes made to the policy
2011	Minor changes
2012	Legislative changes made nationally due to the implementation of the Localism Act (2011)
November 2015	Policy was re-written; procedural notes were removed from the policy and instead made into separate procedures for use by Officers
April 2018	Homelessness section of the policy updated to incorporate national changes made in the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017)
April 2019	Minor changes to reflect the merger between Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council
Sept 2021	Legislative changes made nationally due to the implementation of new statutory guidance regarding improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse in refuges or other type of temporary accommodation and the new Code of Guidance "Allocation of Accommodation: guidance for local authorities".

4.9 The policy has now been reviewed again and a number of minor changes have been made to the policy. Full details of recommended changes are in Appendix A and shown as “Tracked Changes”.

4.10 Areas for review were identified in the following ways:

- Analysis of trends and data from the housing register and lets
- Consultation with the Project Board
- Consultation with frontline staff
- Carrying out a formal review meeting with representatives from all local authority partner and finalising proposed changes to wording with this review group

4.11 In January 2022, the Ministry Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities updated their guidance ‘Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse’ and issued new a new ‘Code of Guidance called, Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local authorities’. Both make clear the obligations placed upon local authorities and provides suggestions on how local authorities and housing associations could improve information sharing practices at the tenancy nomination stage where there are safeguarding concerns, including, but not limited to, concerns about domestic abuse. This guidance has also been considered while developing and updating the Allocations Policy.

4.12 Changes made to the Allocations Policy include:

4.12.1 Addition and clarification of wording in relation to domestic abuse;

4.12.2 Adding clear wording regarding Sensitive Lets;

4.12.3 Adding wording regarding Care Leavers and their connection to the districts;

4.12.4 Amending various inconsistencies around homelessness;

4.12.5 Adding clear wording around effective dates for homeless applicants; and

4.12.6 Various minor word amendments to aide consistency across the policy.

4.13 The updated version of the Allocations policy with proposed changes is listed in Appendix A

5. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

5.1 The Allocation of Social Housing aligns with the vision set out in the Homes and Housing Strategy (2019), that everyone should have a suitable home, which enables them to build settled, safe and healthy lives within sustainable and thriving communities.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 No financial cost to make these changes.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 If we fail to make the required legislative changes to the Allocations Policy, then we could be in breach of our statutory duties under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as

amended). Therefore, the changes proposed ensure we meet all relevant Legislative and Policy obligations.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Corporate / Significant Business Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
If the council continues without the proposed policy amendments, it remains at risk of legal challenge.	(1) Highly Unlikely	(3) Bad	Members approved the proposed amendments to the allocation Policy, to ensure it meets all legislative requirements

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 Consultation has been carried out with the Gateway to Homechoice Project Board, which is Chaired by Ipswich Borough Council. Vice Chair is East Suffolk District Council.

9.2 Consultation has taken place with frontline staff who are involved in the day to day operational work associated with the Policy.

9.3 A formal review meeting with representatives from all local authority partners affected by the proposed changes has taken place, where specific wording for the Policy was agreed collectively.

9.4 The proposed changes are now being considered by Members at all 7 Local Authorities who are part of the Gateway to Homechoice Partnership.

9.5 The changes proposed ensure the policy meets legal requirements and also clarifies wording in the policy to ensure key decisions are made fairly and consistently by all Gateway Local Authorities. Therefore, there has not been a wider consultation with Members or Applicants.

9.6 When a further review is conducted, if more significant changes are proposed, then a full consultation process will take place, which will include applicants and Members. If minor changes are required, we seek delegated authority for the Assistant Director for Housing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to approve these.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

10.1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) required and attached at Appendix B.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no Environmental Implications related to the proposed Policy changes.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Revised Allocations Policy for the Gateway to Homechoice (with the Tracked Changes)	Attached – Appendix A
(b) Equality Impact Assessment	Attached – Appendix B

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

13.1 Current Gateway to Homechoice Allocations Policy

<https://www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk/content/Information/AllocationsPolicy2021>

13.2 Allocation of Accommodation Guidance for Local Authorities

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/allocation-of-accommodation-guidance-for-local-authorities>

13.3 Care Leavers Covenant

[Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government: Care Leaver Covenant offer - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

13.4 Domestic Abuse Guidance

[Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

14. REPORT AUTHORS

Justin King, Housing Needs & Standards Manager
Karen Carter, Choice Based Lettings Team Manager

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APPENDIX A

Allocations Policy – October 2022

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October 2022

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This is the Allocations policy for Gateway to Homechoice choice-based lettings scheme which consists of a single Housing Register and a choice-based lettings scheme for allocating social housing. The Partner Organisations (POs) are listed below along with information of each POs housing arrangements:

PO Name	Housing Arrangements
Babergh District Council	Stock Holding
Braintree District Council	LSVT Transferred their housing stock to Greenfields Community Housing.
Colchester Borough Council	Stock holding but management of their housing stock is undertaken by their ALMO, Colchester Borough Homes.
Ipswich Borough Council	Stock Holding
Maldon District Council	LSVT Transferred their housing stock to Moat Homes Ltd.
Mid Suffolk District Council	Stock Holding
East Suffolk Council	East Suffolk South: LSVT Transferred their housing stock to Flagship
	East Suffolk North: Stock Holding

1.2 Partnership Arrangements

The scheme is managed by a Project Board, made up of housing managers from the participating POs and Registered Providers. The scheme is subject to a consortium agreement. [Registered providers, charities, community land trusts and almshouses \(RPs\)](#), allocate properties using this scheme and are subject to a Service Level Agreement. The list of RPs which participate in the scheme are listed on the Gateway to Homechoice website: <http://www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk/Data/ASPPages/1/277.aspx>

We aim to provide a consistent approach to accessing housing across the diverse area of operation of the scheme and where possible, to ensure that applicants have choice over where they live.

1.3 Monitoring of the Policy

The Project Board will be responsible for ensuring the policy meets its stated objectives and is reviewed every three years, unless there are significant changes in legislation and meets its stated objectives and complies with legislative changes.

1.4 Objectives

The Key Objectives of the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme are:

1. To maintain a system that customers can understand and which is open, fair, user-friendly and offers a high level of operational consistency across the Gateway area of operation;
2. To facilitate genuine opportunities for mobility across the Gateway area of operation;
3. To meet the legal requirements for the allocation of housing as set out in the Housing Act 1996 Part VI as amended by the Homeless Act (2002), the Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA 2017). This policy also has regard to the following:
 - Homelessness Reduction Act 2017: Homeless Code of Guidance

- Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England (June 2012)
 - Providing social housing for local people: Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England (December 2013)
 - Right to Move (2015) Statutory Guidance
 - Gateway policy for discharging duties to statutory homeless applicants
 - POs housing strategies
 - POs homelessness strategies
 - POs tenancy strategies
 - Children’s Act 1989 and Children’s Act 2004
 - Public Sector Equality Duty
 - Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse (November 2018~~21~~)
 - Improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces community (June 2020)
 - Immigration and Social Security Coordination Act (ISSC) 2020
 - Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England (December 2020)
4. To deliver efficiency savings and share good practice across the Gateway area of operation;
 5. To recognise the needs and potential difficulties of social groups which may be less able to participate in the CBL Scheme and to ensure that such groups are able to take part in the CBL Scheme;
 6. To assist in minimising homelessness and reducing the use of temporary accommodation;
 7. To build partnerships relevant to the CBL Scheme across all sectors across the Gateway area of operation, statutory and voluntary as well as the private sector;
 8. To build community cohesion, enabling tenants to have choice in where they live and encouraging people to contribute positively to their community;
 9. To ensure that the CBL scheme enables the best use of stock

1.5 Demand

The demand for social housing is greater than levels of available social housing. The Housing Register exists to enable the POs ([Partner Organisations](#)) to prioritise households who are in the greatest housing need and to maximise their opportunities for rehousing.

1.6 Statement on choice

Applicants on the Housing Register will be allowed to bid on properties for which they are eligible in any part of the Gateway area of operation, subject to any restrictions which will be highlighted to the applicant if relevant.

Homeless applicants have less choice over where they live and are restricted to bid for properties in the local authority which owes them a statutory duty.

1.7 Equal Opportunities

This partnership promotes equality of opportunity and will ensure that all applicants are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity.

Chapter 2 - Reasonable Preference

2.1 Reasonable Preference

The Housing Act 1996 section 167 (2) sets out the five groups of applicants for whom reasonable preference must be considered. These groups are:

- Applicants who are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII (7) of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).
- Applicants who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the Housing Act 1996 (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by such authority under section 193(3).
- Applicants occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.
- Applicants who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to disability).
- Applicants who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).

Under this Allocations Policy, priority bands A, B and C, reflect the reasonable preference categories.

2.2 Additional Preference

Under section 167 (2) of the Housing Act 1996, the following groups of people are given additional preference if they meet the statutory reasonable preference categories (above) and have an urgent housing need:

- **Applicants who need to move urgently because of a life threatening illness or sudden disability** – applicants who meet this criterion will be assessed for additional priority on medical and/or welfare grounds;
- **Families with severe overcrowding which poses a serious health hazard** – applicants meeting this criterion will be assessed for additional priority on medical or welfare grounds;
- **Applicants who are homeless and require urgent re-housing as a result of violence, threats of violence (including intimidated witnesses) and those escaping serious anti-social behaviour or domestic violence-abuse** – applicants who meet this criterion will normally be assessed in accordance with homeless legislation. [\(Also see #5.12\)](#)

2.3 Armed forces¹, reserve forces¹ personnel and bereaved spouses or civil partners of armed forces personnel, under the following circumstances:

- (i) former members of the armed forces;
- (ii) serving members of the armed forces who need to move because of serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service;
- (iii) bereaved spouses, partners and civil partners of members of the armed forces, leaving services family accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner; or
- (iv) serving or former members of the reserve forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service

2.4 Main or joint applicants who meet the reasonable preference criteria and any of the criteria listed in points (i) – (iv) above, will be awarded additional preference by being prioritised within their band when they apply for eligible properties.

2.5 Local authority registered and approved foster carers who are responsible for “looked after children” may be considered for a higher banding and/or an extra bedroom entitlement. Applicants who meet the

¹ All references made to ‘armed forces’, ‘regular forces’ and ‘reserve forces’ throughout this document refers to all those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown.

criteria will be assessed on welfare grounds and will be expected to provide verification of their approval and registration from Social Services.

Chapter 3 - Who qualifies for housing?

3.1 This policy sets out arrangements for allocating housing accommodation within the meaning of Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. It also sets out the arrangements for the following allocations which fall outside of Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 – Allocation of Housing Accommodation. These include:

3.2 The following fall outside of this scheme and are not covered by Part 6 of the Housing Act:

- Mutual exchanges;
- Succession or assignment to someone entitled to succeed;
- Transfer of tenancy by court order in children and family proceedings;
- Properties empty for major repairs and alterations (decants).

3.3 Who is eligible to join the Housing Register?

Anyone aged 16 or over can apply to join the Housing Register, but not everyone will be eligible to join the Housing Register. The eligibility criteria for joining the Housing Register are as follows:

- The main applicant must not be subject to immigration control or be a person from abroad, unless they are an ‘eligible person’ as defined in the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006 No.1294) (‘the Eligibility Regulations’).
- The main applicant and their household must be habitually resident in the UK or the Common Travel Area. (The Common Travel Area includes the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Channel Islands and Isle of Man).

~~• If an applicant is 16 or 17 they will not be offered a tenancy unless they have a guarantor. This could include an applicant whose partner is 18 or older. Anyone aged 16 or over can apply to join the housing register, however under current law, applicants under the age of 18 cannot legally hold a tenancy.~~

3.4 POs will not be able to register anyone who is not eligible to be housed.

Suspensions

3.5 Some applicants will be eligible to join the register but may be suspended, that is they will not be allowed to participate in the scheme by bidding for properties for a temporary period. These include:

- Applicants successfully housed into a social housing property through the Gateway to Homechoice or via mutual exchange** – except in exceptional circumstances, these applicants will be permitted to re-join the Housing Register but will be suspended for 12 months from the start of their tenancy. Their effective date will be 12 months from start of the tenancy or the date of their application, whichever is later.
- Applicants housed temporarily in a PO’s private lettings scheme/non-secure/private landlord under a homeless duty** – these applicants may have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy with a private landlord with a mandatory six month period. Therefore, except in exceptional circumstances, they will be suspended until 56 days before the end of the fixed term of their tenancy.
- Applicants who are under any homelessness duty by a local authority which is not part of the Gateway partnership** - these applicants will be permitted to join the Housing Register but will be suspended while they remain under a homelessness duty to a non-partner authority.
- Applicants who have been placed in accommodation in the Gateway area of operation under any part 7 duty of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by a local authority which is not part of the Gateway partnership.** These applicants will be permitted to apply to join the Housing Register but will be suspended while within the initial 24 months of their tenancy.

- e) **Applicants who are not considered ready to sustain a tenancy because of their age or need for specialist support or who are currently residing in supported housing** - except in exceptional circumstances, these applicants will be suspended. The PO will be responsible for carrying out regular reviews of the applicant's circumstances and their readiness to move on and sustain a tenancy in conjunction with any specialist support providers
- f) **Applicants who have accepted an offer of housing but the property is not yet ready** – these applicants will normally be suspended from bidding.
- g) **Joint applicants of an existing social housing tenancy who no longer wish to live together and require separate housing applications** – these applicants will be suspended until their existing joint tenancy has been resolved except where the PO has assessed that a homeless duty is owed to both parties. In such situations, the PO reserves the right to allow the parties to participate in the scheme.
- h) **Applicants who repeatedly select and/or view properties which they have no intention of taking** – in exceptional circumstances, applicants can be suspended from participating if they repeatedly select and or view properties which they have no intention of accepting.
- i) **Applicants who accept properties** – applicants who sign a tenancy agreement but either do not move into the property or give notice within 12 months of moving in. These applicants will be suspended for up to 12 months.
- j) **Applicants who are unable to sufficiently verify their circumstances which causes the assessing PO to suspect that the application may be fraudulent** – these applicants may be suspended from bidding until they are able to provide evidence of their situation or circumstances

3.6 The decision to suspend an eligible applicant from bidding for properties will be considered following a full assessment of the individual circumstances. If a decision is taken to restrict an eligible applicant from participating in the scheme, the PO will decide on these cases explaining to the applicant:

- the reasons why they are temporarily not able to take part in the scheme;
- the date or circumstances when they will be able to resume participation in the scheme or request a review of the original decision;
- the right to a review of the PO decision – for more information on this see [Chapter 9](#).

False Information

3.7 Any applicant who deliberately attempts to deceive or defraud the POs in order to secure a home to which they are not entitled, may lose any home provided for them, and may also be prosecuted. The law imposes severe penalties, including substantial fines or imprisonment, where an offence is proved.

Chapter 4 - How the Housing Register operates

4.1 How to apply for housing

Those who want to apply for housing are required to complete an online application form. Applications can also be taken over the phone. The information given in this form will be used to assess the applicant's need for housing and to determine which band the applicant will be placed in.

The application form can be found here:

<https://www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk/Data/ASPPages/1/88.aspx>

4.2 All POs will ensure that:

- Advice and information is available free of charge to persons in their area about the right to make an application for an allocation of housing accommodation; and
- Any necessary assistance in making such an application for housing is available free of charge to persons in their area who are likely to have difficulty in doing so without assistance.

4.3 As part of the online application process, applicants will be asked to select a PO to hold their application. Applicants should select the PO for the district or borough where the person is currently living. If an applicant does not currently live in any of the seven PO areas, they should apply to the PO area where they hold a local connection. If an applicant does not have a local connection to any of the seven POs, they should apply to the PO where they wish to live.

4.4 Local Connection

Applicants will have a local connection to the area of operation of Gateway to Homechoice if they meet one or all of the criteria below:

- Their only or principal home is within the boundaries of the district or borough covered by the scheme.
- They were placed in specialised housing which is not available in the area of the scheme but had a local connection previously through residence.
- They (not a member of their household) are in permanent paid work in one of the partner districts or boroughs.
- They have a son, daughter, brother, sister, mother or father, who is aged 18 or over and lives in the area of the scheme and has done so for at least five years before the date of application.
- ~~A family member may live within different Gateway local authority areas as long as they have continuously lived within the Gateway area of operation for 5 years and this will give their close family member a local connection subject to any individual property restrictions, e.g. s106 or local lettings plan. The local connection will be where the family member currently lives and the corresponding local authority will host the application. The local connection will be where the family member currently lives and the corresponding local authority will host the application. Applicants who have this type of local connection will only be permitted to bid within the local authority area where their family member lives.~~
- Homeless care leavers aged 18 – 20 who have been looked after by either Essex County Council or Suffolk County Council will have a local connection with every housing authority within the county that looked after them.

4.5 The following people will also be deemed to have a local connection to the Gateway area of operation if:

- The main or joint applicant is serving in the regular forces² or who has served in the regular armed forces² within five years of the date of their application.
- The main or joint applicant has recently ceased or will cease to be entitled to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner where the spouse or civil partner has served in the regular forces and their death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service.
- The main or joint applicant is serving or has served in the reserve forces² and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable whether wholly or partly to that service.
- Spouses and civil partners who are required to leave accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following a breakdown in their relationship with their Service spouse or partner.

4.6 An applicant will lose their local connection if:

- Since applying to join the register they have moved outside the Gateway area of operation and no longer meet any other local connection conditions.
- They had a local connection through a close relative but the relative no longer resides in the area.
- They had a local connection through their employment but this no longer applies.

4.7 Each applicant's connection to the area of operation of the scheme will be assessed on an individual basis. Applicants who do not have a local connection are permitted to join the Housing Register but once their housing needs have been assessed, they will be placed in the band that is one lower than if they had a local connection. For example, if someone is assessed and would ordinarily be placed in band B, if they don't have a local connection to one of the districts or boroughs they will be placed in band C instead.

4.8 Rural Housing

There are rural exception sites throughout the Gateway area of operation. Rural exception sites are small sites where affordable housing is developed to meet the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents within the village/area or who have an existing family or employment connection. Properties on rural exception sites will usually be advertised listing the specific local connection criteria which an applicant will need to meet in order to be considered for the property, e.g. needs to have lived in a specific village/area for at least three years or has close family who have lived in the area for at least three years.

All applicants are responsible for ensuring that that all relevant local connection details have been included on their Housing Register application. ~~Current and former members of the armed forces will also need to demonstrate the relevant local connection criteria to be considered for a property which is on a rural exception site. ; they will need to demonstrate and provide evidence of the relevant local connection criteria to be considered for a property which is on a rural exception site.~~

4.9 Newly Built or Newly Acquired Properties

Newly built properties are usually restricted on their first let to those who have a local connection to the local authority area in which the properties have been built.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that they add all relevant local connection details to their Housing Register application.

² All references made to 'regular forces', armed forces' and 'reserve forces' throughout this document refers to all those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown.

4.10 Right to Move

Existing social tenants who need to move due to work are exempt from the local connection requirements in Chapter 4 subject to them meeting the following requirements:

- They have reasonable preference under s.166(3)(e) because of a need to move to the local authority's district to avoid hardship; and
- They must work in the Gateway area of operation, or have an offer of work in the Gateway area of operation with a genuine intention of taking up the offer of work and be able to provide evidence of this; and
- The work must not be short-term (less than 12 months) or marginal in nature, be ancillary to work in another district; or voluntary work. Work will normally be regarded as marginal in nature if it is less than 16 hours a week, unless the work is regular and payment substantial.

Government guidance says each local authority should aim to make 1% of lettings in this way; we will monitor to see if we achieve this.

4.11 Verification

On receipt of the complete application form, the relevant PO will assess the application and will request additional information, supporting evidence and references from current and previous landlords so that the applicant's housing need can be verified. Once the application has been assessed and the information has been verified, the PO will write to the applicant and will let them know:

- whether they have been accepted onto the Housing Register;
- which band they are in;
- their effective date;
- the type and size of property for which the applicant can bid; and
- if an adapted property is required.

If they have not been accepted onto the register, they will be told the reasons why and for how long they will be excluded.

An applicant will be given a maximum of 28 days to provide info for verification process after which time their application will be closed.

Effective Date

4.12 The effective date of an application will be the date that the application form is received by the PO, except in the following situations:

- When an applicant is moved from one band to a higher band. Their new effective date will be the date that their circumstances changed or when the PO is advised of this.
- Where an applicant receives priority on medical or welfare grounds. Their effective date will be the date that the application for the award is received by the PO.
- Where a woman is pregnant and the baby will make her eligible for a larger property, her effective date for the larger property will be the date that the baby is born.
- ~~Where an applicant has been accepted as being owed the main homelessness duty their Band B effective date will be the day after the relief duty ended (i.e. day 57) unless they already qualified for Band B with an earlier effective date. The exception will be where an application is/has been in the reduced preference band: in these circumstances the Band B date will only be effective from when the reduced preference reason was resolved.~~

4.13 Effective dates for homeless applications

- Band C Prevention - effective date – the date that the prevention duty was owed unless the applicant already has an award on the housing register with an earlier effective date. In this situation, the applicant would retain their effective date from their previous housing register award.
- Band C Relief – effective date – the date that the relief duty was owed – i.e. their assessment date, or after the prevention duty has ended and has been unsuccessful, if they were owed the prevention duty.
- Band B Options advice Prevention – the date that the prevention duty was owed or the date that the Options advice award was applied to their homeless case at the discretion of the awarding local authority unless there is an agreement or notification to another LA due to domestic abuse.
- Band B Options advice – Relief – the date that the relief duty was owed or the date that the Options advice award was applied to their homeless case at the discretion of the awarding local authority unless there is an agreement or notification to another LA due to domestic abuse.
- Band B Main duty – the date that the main duty takes effect – i.e. the date after the Relief duty ended.
- Band A Homeless in Severe Need – the date that the prevention, relief or main homelessness duty was owed or the date that the Homeless in Severe Need award was applied to their homeless case at the discretion of the awarding local authority unless there is an agreement or notification to another LA due to domestic abuse.

Applicants' consent and declaration

4.1314 When an applicant applies for housing, they must complete a declaration. The submission and confirmation of the declaration section contained in the online application form, will be taken as the applicant's formal declaration and agreement, confirming that:

- The information provided by the applicant is complete, true and accurate.
- The applicant will inform the POs immediately of any change in circumstances.
- The applicant understands that information will be shared with all the POs and all participating RPs together with other relevant organisations in order to complete or verify information or to prevent fraud or protect public funds in other ways.
- The applicant consents to POs making enquiries of any relevant persons to confirm the information on the application form is correct, or to add to the information given where this is necessary to complete an assessment of need or consider suitability for housing.
- The applicant gives permission to take up references from current and previous landlords
- The applicant gives consent for the PO to carry out a risk assessment

Who can be included on an application?

4.1415 Subject to Paragraph 4.1718(a), an applicant may include anyone on their application if they usually reside with the main applicant as a member of the family/household. This includes any close blood relative, marital or co-habiting partners or someone who might reasonably be expected to reside with the main applicant. Any adult who is asking to be accepted or who has been accepted as being part of a household but who is not the lead or joint applicant will be required to sign a declaration acknowledging that the relevant local authority may undertake enquiries into their circumstances.

Lodgers or live-in carers are not usually included as part of the main applicant's household and so would not be included in a housing application. If an applicant requires an extra bedroom for their carer, they should apply for this under the [Welfare criteria](#).

Two households forming one household on an application

4.1516 Subject to Paragraph 4.1718(a), when two households wish to form one household on one housing application, the PO will complete a full assessment of the housing situation. The assessment will establish if either applicant's existing accommodation is adequate to meet the needs of the new household structure.

4.16-17 If either applicant's accommodation is deemed adequate for the needs of the new household structure, the PO will advise the household to reside in the suitable property and will award them band E (adequately housed).

4.17-18 If both applicants' accommodation is assessed as being unsuitable for the new household structure, if appropriate, the household will qualify for additional bedroom entitlement but overcrowding priority will not be considered for 12 months from the date the application with the intention to form a new household was received.

4.18-19 The PO will assess to see if the application is eligible for additional priority on [welfare grounds](#). If welfare priority is not applicable, the application will be reviewed after 12 months (from the date the new household was formed or the date of application, whichever is later), and if appropriate at that point, overcrowding priority will be applied. If the priority band increases, the effective date will be amended to the date the priority changes.

Joint applications

4.19-20 Subject to Paragraph 4.1718(a), where more than one eligible applicant wishes to have a shared application, they will be considered as joint applicants. This will include married couples, civil partners, co-habiting couples and couples living apart. In exceptional circumstances the PO may also include others, such as friends and relatives. The landlord will decide at the time of letting whether to offer a joint or sole tenancy.

4.2021(a) If an applicant has applied as homeless and is owed a duty under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), they cannot add someone to their Housing Register application who is not on their application for homelessness assistance unless otherwise agreed by the relevant local authority.

4.20-21 (b) If an applicant has applied as homeless and is owed a duty under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), they cannot add someone who is reasonably expected to reside with them to become a joint applicant on the Housing Register.

4.21-22 For a joint application, both applicants ~~have to~~**must** be eligible to join the Housing Register.

Exception to sections 4.14-15 – 4.21-22 inclusive: someone can be added to a Housing Register application only if there is no duty owed under part 7 Housing Act 1996 (as amended). In that event the household composition must remain the same as that accepted under the homelessness provisions, unless otherwise agreed by the relevant local authority. Further detail about adding someone to a Housing Register application is in section 4.3233.

4.2223 Joint tenants of a social housing tenancy, who no longer want to live in the same property, can apply to join the Housing Register. Applicants will be suspended from the scheme (i.e. unable to bid for properties) until the issues of assignment relating to the existing tenancy have been resolved. POs will advise the applicants to seek advice from their current landlord or professional legal services, before signing over any rights to the existing tenancy (as this could result in one party being made homeless). POs may accept applications from one or both parties. In this situation, an application will be reassessed according to their current circumstances

4.2324 **An applicant or household member can only be part of one active Housing Register application.**

Applications from previous applicants (those housed or whose application has been closed)

4.2425 Applicants who have previously been registered and their application has been closed can re-apply to join the register using their existing log in number. Previous joint applicants who wish to apply separately will need to have their application split and will be provided with another log in number.

4.2526 Applicants previously housed into social housing will be permitted to re-apply to join the Housing Register; however, if they apply during the first 12 months after moving, they will receive an effective date of 12 months after their tenancy began.

4.2627 Types of applicants

Applicants who apply to join the Housing Register will be in one of the following categories:

- **Transfer applicants** - are those who are existing tenants of a council or housing association property within the Gateway area of operation.
- **Homeless Prevention applicants** – these are applicants to whom one of the POs owes the prevention duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- **Homeless Relief applicants** – these are applicants to whom one of the POs owes the relief duty as stated in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- **Homeless main duty applicants** – these are applicants to whom one of the POs owes the main housing duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- **Direct applicants** - all other applicants.

Renewals

4.2728 The POs carry out an annual renewal process to ensure applications are accurate and up-to-date. Applicants will be notified of the need to complete the renewal through their Gateway account. It is the responsibility of an applicant to complete the renewal and provide any updates to their current circumstances.

Applicants will usually be given 28 days to complete a renewal. If an applicant fails to complete the renewal, their application will be closed.

4.2829 Closing a Housing Register Application

A Housing Register application will be closed in the following circumstances:

- at the applicant's request;
- if the applicant becomes ineligible for housing;
- when the applicant has been housed through the scheme;
- when a statutory homeless applicant has been housed into private sector accommodation;
- where an applicant does not maintain their application through the re-registration process or where they move and do not provide a contact address; or
- if the applicant fails to respond to a request for further information within a reasonable time; or
- if a sole applicant has died.

4.2930 If an applicant whose application has been closed wishes to re-join the Housing Register, a PO may agree to reinstate a closed application. Normally this will only apply within 3 months of closure although this will be at the discretion of the relevant PO. The applicant will retain the same effective date if their application is reinstated within 3 months of closure, assuming that there is no change in their circumstances or household make up.

4.3031 Data Protection

Each PO has its own Data Protection Policy which can be requested from the relevant PO. All data provided under this scheme will be treated in accordance with the POs' Data Protection Policies.

Employees and members of the Council or an RP and their relatives

Applicants who are related to a Councillor or a Member of the Board of an RP, or are a member, or related to a member of staff of the Council, will be asked to declare this on their application form.

4.3432 Depending on the nature and extent of the relationship with the local authority, Councillor or RP, the manager of the assessing PO may refer the application to another local authority to ensure that it is fairly assessed. The agreed process is to refer the applicant to the local authority as follows and notify the applicant of this decision:

- Babergh to East Suffolk
- Braintree to Colchester
- Colchester to Ipswich
- Ipswich to Maldon
- Maldon to Braintree
- Mid Suffolk to East Suffolk
- East Suffolk to Babergh/Mid Suffolk

4.3233 The receiving local authority will retain responsibility for the application, establishing eligibility and awarding appropriate priority. The applicant will be notified in writing of the accepting local authority and the outcome of their Housing Register assessment.

Change in Circumstances

4.3334 If there is a change in the main applicant's circumstances, for example, birth of a child, moving house or another change in circumstance it is the applicant's responsibility to update their online housing application via the Gateway system, providing the details of e.g. the new household member/new address etc. These changes will need to be verified using the verification procedure.

4.3435 An applicant's band may increase or decrease following a change in circumstances. If the priority band increases, the effective date will be amended to the date that the PO was informed of the applicant's change in circumstances.

4.3536 If the lead applicant wishes to add new household member/s to their application, the housing application will need to be updated, providing the new household member's details. New, eligible, non-dependent household members will be included in the assessment for bedroom entitlement. After 12 months, the application will be reviewed and if appropriate at that point, overcrowding priority will be applied.

4.3637 Feedback

After each advertising cycle, feedback on successful lets is provided on the Gateway to Homechoice website at the following link:

<http://www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk/Data/ASPPages/1/75.aspx>

The feedback will include the following:

- property size and type;
- if the property was let as social or affordable rent;
- location of the property;
- number of bids for each property;
- priority band of the successful applicant; and
- effective date of the successful applicant.
- Properties which are let as a direct let.

No personal information about bidders is shared publicly.

Chapter 5 - How housing need is assessed

5.1 We use a banding system to identify those in the greatest housing need and to reflect the aims and objectives of our policy. We will decide which band the application will be placed in depending on the information provided in the application form. The following tables provide details on the bands:

Band A – those with critical or urgent needs
Critical medical/welfare award, including emergency situations
Applicants in severe need to whom the local authority has accepted a main duty, relief duty or prevention homeless duty
Council or RP tenants who are currently in three, four or five or larger bedroom, general needs accommodation, who wish to downsize and will release one or two bedrooms within the Gateway area of operation
Applicants with multiple needs - if someone has two or more needs in band B, they will be moved into band A.
Nominations - move on from specified agencies – at the discretion of the PO
Negotiated surrender of a tenancy within the Gateway area of operation
Qualifying Agricultural Workers within the Gateway area of operation
Relationship breakdowns (Council properties where they are under occupying but have been assessed as having housing need) within the Gateway area of operation
Successions - Council or RP succession tenants who are under occupying their property in the Gateway
Releasing a property in need (Council or RP properties) or where it prevents the Council or Registered Provider making expensive alterations to the property within the Gateway area of operation.

Band B – applicants with serious needs
Statutory homeless applicants accepted as being owed the main housing duty
Applicants with a serious medical/welfare award
Council or RP tenants who are currently in one or two bedroom general needs accommodation and who wish to downsize and will release one bedroom within the Gateway area of operation
Nominations - move on from specified agencies – at the discretion of the PO
Options advice - POs have discretion to award band B to applicants who are under either the Prevention or Relief duty (HRA 2017), who are likely to lose/have lost their accommodation through no fault of their own, for which there is no legal redress, who are assessed by the particular scheme PO as likely to be in priority need, who are receiving housing advice from the particular scheme Council to prevent/relieve homelessness and for whom social housing is assessed by the PO as being the only/most appropriate solution
Tenants who are overcrowded in social or private rented housing within the Gateway area of operation (this does not apply to applicants who are residing in temporary accommodation and who are overcrowded).
Applicants who are required to leave their property as a result of an emergency prohibition order served in relation to the premises under the Housing Act 2004 within the Gateway area of operation
A prohibition order or demolition order has been served or is about to be served in relation to the applicants dwelling by the Private Sector Team of the particular scheme Council. This indicates that the property contains one or more Category 1 Hazards that probably cannot be remedied.
An improvement notice has been, or is about to be served in relation to the applicant's dwelling by the Private Sector Housing Team of the particular scheme Council and: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The remedies that are needed to reduce the hazard will require the property to be vacated for a significant period of time; 2. The cost of the remedies is beyond the means of the applicant (where applicable); or 3. The remedies will make the property unsuitable for occupation by the applicant.
Applicants assessed as meeting band A criteria, but with no local connection to the Gateway area
Multiple needs - applicants with four or more needs in band C will be moved into band B.

Right to Move applicants

Band C – those with medium need for housing

Moderate medical/welfare award

Applicants who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days and are owed the Prevention duty (HRA 2017) by one of the POs

Applicants who are homeless and owed the Relief duty (HRA 2017) by one of the POs

Applicants who are homeless but who are assessed by the PO as not being in priority need

Valid notice to quit – which has not been instigated by any breach of tenancy

Applicants who, following a homelessness application, have been deemed by the particular scheme PO to be in priority need, but intentionally homeless.

Tenants who are overcrowded in social or private rented housing outside of the Gateway area of operation but who have a local connection to the Gateway area

Applicants who are either sharing facilities or lacking facilities or who are of no fixed abode

Fixed term licensees – this applies to applicants living in supported accommodation

A hazard awareness notice has been served by the Private Sector Housing Team of the particular scheme Council, in relation to a Category 1 or 2 hazard at the applicant's dwelling and:

- The remedies that are needed to reduce the hazard will require the property to be vacated for a significant period of time; or
- The cost of the remedies are beyond the means of the applicant (where applicable); or
- The remedies will make the property unsuitable for occupation by the applicant

A suspended improvement notice or prohibition order exists but a foreseeable change in the applicants circumstances will cause it to become active and result in a high priority situation.

Applicants assessed as meeting band B criteria, but with no local connection to the Gateway area of operation

Band D – reduced preference

Applicants assessed as meeting band C criteria, but with no local connection to the Gateway area of operation

Applicants with reduced preference

i) where the household is entitled to reasonable preference but is found to have:

- Sufficient resources to buy a property on the open market
- Sufficient resources to buy a property through a low-cost home ownership scheme
- Sufficient resources to rent a property in the private sector

All adult household members' incomes will be considered as part of the household income; current financial limits are available to applicants on request.

This does not apply to transfer applicants who are existing local authority or RP tenants.

Members of the armed forces, who have received a lump sum payment as compensation for an injury or disability sustained during active service, will not be subject to reduced reference on grounds of significant resources.

Deliberate Deprivation of assets – applicants who have had significant income or savings/capital which they have deliberately spent instead of using to pay for housing costs may be considered to have deliberately deprived themselves of their assets and may also be placed in band D. Examples of this include one or all of the following:

- Giving away a lump sum of money
- Transferring title deeds of a property to someone else
- Suddenly spending a lot of money in a way which is unusual from normal spending
- Gambling money

- Using savings to buy possessions, such as jewellery or a car, which would usually then be excluded from the financial assessment test

When a PO thinks that an applicant has deliberately deprived themselves of assets, they will assess the application and what they have used their money for to assess whether they should be placed in band D.

ii) where the applicant would be entitled to reasonable preference but the behaviour of the applicant (or member of their household) affects their suitability to be a tenant, for example:

- former tenant arrears
- damaging a property
- obtaining a previous tenancy fraudulently
- notice being served on a tenant because of their own actions e.g. rent arrears or anti-social behaviour
- intentionally homeless applicants with rent arrears
- an applicant has been evicted from a home owned by a PO or RP
- an applicant has abandoned a property without giving the required notice to their landlord
- an applicant has assaulted or harassed an employee or agent of a PO or RP
- an applicant or members of their prospective household have committed acts causing or likely to cause a nuisance or annoyance to their neighbours or others in the locality of where they live or where they have previously lived
- failure to maintain a rented property in a proper and reasonable condition
- an applicant or member of their household has committed acts of anti-social behaviour
- Failing to repay money owed to a PO relating to rent deposit, rent in advance, rent arrears, mortgage arrears
- Applicants who are accepted as being owed the main housing duty under homelessness provisions and who are in temporary accommodation but building up rent arrears sufficient to be bypassed on shortlists
- Applicants who are accepted as being owed the main homeless duty and who are in temporary accommodation but whose behaviour is such that eviction proceedings have begun

Band E – applicants who do not have a housing need

Applicants who live in a property that is adequate to meet their needs in terms of property type, size and facilities

Owner-occupiers

Applicants in prison

A suspended prohibition order or improvement notice has been or will be served by the Private Sector Housing Team of the particular scheme Council, in relation to the applicants dwelling, but the criteria leading to it becoming active are not met by the applicant.

A hazard awareness notice or improvement notice has been or will be served by the Private Sector Housing Team of the particular scheme Council, in relation to the applicants dwelling, but the specified remedies are low cost and straightforward to achieve.

Applicants living in a caravan, mobile home or boat but who don't have a housing need

Applicants in tied accommodation, but no housing need.

Bandband F – this is a non-bidding band and only applicants who are waiting for extra care or some other form of supported housing or those who are being directly matched to a property will be placed in band F.

Medical Assessments

5.2 Medical assessments will be carried out for applicants who believe that their medical condition or disability is affected by their current accommodation. The applicant will be required to complete a self-assessment medical form showing the impact that their current property has on their medical condition or disability. These forms will be assessed by the relevant PO and the applicant may be placed in a higher band depending on what impact their current accommodation is having on their medical condition.

5.3 Applicants may also be awarded priority if the applicant is asking to be re-housed so they can receive care or specialist support.

5.4 Extra medical information may be sought from the applicant’s GP, hospital consultant, health visitors and other relevant parties. The table below is used to act as a guide to priority:

Effect on Housing	Medical Problem			
	Critical - 1	Serious - 2	Moderate - 3	Low -4
Critical - 1	Band A	Band B	Band C	No award
Serious - 2	Band B	Band B	Band C	No award
Moderate - 3	Band C	Band C	Band C	No Award
Low - 4	No award	No award	No award	No award

5.5 Applicants who are under a homelessness prevention duty, a homelessness relief duty or who are accepted as being owed the main housing duty under homelessness legislation ~~will not be eligible for medical priority cannot have a medical award added to their Housing Register application. Applicants who have been awarded band C under the homeless Prevention duty may retain a medical band if one already exists on their Housing Register application when the prevention duty commences. If the Prevention duty ends and the applicant is then owed the Relief duty, the medical award will be removed from their application.~~ If a homeless applicant under any of the 3 main homelessness duties listed above has a medical need for an extra bedroom due to, for example, ~~needing a live-in carer this will be assessed under welfare grounds.~~ If a homeless applicant under any of the 3 main homelessness duties listed above has a medical need for an extra bedroom due to, for example, needing a live-in carer, this will be assessed by the relevant local authority and property size required will be amended on their housing register application if necessary/evidenced.

5.6 If a homeless applicant’s temporary accommodation becomes unsuitable on medical grounds the PO will first look to see if alternative temporary accommodation can be found.

~~**5.7** Applicants who have been awarded bands C relief, or band B Options advice under relief or Band band B main accepted duty of the homelessness legislation cannot be assessed under medical or welfare grounds as the latter are based on occupation of permanent accommodation.~~

~~**5.8** Applicants who have been awarded band C under the homeless prevention duty may retain a medical band if one exists on their housing register Housing Register application when the prevention duty commences.~~

~~**5.97** Applicants under band B options advice, either prevention or relief, or who are under the main homelessness duty cannot be given any additional awards on the housing register Housing Register. may not retain or obtain any other additional awards on the Housing Register. The only additional awarded permitted is if an applicant is placed in band A Homeless in severe need.~~

Wheelchair, Mobility and Adapted Housing

5.108 An applicant should inform the relevant PO if they have mobility needs. Further information about the applicant’s needs may be sought from the applicant’s GP/consultant. Applicants who need a property suitable for wheelchairs users will be assessed by an occupational therapist before an offer can be considered.

5.119 The following are the mobility categories used in this scheme:

Code 1 – the applicant is a full-time wheelchair user and needs a home which is accessible for wheelchair use both indoors and outdoors.

Code 2 – the applicant needs a home with a level access shower.

Code 3 – Ground floor accommodation is required as the applicant can't use stairs.

Welfare

5.102 At the applicant's request, the PO will request relevant evidence to support their application. The PO will then review the full situation, taking into account the level of vulnerability of the household members. Each case will be assessed on individual circumstances.

The table below is used as a guide to priority:

Need for settled suitable accommodation	Level of Vulnerability			
	Critical - 1	Serious - 2	Moderate - 3	Low - 4
Critical - 1	Band A	Band B	Band C	No award
Serious - 2	Band B	Band B	Band C	No award
Moderate -3	Band C	Band C	Band C	No award
Low - 4	No award	No award	No award	No award

5.113 If a homeless applicant or household which is owed a homelessness duty by the PO, is considered to be particularly vulnerable and/or may be at significant risk in temporary accommodation, the PO can place them in the category of 'Applicants in severe need to whom the local authority has accepted a homelessness duty' which will increase their band to band A.

5.124 Applicants cannot be awarded priority under both the medical and welfare schemes. If an applicant applies for both, once their applications have been assessed, they will be placed in the higher band which reflects either their medical or welfare needs.

[Applicants who have been given a higher welfare or medical award due to DA will be offered the same tenure as their existing tenure when they are housed via the register.](#)

[Due to the complex nature of those who are fleeing from domestic abuse there is no one procedure which can be applied to every applicant's situation so local authorities will use their discretion to assess each application individually and will usually use one of the following options to resolve housing need/homelessness when fleeing from domestic abuse:](#)

- [1. Make a homeless application – this may be the best option where the applicant is unable to remain in their home due to domestic abuse](#)
- [2. Awarding the applicant with a welfare award on the Housing Register and allowing the applicant to bid for properties](#)
- [3. Making an applicant a direct let from the Housing Register – this will depend on the availability of suitable properties in areas which are considered safe for the applicant/household to live in](#)

[The local authority may use more than one of the above options for a household – e.g. they may initially be placed in band A Welfare and subsequently given a direct let when a suitable property becomes available.](#)

Succession rights when a council or RP tenant dies

5.1513 When a secure Council tenant or an Assured RP tenant dies a person living with them at the time of their death may have a right to succeed the tenancy. This will depend on the individual tenancy agreement that the tenant had with their landlord. The remaining tenant, where there is a joint tenant or other persons living in the home will need to liaise with the relevant landlord to see if they have a succession right.

5.1614 If the remaining tenant succeeds the tenancy but is then under-occupying the property and wishes to move, if the landlord agrees, these applicants will be placed in band A Succession. If there is no succession, then a Notice to Quit will be served and the applicant will be placed in band C.

Applicants who have deliberately made their housing situation worse

5.1715 The PO will consider whether an applicant has deliberately made their housing situation worse to increase their housing need, and consequently improve their chances of re-housing through the register.

5.1816 If it is decided that the applicant has made their housing situation worse, for example, by moving into smaller private rented accommodation, or by moving another family in with them to create overcrowding, they will remain in the band that reflected their housing need in their previous accommodation. In 12 months' time, this decision may be reviewed by the relevant PO on request. If the restriction is removed, the applicant will be placed in the band that reflects current circumstances. Their effective date will be the date they moved to the new band.

Owner-occupiers

5.1917 Owner-occupiers or applicants who own other residential property are eligible to join the Housing Register but will be placed below other groups in our lowest priority band (band E).

5.2018 Owner-occupiers in band E will be able to express an interest for a property if they wish to do so, however, because a Council or RP tenancy can only be held as a main home, homes are not usually offered to applicants who still own their home or are paying a residential mortgage. An exception may be considered where an older owner-occupier wants to express an interest in low demand sheltered accommodation.

5.2119 Generally, owner-occupiers will not be able to move to another band unless they meet the criteria for critical or serious medical or welfare priority (band A or B).

5.2220 In assessing whether there is a critical or serious medical or welfare need the following information will be taken into account:

- The effect of their current housing on their medical or welfare needs;
- Whether they can afford to meet their housing needs from their own resources and whether the type of accommodation required is available in the private sector.

5.2321 If it is decided that the applicant is unable to buy or privately rent suitable accommodation and they have a serious or critical medical or welfare need they may be placed in band A or B as appropriate and will be permitted to bid for and if successful, may be offered the type and size of accommodation which meets their needs.

Chapter 6 - Allowed property sizes

6.1 The following table shows what size of property applicants will be eligible for within this scheme. Applicants are expected to make best use of bedroom sizes in their property. For example, the best use of bedrooms within a two-bedroom property might be for an adult to sleep in the smaller of the bedrooms and their children to share the larger bedroom:

Household Size	Bedroom entitlement
1 adult	Bedsit or 1 bedroom
2 adults living together as a couple	1 bedroom
2 adults living together, but not as a couple	2 bedrooms
1 adult (or 2 adults living together as a couple) expecting their first child	2 bedrooms
1 adult (or 2 adults living together as a couple) with 1 child	2 bedrooms
1 adult (or 2 adults living together as a couple) with 2 children of the same sex	2 bedrooms
1 adult (or 2 adults living together as a couple) with 2 children of the opposite sex, where both children are under 10 years old	2 bedrooms
1 adult (or 2 adults living together as a couple) with either: 2 children of the opposite sex where one child is aged 10 years or more 2 children and the applicant or their partner is pregnant 3 children 4 children (all of one sex or 2 boys and 2 girls)	3 bedrooms
1 adult (or 2 adults living together as a couple) with either: 4 children (3 children of the same sex and 1 child of the opposite sex who is over 10 years old)	4 bedrooms
OR	
Up to 6 children	
1 adult (or 2 adults living together as a couple) with 6 or more children	5 or more bedrooms

6.2 Children of the same sex are expected to share a bedroom unless there is a medical or welfare reason why the children cannot share a bedroom. Medical and welfare needs will be assessed using the scheme's standard processes. Adult children will not be given additional bedroom entitlement but will be considered as children of the household and will be assessed in accordance with the table above.

6.3 Applicants who are given a medical award because they require an additional bedroom cannot be given both a medical award and an overcrowding award for the same, additional bedroom requirement.

Exceptions to the Property Size Rules

6.4 Transfer Incentive Scheme applicants who are downsizing are permitted to bid for properties with one more bedroom than their allowed size.

6.5 In exceptional circumstances, and with the agreement of the landlord, an applicant will be allowed to move into a property that is smaller than their needs, if doing so improves their situation. For example, if an applicant has 4 children and is entitled to a four bedroom property, but is living in a 2 bedroom flat, their application for a 3 bedroom property may be considered and if successful these applicants will be suspended from bidding for a year as detailed in **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.-5.**

6.6 Similarly, where a household with a 2 bedroom need and is assisted to secure 1 bedroom accommodation in the Private Rented Sector or Supported Housing Sector under a homelessness duty their

Housing Register application will be suspended for 12 months or until a valid notice is served, whichever is sooner. Typically, this will be a household including an expectant mother or a newborn child.

Parents with 'staying access' to dependent children or shared residency orders

6.7 Applicants with a shared residence order or staying access for children are not automatically entitled to bedrooms for their children. The general principle is that a child needs one home of an adequate size, and that the POs will not accept responsibility for providing a second home for children.

Applicants with a medical or social need for a larger property

6.8 Applicants can apply for an extra bedroom due to their medical or social needs. Their circumstances will be considered and evidence supporting the need for an extra room will be required.

Extra rooms for carers

6.9 If an applicant needs an extra room for a carer the PO will investigate and seek advice on the need for an extra room. The PO will make the final decision but it is usually expected that Social Services should be able to give supporting evidence that a 'live in' carer is needed.

6.10 Applicants in receipt of housing benefit/universal credit will need to be aware that from April 2013 they may not qualify for housing benefit/universal credit for an extra bedroom. In such circumstances the applicant will be responsible for paying any shortfall and may be subject to affordability checks prior to signing a tenancy.

6.11 Bedroom Sizes

- Bedrooms of less than 6.7 square metres are not considered for use by more than one child.
- Rooms of less than 8 square metres are not seen as suitable for use by more than one 'non-dependent' adult (aged 16 or over)
- Rooms between 6.7 – 8 square meters are not considered suitable for more than two children and a second bedroom occupied by four or more children is considered unreasonable

Chapter 7 - Choice Based Lettings

Finding a Home

7.1 Properties which are available for applicants will be advertised in the following ways:

On the Gateway to Homechoice website - www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk.

In a property newsletter if requested, and at the discretion of the PO to:

- RPs;
- voluntary and other agencies;
- applicants in bands A and B; and
- applicants who require sheltered accommodation and who require assistance with bidding.

7.2 Advertisements will include information about the property, which can include the following:

- a description of the home;
- a photograph of the property;
- rental type (e.g. social or affordable rent);
- rental charge and period (e.g. weekly, monthly, 4 weekly);
- service charges;
- length of tenancy (e.g. fixed term tenancy and number of years);
- special facilities; and
- adaptations made to the property

7.3 The advertisement will also highlight if there are any special criteria for letting the property, for example if a property is only available to main duty homeless applicants, those applicants with a local connection or applicants of a certain age range, to enable local authorities to balance needs and resources effectively.

7.4 The property advert will show who is able to bid for the property.

7.5 Available properties are advertised on a weekly cycle; applicants can bid for up to two properties per cycle.

7.6 To be considered for a property, bids must be placed by the advertising cycle deadline.

Sheltered accommodation

7.7 When allocating sheltered housing the same general principles as for other property types are followed. In addition, an assessment of the applicant's suitability and need for support must be completed before a sheltered tenancy is offered. If the applicant is considered unsuitable for sheltered accommodation, they will be advised and given advice on homes more suitable to their needs.

Allocation of extra-care sheltered housing or very sheltered housing

7.8 The eligibility rules means that applicants who want extra-care sheltered or very sheltered are assessed on both their housing and support needs. For more information on these schemes please contact the relevant PO.

7.9 Applicants waiting for extra care or very sheltered housing will usually be placed in band F (non-bidding band).

Bungalows

General Needs Bungalows

7.10 Some bungalows will be let to applicants of any age. These are known as general needs bungalows and will be advertised as such.

Restricted bungalows

7.11 Many of the bungalows advertised within the scheme are designed for older people, or people who have limited mobility. These are known as restricted bungalows.

Preference for restricted bungalows will be given to:

- Those aged 60 or over;
- Those under 60 with a medically assessed need for a bungalow;
- Those who will release a property that is needed by the Council as decided by the Transfer Incentive Scheme (TIS) aged between 40 and 60.

Direct Lets

7.12 Occasionally, a property may be let to an applicant directly, without it being advertised on the Gateway website. This may happen in the following circumstances:

- extra care and very sheltered properties;
- if a property is needed to house someone in a social housing property temporarily;
- where someone has to be moved immediately;
- where a specially adapted property has been built for a specific person;
- where the landlord needs to do major repairs to their property or redevelop the area and the property needs to be vacant for this work to be carried out (also called decant);
- where a homeless applicant has either failed to bid or failed to bid on a property on which they could be successful, or has refused a property and the PO needs to move them on from temporary accommodation;
- if there is no suitable temporary accommodation and the PO would be breaching their duty under homelessness law;
- where it has been deemed that the person is at risk or is a risk to others and it is not appropriate for them to bid through the scheme;
- for applicants who are currently in RP or council housing within the Gateway area of operation and who are fleeing domestic [violence-abuse](#) or in other exceptional circumstances (known as management moves) as agreed by the relevant local authority and housing provider;
- Properties which have been adapted to a very high standard, for example, a fully accessible property, may not be included in the scheme and will be directly allocated;
- Retiring scheme managers, relationship breakdown and under-occupying successors who are not bidding.

7.13 The outcome of each letting cycle is published on the website and all direct lets are reported here.

7.14 Applicants may be placed in ~~Band~~ band F which is a non-bidding category when a property is being let to them directly.

~~The Essex-wide agreement for victims of domestic abuse~~

~~**7.15** This is a countywide agreement which a number of POs and RPs in Essex have signed up to. The agreement aims to increase the accommodation options for social housing tenants who need to move because of domestic abuse where they are at a significant risk of harm. Lettings made under this agreement will usually be let as direct lets.~~

7.1615 Bidding Restrictions

Some applicants are subject to the restricted bidding arrangements as detailed below:

Location Restrictions

Applicant type	Restriction
Applicants who are owed the main housing duty by the local authority under the homelessness legislation and who are not at risk of violence, threats or harassment in that area.	These applicants are only permitted to bid within the awarding local authority area.
Applicants in severe need to whom the local authority has accepted a homelessness duty (band A) and who are not at risk of violence threats or harassment in that area.	
Applicants who are assessed as likely to be owed the main housing duty under the homelessness legislation, who have been awarded an Options advice band B and who are not at risk of violence, threats or harassment in the area.	
band C Applicants under any homelessness duty, including non-priority need applicants and applicants who are intentionally homeless.	The ability for each individual household to bid outside their local authority area will be facilitated through laid down reciprocal working arrangements between each local authority in the partnership.
Applicants who have been given medical or welfare priority because they need to move to a specific area in order to give or receive support.	Applicants are only permitted to move to the specific local authority area where they wish to live – this is because the welfare or medical priority is based on the applicant moving to that specific area.
Applicants who are ready to move on from supported housing schemes in bands A & B.	Applicants will usually only be permitted to bid within the local authority area as ongoing support may be a condition of their tenancy. In certain cases, these applicants may be allowed to bid for properties in other local authority areas across the Gateway area of operation, however, this will only be permitted following agreement between the awarding PO and receiving PO.

7.1716 Time Restrictions on bidding

Some applicants will be subject to time limited bidding restrictions. Applicants will be free to choose which properties they bid for throughout the period given below. After that period has elapsed, the sanction indicated will apply. The suitability of a property will be considered using the criteria set out in 'The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012'. The POs reserve the right to set the time limits based on local circumstances, which can include the availability of accommodation required by the applicant in the PO area:

Applicant Type	Restriction	Sanction available
Applicants in severe need to whom the local authority has accepted a homelessness duty.	Applicants are expected to use their bids to secure the first available suitable property.	PO will bid on appropriate property on applicant's behalf and/or move the applicant's bids to the most appropriate properties.
Applicants awarded severe or high medical or welfare priority (bands A and B).	Applicants will be subject to a time limited bidding restriction of 2 bidding cycles, which include suitably sized properties in a relevant area	Reduce by one band.
Applicants awarded multiple needs in band A.		Reduce to band B.

Applicant Type	Restriction	Sanction available
band B Homeless Applicants.	Applicants are expected to use their bids to secure the first available suitable property.	PO will bid on appropriate property on applicant's behalf and/or move the applicant's bids to the most appropriate properties.
Band B Options advice applicants.	Applicants are expected to use their bids to secure the first available suitable property.	PO will bid on appropriate property on applicant's behalf and/or move the applicant's bids to the most appropriate properties.
Band C applicants under any homelessness duty, including non-priority need applicants and applicants who are intentionally homeless.	Applicants are expected to use their bids to secure the first available suitable property.	PO will bid on appropriate property on applicant's behalf and/or move the applicant's bids to the most appropriate properties.
Applicants who are ready to move on from supported housing schemes.	Applicants will be subject to a time limited bidding restriction of 3 months.	Make direct offer of next suitable vacancy May be offered a direct let or move-on banding reduced, at the PO's discretion.
Retiring sheltered housing scheme managers in tied accommodation.	Applicants will be subject to a time limited bidding restriction of 6 months.	Make direct offer on next suitable vacancy ay be offered a direct let or move-on banding reduced, at the PO's discretion.
Relationship breakdown (applicants in social housing properties where they are under occupying and assessed as having a housing need).		
Successions (applicants in social housing properties where they are under occupying but have been assessed as having a housing need).		

7.1917 If an applicant is sanctioned, the PO will notify the applicant of their decision and the reasons for this action. The PO will also advise the applicant of their new priority band, effective date and the right to a [review of the decision](#).

Appropriate bidding for applicants under any homelessness duty

7.1918 The awarding PO reserves the right to review the priority band award and/or bid on the applicant's behalf for suitable properties during the time period if the applicant has:

- failed to bid for any properties;
- failed to bid for properties which they would have likely to have been successful in securing;
- placed bids on unsuitable properties; or
- placed a bid on a suitable property and then refused the offer.

7.2019 Under these circumstances, the PO will notify the applicant of their decision and the reasons for this action. The PO will also advise the applicant of their new priority band, effective date and the right to a review of the decision. (For further information on the reviews of housing application decisions, please see [Chapter 9](#)) – move this section to bidding restrictions

For further information about offers to homeless applicants or those under the prevention or relief duty, please see [section 8.11 – 8.15](#).

Local Lettings

7.2120 In certain circumstances, the POs may decide to give preference for offers of homes to a particular group of applicants in response to certain local circumstances. This is called a local lettings plan. The decision to apply a local lettings plan will be jointly made by the landlord of the property and the PO and will usually be made under the following circumstances:

- To help create balanced communities and achieve wider community objectives (i.e. to produce a broader social mix).
- To help improve difficult to let areas and/or to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- To make best use of the housing stock and give priority for releasing a property in need.
- Where planning conditions were agreed at time of build (s106 agreements) that stipulate that priority must be given to local applicants.

7.2221 If a property is subject to a local lettings plan, it will be clearly labelled as such in the property advert.

Sensitive Lets

7.22 There may be occasions when it is necessary and appropriate to make a sensitive letting to a property that has become vacant following a period of substantial nuisance, anti-social behaviour or criminal activity within the immediate area of the vacant property, to make best use of the PO's housing stock for tenancy management purposes. The property advert will be shown as a sensitive let detailing any restrictions which have been agreed prior to advertising. There may also be times when an applicant may be considered unsuitable to meet the criteria of a sensitive let due to their vulnerabilities and to prevent them from potential risk of harm to themselves or others. An assessment of each applicant against the specific let criteria will be completed on a case-by-case basis and agreed in line with the procedure.

Chapter 8 – Shortlisting and offers

8.1 At the end of each choice based lettings (CBL) cycle a shortlisting of applicants who have bid for the property will be taken from the CBL computer system. The shortlist will identify the order of applicants based on who is in the highest housing band (A is highest, E is the lowest) and who has the earliest effective date unless the property has been adapted or is subject to a local lettings agreement, such as a s106 agreement.

8.2 The top three applicants from the shortlist will usually be invited to view the property.

8.3 After viewing the property the applicant at the top of the shortlist will usually be given up to 24 hours to accept or refuse the accommodation. If the offer is refused the next person on the shortlist will be offered the property.

8.4 At the point of shortlisting, the PO or RP carrying out the shortlisting will verify the applicant's level of housing need and other details to ensure that the applicant still remains eligible for housing, that their circumstances remain the same as when they applied and that their level of priority is correct. References from the applicant's current landlord will also be sought. Applicants may also be required to pay rent in advance.

8.5 In order to effectively manage housing applications, shortlists and prompt allocation of properties, any open shortlists dated one month from the end of the advertising cycle, where applicants in bands A-C have been exhausted, may be rejected and readvertised in the next suitable cycle.

Formal offer

8.6 Once the applicant has confirmed their acceptance of the tenancy the landlord of the property will usually write to confirm the formal offer of the tenancy and an applicant's application will be matched against the property. Once they have signed the tenancy agreement, the applicant's Housing Register application will then be changed to Housed.

Rejecting an offer

8.7 An applicant may reject an offer of accommodation and they will be permitted to bid on other properties. If an applicant repeatedly bids for and then rejects properties that they are offered, the PO may decide to suspend the applicant from bidding on properties for a specified time period. For further information please see [here](#).

Please note – different rules apply to applicants who are under a homelessness duty, please see [8.11](#).

Offering properties to tenants who owe rent

8.8 Tenants on the Housing Register will not normally be offered a new tenancy if they are in arrears with their rent. An offer is possible if:

- The rent owed is no more than four times the weekly rent (less any housing benefit payable). Any rent owing must be paid before the tenant signs to accept the new tenancy. *Note: this may not always apply to RP tenants as the rent account may need to be clear before making the offer. This is checked with the RP at the time.*
- A PO has accepted a duty to house the applicant under homelessness legislation. However, the applicant will still be expected to agree to pay outstanding rent. *Note: if court action is being taken to gain possession or other legal action, no offers of housing will be made without the agreement of the PO.*

8.9 The applicant is a Council or RP tenant who has a high priority because they:

- Have been temporarily moved from their property by the Council or RP to allow repairs or redevelopment work to take place; or

- Are moving under the Transfer Incentive Scheme. In this case the rent they owe cannot be more than any payment due from the scheme. An exception may be made if a move would benefit both housing needs in the area and the POs housing management work. The PO and the landlord must agree this; or
- Have a high medical, welfare or hardship assessment. For clarification purposes, this is for those who have been awarded band A on medical or welfare grounds. No offers of housing will be made without the agreement of the PO; or
- Tenants who are at significant risk due to violence or harassment. No offers of housing will be made without the agreement of the PO.

8.10 In some circumstances, a new tenancy will be approved if there is rent owing. This could include applicants who have accrued rent arrears as a direct result of housing benefit deductions due to under-occupation of their property. These cases will need to be agreed by the PO and the landlord. Generally, these cases will include a strong social or housing management need for the household to move.

Offers to Homeless Applicants who are owed the main housing duty

8.11 In accordance with the Housing Act 1996, part 7 (as amended) and the policy for discharging statutory homeless duties, all statutory homeless applicants are entitled to one reasonable offer of accommodation. These applicants will usually be placed in band B and will be able to bid for properties through the CBL scheme. The PO may also bid for properties on behalf of the applicant. The relevant local authority will confirm to the applicant, in writing, if an offer secured via Gateway to Homechoice is considered to be the applicant's final offer under the homelessness legislation and the consequences of acceptance or refusal. If a statutory homeless applicant refuses/fails to respond to/fails to accept a reasonable offer of accommodation, the awarding PO can end its statutory duty to provide accommodation.

8.12 If a homeless applicant has refused the accommodation because of its suitability, the awarding PO will explain the applicant's right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation offered. The PO will also explain the applicant may lose their right to temporary accommodation. For further information on statutory homelessness review and appeals, please refer to [Appendix 1](#)

8.13 An applicant, whose statutory homeless duty has been ended as a result of their refusal/ failure to respond/failure to accept an offer of suitable accommodation, can remain on the Housing Register although the awarding PO will remove the statutory homeless priority banding award. Their application will be reassessed and given the priority that reflects their current situation. Their effective date will not change. The PO will advise the applicant of their new priority band and the right to [request a review](#) of this decision.

8.14 Offers to Applicants under the Homelessness Prevention Duty

In accordance with the HRA 2017, applicants who are under the Prevention duty will usually be placed in band C and will be able to bid for properties. The PO may also bid on properties on behalf of the applicant. If an applicant who is under the Prevention duty, refuses/ fails to respond to/fails to accept a reasonable offer of accommodation, the PO can end its prevention duty to that applicant but this does not affect any further duties which may be owed to the applicant if they become homeless.

8.15 Offers to Applicants under the Homelessness Relief Duty

In accordance with the HRA 2017, applicants who are under the Relief Duty are entitled to one reasonable offer of accommodation. These applicants will usually be placed in band C and will be able to bid for properties. The PO may also bid on properties on behalf of the applicant. If an applicant who is under the Relief duty, refuses/fails to respond to/fails to accept a reasonable offer of accommodation, the awarding PO can end its duty to provide accommodation or further support.

If the relief duty is ended because the applicant refuses/ fails to respond to/fails to accept a reasonable offer of accommodation, their Housing Register application will usually be reassessed and given the band that reflects their current situation. Their effective date will not change, unless their band increases. The PO will advise the applicant of their new priority band and the right to [request a review](#) of this decision.

Bypassing an applicant on a shortlist

8.14 The LAs and RPs agree that:

1. a decision by an LA or RP to bypass an applicant who would be next in line for an offer of accommodation will only be taken according to the criteria agreed set out below;
2. where an RP wishes to retain exception rules that do not form part of the Gateway to Homechoice allocations policy, for example, rules relating to the size of accommodation to be offered or rules relating to offers of accommodation from applicants with former rent arrears or behaviour that has not yet been addressed or resolved – these rules should be transparent and will be recorded in each RP's Lettings policy and on each property advert so it is clear when a named RP will bypass an applicant and what an applicant would need to do in order to be considered by that RP; and
3. each case will be assessed individually and the reason why an applicant is bypassed recorded on the relevant Housing Register application, by the shortlisting organisation

8.15 It is not possible to describe every situation where an applicant on a shortlist might be bypassed. However, the following are the most common situations:

- Applicant considers rent too high
- Applicant has changed mind
- Area unsuitable
- Change of circumstances
- Condition not satisfactory
- Did not turn up for arranged viewing
- Does not meet age criteria
- Does not meet local lettings plan
- Does not meet sensitive let criteria
- Does not need adaptations
- Does not qualify for universal credits
- Does not require ground floor
- Does not want shower/wants bath
- Doesn't meet criteria
- Doesn't meet s106 criteria
- Efficient management of stock
- Garden too big
- Incomplete verification by applicant
- Lacks public transport connections
- Needs extra care
- No garden
- Not suitable for pet
- Offered on another shortlist
- Other reason
- Owner occupier
- Property not adapted/adaptable
- Property too large
- Property too small
- Provider considers rent too high
- Refused by Landlord
- Rent arrears
- Rent too high
- Requires ground floor
- Service charge too expensive
- Too far away from current residence
- Unable to contact

- Unsuitable due to arrears/debts
- Wants council property not housing association
- Wants a shower
- Withdrawn by Landlord

Chapter 9 – Right to reviews

9.1 Applicants have the right to ask for a review of decisions made about their application for housing or offer of accommodation. This includes:

- size or type of property
- assessment of bands; and
- offers of housing

How to request a review of a Housing Register Decision

9.2 An applicant who disagrees with a decision a PO has made that affects their housing application may request a review of that decision within 21 days of receiving the written decision from the PO. A request for a review should usually be made in writing although POs may also consider verbal requests for a review to be undertaken.

9.3 The applicant should clearly outline the reasons that they have formally requested a review and a different officer at the PO will review the original decision. In some cases the PO may need to request further information from the applicant in order to make a decision. The PO will respond to the review request in writing within 8 weeks.

9.4 If an applicant still disagrees with a decision they can request that another PO hears their appeal. The appeal process will be as follows:

- Babergh to East Suffolk
- Braintree to Colchester
- Colchester to Ipswich
- Ipswich to Maldon
- Maldon to Braintree
- Mid Suffolk to East Suffolk
- East Suffolk to Babergh/Mid Suffolk

9.5 The PO carrying out the appeal will reply to the applicant within 8 weeks of receiving it from the awarding PO.

Complaints procedure

9.6 If an applicant is dissatisfied with any aspect of the management of their application, other than when a review can be made, they should contact the PO and ask for a complaints form.

The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

9.7 If an applicant is not satisfied with the action of a PO and they have already been through all of the stages of the POs' complaints procedure, they can send a written complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. If an applicant has complained to a PO but has not had a reply from the relevant PO for 12 weeks, they can also complain to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

Further detail about the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman can be found here:

<http://www.lgo.org.uk/>

And information about how to make a complaint is here:

<https://complaints.lgo.org.uk/>

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

The Housing Ombudsman Service

9.8 If an applicant wishes to make a complaint about a Registered Provider they should contact the Housing Ombudsman Service:

Housing Ombudsman Service

PO Box 152

Liverpool

L33 7WQ

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

To make a complaint, use the link below:

[Getting help from the Housing Ombudsman.](#)

Appendix 1 – Meeting the Statutory Homelessness Duty

Policy Overview

1.1 This document relates to the policy and procedural arrangements for assessing and discharging statutory homelessness duties. The document will be referred to as “the policy”.

The policy applies to the following local authorities:

- Babergh District Council
- Braintree District Council
- Colchester Borough Council
- Ipswich Borough Council
- Maldon District Council
- Mid Suffolk District Council
- East Suffolk Council

1.2 The local authorities, who have signed up to the policy, all participate in the Gateway to Homechoice Housing Register and choice based lettings system. This policy works alongside the Gateway to Homechoice Allocations Policy.

The policy complies with:

- The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002
- Equality Act 2010
- The Localism Act 2011
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Suitability of Accommodation Order (November 2012)

This policy also links to each authority’s homelessness strategy.

Policy aims and objectives

This policy explains how the above authorities will assess and support applicants who approach their local authority and who are either homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

1.3 Definitions

Homeless: a person is homeless if they have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere which is available for their occupation, which that person has a right to occupy and which it is reasonable for them to continue to occupy.

Threatened with homelessness: someone who is likely to become homeless within 56 days or someone who has been served a valid notice under Section 21 of the Housing Act 1985 in respect of the only accommodation available for their occupation and the notice will expire within 56 days.

1.4 This policy and the needs assessment procedure will ensure there is no discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief and sex.

1.5 Advisory Services

All Gateway authorities will provide free advice and information on homelessness and how to prevent homelessness to those living within their local authority area or anyone referred to them under the ‘duty to refer’ on Public Authorities.

1.6 The duty to refer cases to housing authorities

Under section 213B public authorities are required to notify a housing authority if they consider that a service user may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days. Prior to referring a service user to one of the POs the relevant public authority must:

- Have consent from the individual service user to the referral;
- Allow the individual to say which local housing authority they would like to be referred to; and
- Have consent from the individual that their contact details can be supplied to the housing authority so they can contact them regarding the referral

A referral made by a public authority to a housing authority under section 213B will not in itself constitute a homelessness application.

Section 2 - Assessment of Circumstances and Needs (Section 189a)

2.1 Applicants who ask a PO for a help because they are homeless, or threatened with homelessness in the next 56 days will have an assessment of their circumstances and needs completed which will include the assessment of:

- a) the circumstances that have caused them to be homeless or threatened with homelessness
- b) their housing needs and what accommodation would be suitable for them, their household and anybody who might reasonably be expected to live with them and
- c) the support that would be necessary for them and anybody who will be living with them to have and sustain suitable accommodation.

2.2 The information gathered in this assessment will be used to create a Personal Housing Plan (PHP) for each applicant/household which will list practical and reasonable steps that both the applicant and the PO will take to try to prevent or relieve their homelessness.

2.3 The PHP might also identify other agencies which may also be able to support the applicant/their household to prevent/relieve their homelessness and if the applicant agrees, the PO may refer them to relevant support agencies.

2.4 POs will review PHPs regularly to ensure that the PHP still accurately reflects an applicant's needs and circumstances. Applicants should also inform the relevant PO when their circumstances or housing needs change so that the PO can update their PHP if necessary.

2.5 Notification of the Assessment of Circumstances and Needs

Following the PO completing an assessment of an applicant's circumstances and needs, they will notify the applicant of the assessment that they have made.

2.6 Right to Review of the PHP

Applicants have the right to request a review of the reasonable steps the PO has included within their PHP within the prevention and relief stages.

At this stage, if the applicant is eligible and threatened with homelessness within 56 days, applicants will be under the Prevention duty.

3. Prevention Duty (Section 195)

3.1 Under the prevention duty, POs will try to help applicants who are owed this duty to stay in their current accommodation where it is safe for them to do. If this is not possible, the PO will support applicants to secure suitable alternative accommodation which offers a reasonable prospect of being available to them for at least six months.

3.2 Applicants who are under the prevention duty will be placed in **band C** on the Housing Register (unless reduced preference applies) and will be allowed to bid on suitable properties in any part of the Gateway area of operation.

3.3 Where an applicant is under the Prevention duty to one local authority but who lives in a different Gateway authority, the local authority which is responsible for the prevention duty will usually also host the applicant's Housing Register application.

3.4 An applicant may retain a medical award while under Prevention band C.

3.5 Ending the Prevention Duty

The prevention duty will end in the following situations when the following apply:

a) The applicant has suitable accommodation available for occupation and there is a reasonable prospect of it being available for at least six months. This accommodation can be of any tenure, e.g. private rented, social housing, supported housing etc.

b) The housing authority has complied with the prevention duty and 56 days have passed. The prevention duty will not, however, come to an end where the applicant has remained in accommodation after expiry of a valid section 21 notice but remains threatened with homelessness.

When a PO is satisfied that, despite the section 21 notice, the landlord is not seeking possession and there is a reasonable prospect of the accommodation being available for at least 6 months, the prevention duty may be ended.

However, POs can also continue to deliver the prevention duty with any applicant for longer than 56 days and issue a notice to end it at any point after this date:

c) The applicant becomes homeless (if so, they will usually move to the Relief duty)

d) The applicant has refused an offer of suitable accommodation and on the date of refusal, there was a reasonable prospect of that accommodation being available for six months. The refusal of suitable accommodation during the prevention duty brings this duty to an end although it does not have any further impact on the application for housing assistance

e) The applicant is no longer eligible for assistance

f) The applicant withdraws their application for homelessness assistance

g) **The applicant deliberately and unreasonably refuses to co-operate** (s195(10)) If a PO considers that an applicant has deliberately and unreasonably refused to cooperate with steps outlined in their Personal Housing Plan the PO can end its prevention duty to that applicant. Before bringing its prevention duty to an end, the PO will issue the applicant with a warning to let them know that they intend to end the prevention duty due to the applicant's non-cooperation.

Following the warning, if an applicant continues to deliberately and unreasonably refuse to cooperate, the PO can bring the prevention duty to an end.

Where the prevention duty is brought to an end due to deliberate and unreasonable refusal to cooperate, the applicant is still entitled to the relief duty and may subsequently be owed the main housing duty, depending on their individual circumstances.

3.6 Notification and Right to Review

When a PO ends the Prevention duty, it will notify the applicant that the Prevention duty is ending and inform the applicant that they have the right to [request a review](#) of the PO's decision to bring this duty to an end. The applicant must request the review within 21 days of the PO notifying the applicant that they are bringing the relief duty to an end.

The PO will respond to review requests within 8 weeks from the day of request for a review.

3.7 POs will also notify applicants that their Prevention duty has ended and what further duty the applicant is entitled to, if any.

4. Relief Duty (Section 189b)

4.1 Under the relief duty, POs will help applicants who are both eligible and homeless to secure suitable accommodation which has a reasonable prospect of being available to them for six months.

4.2 Assessment of Circumstances and Needs (Section 189a)

When an applicant approaches a PO because they are already homeless, the PO will complete an assessment of their needs as detailed in section 2 above.

4.3 During the Relief Duty

While an applicant is under the Relief duty, POs will work with the applicant to help them to find suitable accommodation which has a reasonable prospect of being available to the applicant for six months. The accommodation could be of any tenure e.g. private rented, social housing, supported housing etc.

4.4 Housing Register

[Effective dates for homeless applications](#)

- [Band C Prevention - effective date – the date that the prevention duty was owed unless the applicant already has an award on the housing register with an earlier effective date. In this situation, the applicant would retain their effective date from their previous housing register award.](#)
- [Band C Relief – effective date – the date that the relief duty was owed – i.e. their assessment date, or after the prevention duty has ended and has been unsuccessful, if they were owed the prevention duty.](#)
- [Band B Options advice Prevention – the date that the prevention duty was owed or the date that the Options advice award was applied to their homeless case at the discretion of the awarding local authority.](#)
- [Band B Options advice – Relief – the date that the relief duty was owed or the date that the Options advice award was applied to their homeless case at the discretion of the awarding local authority.](#)
- [Band B Main duty – the date that the main duty takes effect – i.e. the date after the Relief duty ended.](#)
- [Band A Homeless in Severe Need – the date that the prevention, relief or main homelessness duty was owed or the date that the Homeless in Severe Need award was applied to their homeless case at the discretion of the awarding local authority.](#)

~~Applicants who are under the relief duty will be placed in Bandband C (Under Relief) on the Gateway to Homechoice housing register (unless reduced preference applies). Their effective date will be the date that~~

~~the applicant approached the PO for assistance. Applicants who were under the Prevention duty but became homeless, will retain the same effective date that they had whilst under Prevention.~~

~~4.5 — If the applicant was already in Bandband C on the housing register, prior to being under the Relief duty, they will also retain their effective date from their existing Bandband C.~~

~~4.6 — Where an applicant is under the Relief duty to one local authority but who lives in a different Gateway authority, the local authority which is responsible for the relief duty will usually also host the applicant's housing register application~~

4.7 An applicant who previously had a medical or welfare band cannot retain a medical or welfare award when under the homeless relief duty.

4.8 Interim Accommodation

Where the PO has reason to believe that an applicant may be eligible, homeless and have a priority need they will provide the applicant and their household with interim accommodation under section 188 (1) while fulfilling the relief duty.

4.9 Ending the Relief Duty

The relief duty will end in the following situations when one of the following applies:

a) The applicant has suitable accommodation available for occupation and there is a reasonable prospect of it being available for at least six months. This accommodation can be of any tenure.

b) The housing authority has complied with the relief duty and 56 days have passed. The relief duty can continue for longer than 56 days and a notice to end it can be issued at any point after this date as long as the applicant is not owed another duty which take precedence.

Where the PO is satisfied that the applicant has a priority need and has become homeless unintentionally, the relief duty will come to an end after 56 days and POs will aim to complete their enquiries and inform the applicant of their decision within the next 15 working days.

c) The applicant has refused an offer of suitable accommodation and, on the date of refusal, there was a reasonable prospect of it being available for at least six months. This will bring the Relief duty to an end and, if the offer was a final accommodation offer or final part 6 offer, the main housing duty (section 193) will not apply.

If an applicant is in interim accommodation at the point that the offer is made, and the applicant requests a review of the suitability of the accommodation, the PO has a duty to continue to provide the applicant with interim accommodation until the review is complete and the relief duty continues until the outcome of the review.

d) The applicant is no longer eligible for assistance

e) The applicant withdraws their application for homelessness assistance

f) The applicant deliberately and unreasonably refuses to co-operate - where the relief duty is brought to an end as a result of the applicant's deliberate and unreasonable refusal to cooperate the main housing duty will not apply to that applicant.

- Before bringing the relief duty to an end due to deliberate and unreasonable refusal to cooperate, the PO will issue the applicant with a warning, letting them know that if they intend to bring the relief duty to an end due to their non-cooperation.
- If an applicant continues to deliberately and unreasonably refuse to cooperate, the PO can bring the relief duty to an end.
- When the relief duty is ended in this way, applicants who are not in priority need will not be entitled to any further assistance.

Intentionally Homeless Applicants – End of Relief Duty for Deliberate and Unreasonable Refusal to Cooperate: For applicants who are in priority need but are intentionally homeless, the PO will assess these applicants under the main housing duty - section 193(2) and can issue a decision on these applicants immediately after the relief duty has ended.

Applicants in Priority Need and Unintentionally Homeless – End of Relief Duty for Deliberate and Unreasonable Refusal to Cooperate: For applicants who are in priority need and not intentionally homeless, they will be owed a different version of the main housing duty (section 193c(4)) and will be made a final offer of accommodation which could be a 6 month AST, instead of a 12 month AST.

4.10 Applicants with a local connection to a different housing authority – relief duty

POs may refer an applicant’s case to another housing authority in England during the relief duty if the applicant does not have a local connection with the authority to which they have applied and they do have a local connection to another district where they would not be at risk of violence.

4.11 Notification and Right to Review

When a PO ends the Relief duty, it will notify the applicant that the Relief duty is ending and inform the applicant that they have the right to request a review of the PO’s decision to bring this duty to an end. The applicant must request the review within 21 days of the PO notifying the applicant of bringing the relief duty to an end.

The PO will respond to review requests within eight weeks from the day of the request for a review.

5. Main Duty – Section 193

Under the main duty, POs will help applicants who are eligible, homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless to secure accommodation. Applicants under this duty will be placed in band B (Accepted Homeless) on the Gateway to Homechoice Housing Register. Their effective date will be the day after the relief duty ended, unless the applicant was already in band B with an earlier effective date. The exception will be where an application is/has been in the ‘reduced preference’ band: in these circumstances the band B date will only be effective from when the reduced preference reason is resolved.

5.1 Main duty accepted homeless applicants can only have a [Band](#) band B for homelessness and no other awards on the Gateway Housing Register.

6. Available housing options for customers

6.1 Assessed as suitable for discharge into private sector

a) Singles/Couples

- Singles – Under the age of 35 for shared housing only, unless they are in an exempt category of persons.
- Singles – 35 and over can be considered for bedsits, studio or one beds
- Couples – one beds

These applicants must be 18 years or over, have low support needs, have an accepted homelessness application and assessed income and savings which are above the current Gateway to Homechoice financial thresholds (see section 5.1) or the property identified is assessed as being affordable to the household and they are assessed as being able to manage their finances with limited support.

b) **Families** - Households aged 18 years or over and have children or include an expectant mother with low support needs, an accepted homelessness application and assessed income and savings which are above the current Gateway to Homechoice financial thresholds or the property identified is assessed as being affordable to the household and they are assessed as being able to manage their finances with limited support.

6.2 Suitable ONLY for Council or RP Properties - those singles, couples and families who do not meet the criteria as above should make a Gateway application to bid on Council or RP properties.

7. Selecting Households for Properties

7.1 Policy – a selection procedure is in place in order to prioritise households for properties when they become available. The decision to prioritise households for properties will be at the local authority's discretion. Each case will be assessed on individual circumstances and in line with the terms of this policy and procedure. In certain cases, a landlord may determine the criteria for who will be accepted into the property.

7.2 When a suitable property becomes available priority will be given as follows:

First – Exceptional medical cases or other circumstances where it was agreed B&B/temporary accommodation would be unacceptable if the household was not prioritised for a property. Households with sufficient capital to meet 12 months' rent payments. Then if none (or none suitable).

Second - Households in Bed & Breakfast/temporary accommodation (longest stay first). Then if none (or none suitable).

Third - Households where negotiations have taken place (e.g. with a landlord) to avoid B&B if we prioritised them for a property. Then if none (or none suitable).

Fourth – Next suitable homeless household (where a homeless duty has been accepted) with the oldest date homeless.

8. Offers of accommodation

8.1 Statutory homeless households are entitled to one reasonable offer of accommodation. The local authority will consider its homeless duty discharged if a suitable offer (known as a "final" offer) is refused, in either the private rented or social sector.

Offers of accommodation in the Private Rented Sector

8.2 If an applicant is deemed to be suitable for a private sector offer and a suitable property is available, they will be made an offer immediately. The private sector offer must be an offer of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, with a minimum fixed term of one year. Under these circumstances, this will be considered to be the applicant's one offer of suitable accommodation and will therefore discharge the statutory homeless duty. If the applicant refuses the offer of accommodation, the local authority can end its statutory homeless duty.

8.3 Once the offer has been formally made, the applicant's homeless and Housing Register applications will be closed. Should the applicant wish to reapply to join the Housing Register, they will need to complete a new application and their priority will be assessed based on their current accommodation.

8.4 If an applicant is deemed suitable for a private sector offer and there are no suitable properties available, the applicant will be given band B and will be able to bid for social housing, subject to location and time bidding restrictions. (For further information on time and location bidding restrictions, please refer to the Gateway to Homechoice Allocation Policy).

8.5 If a suitable private rented property becomes available before an offer of social housing can be made, then this property will be offered to the applicant as their final offer.

Offers of accommodation in the social sector

8.6 Applicants assessed as being suitable for a social housing offer of accommodation will be subject to location and time restricted bidding under the scheme. For further information, please refer to the Gateway to Homechoice Allocation Policy.

Refusal/ failure to respond to/failure to accept an offer of suitable accommodation

8.7 If a statutory homeless applicant refuses/ fails to respond to/fails to accept a suitable offer, the local authority will explain the applicant's right to a review of the suitability of the offer of accommodation.

8.8 POs will also explain to the applicant that they may lose their right to temporary accommodation. For further information, please refer to section 9 below and to the relevant local authority Reviews Procedure-

8.9 An applicant whose statutory homeless duty has ended as a result of their refusal/ failure to respond/failure to accept can remain on the Housing Register; however, the local authority will remove the statutory homeless priority award. Their application will be reassessed and given the band that reflects their current situation. For further information, please refer to the Gateway to Homechoice Allocation Policy.

Section 9 – Reviews of the suitability of accommodation offered

9.1 As part of the offer process and in accordance with each Local authority's policies and procedures, applicants will be advised of their right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation offered. Applicants will also be informed of advice services, for example Citizens' Advice or Shelter.

Review process

9.2 Applicants can request a review within 21 days of the Local authority telling them that they consider an offer to be suitable and that it has discharged its duty under the homeless legislation. The local authority will consider review requests received after 21 days, but they are not obliged to agree to carry out the review.

9.3 Review requests can be made in writing or verbally to the relevant local authority. Once a review request has been received, the local authority will write to the applicant to:

- acknowledge the request
- provide details of the review procedure

9.4 The local authority will need to complete the review within 56 days of receiving the applicant's original review request (unless a longer period is agreed). The review will be carried out by a local authority Senior Officer. This officer must not have been involved in the original decision.

Review outcomes

9.5 The review outcome can be:

- Unsuccessful – in this situation the local authority’s original decision will stand.
- Successful – in this situation the local authority will amend their original decision.

9.6 Once the review has been completed, the local authority will write to the applicant informing them of the review decision. The letter will be sent to the applicant or will be available for collection from the local authority offices.

9.7 The outcome letter will explain the review decision, how the local authority reached this decision and the right to appeal the review decision to the County Court if the applicant believes the decision is legally incorrect. An appeal must be made within 21 days of being notified of the review decision.

Accommodation options during and after a review decision

9.8 During the review process, the local authority is not legally obliged to provide the applicant with temporary accommodation. Applicants will be advised to accept the final offer of accommodation whilst the review is being considered. This is because:

- the applicant will have somewhere to stay during the review process
- there is no guarantee of a further offer of accommodation following the outcome of the review.

9.9 During the review process, the property originally offered, may at the landlord’s discretion, be held open whilst the review is considered. Unfortunately, this may not be possible in cases of private rented accommodation. If the review is unsuccessful and the property is still available, the applicant may be offered the property again. If the applicant refuses the offer, they will be referred to a Local authority Senior Officer, who will confirm if the statutory homeless duty has been ended.

County Court Appeals

9.10 An applicant can appeal to the County Court on any point of law for one of the following reasons:

- if they feel the review decision is legally incorrect; or
- if the Local authority has not met the time limit to complete the review process.

9.11 All appeals must be made to the County Court within 21 days of the review decision. Applicants considering an appeal to the County Court are advised to obtain independent legal advice e.g. citizens advice bureau or Shelter.

Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

9.12 If an applicant is not satisfied with a review decision, they can complain to the Local Government Ombudsman.

9.13 The Ombudsman will not consider certain matters, for example, if 12 months has passed since the cause for complaint occurred or when matters are, or could be, subject to court proceedings.

9.14 The Ombudsman will consider a complaint if an applicant believes they have been treated unfairly as a result of maladministration. Examples include:

- Delayed taking action without good reason
- Taken into account irrelevant considerations or ignored relevant considerations
- Not followed rules (legal or local procedures)
- Given the wrong decision
- Not reached a decision in the correct way

Contact details for the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman are:

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Website: www.lgo.uk

Section 10 - New approaches from applicants previously housed into the private sector as a discharge of the main homelessness duty

10.1 If an applicant becomes unintentionally homeless from their private rented tenancy within 2 years, the statutory homeless duty automatically revives once. In cases where the duty revives and the applicant applies to a different local authority, the applicant can be referred back to the original local authority, unless there is a risk of domestic [violenceabuse](#).

10.2 The revived duty may again be discharged through an offer of private or social rented accommodation, in accordance with this policy.

Partner Organisation (PO) List

Babergh District Council
Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP1 2BX

Telephone: 0300 123 4000
Website: www.babergh.gov.uk
Email: homechoice@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

Braintree District Council
Causeway House
Bocking End
Braintree
Essex
CM7 9HB

Tel: 01376 552525
Website: www.braintree.gov.uk
Email: homechoice@braintree.gov.uk

Eastlight Community Homes
Eastlight House
Charter Way
Braintree
Essex
CM77 8FG

Tel: 01376 535400
Website: www.eastlighthomes.co.uk
Email: enquiries@eastlighthomes.co.uk

Colchester Borough Council
Rowan House
33 Sheepen Road
Colchester
Essex
CO3 3WG

Tel: 01206 282222
Website: www.colchester.gov.uk

Colchester Borough Homes
Rowan House
33 Sheepen Road
Colchester
Essex
CO3 3WG

Tel: 01206 282514
Website: www.colchesterboroughhomes.co.uk
Email: housing.evidence@cbhomes.org.uk

Ipswich Borough Council
Grafton House
15-17 Russell Road
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP1 2DE

Tel: 01473 423000
Website: www.ipswich.gov.uk
Email: homechoice@ipswich.gov.uk

Maldon District Council
Princes Road
Maldon
Essex
CM9 5DL

Tel: 01621 854477
Website: www.maldon.gov.uk
Email: homechoice@maldon.gov.uk

Moat Homes Ltd
Mariner House
Galleon Boulevard
Crossways
Dartford
DA2 6QE
Tel: 0845 359 6161
website: www.moat.co.uk
Email: customer@moat.co.uk

Mid Suffolk District Council
Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP1 2BX

Tel: 0300 123 4000
Website: www.midsuffolk.gov.uk
Email: homechoice@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

East Suffolk Council
Riverside
4 Canning Road
Lowestoft
Suffolk
NR33 0EQ

Tel: 01502 523524
Website: www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk
Email: homechoice@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Flagship Homes
31 King Street
Norwich
Norfolk
NR1 1PD

Tel: 0845 258 6432
Website: www.flagship-homes.co.uk
Email: info@flagship-homes.co.uk

Glossary of Terms

Affordable Rent	Local authority or registered provider accommodation let at a higher rent level compared to social rent, normally up to 80% of market rent levels.
ALMO	Arms Length Management Organisation is a not-for-profit company that manages the housing stock and provision of housing services on behalf of a local authority. Ownership of the housing stock remains with the local authority.
Applicants	People who apply to join the Housing Register who are seeking access to local authority or registered providers' properties for rent or low cost ownership.
Armed forces	All references made to 'armed forces', 'regular forces' and 'reserve forces' throughout this document refers to all those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown.
Housing Register	The Housing Register is a list of applicants who want to be considered for social housing. Eligible applicants are able to join the Housing Register and will be prioritised based on their need for social housing.
Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT)	Large Scale Voluntary Transfer refers to local authorities that have transferred their housing stock to a RP. The RP owns the housing stock and is responsible for overall management and provision of housing services.
Main homelessness duty (s193 (2)) Effective date	Where the main homelessness duty has been accepted the band B effective date will be the day after the relief duty ended (i.e., day 57) unless they were already in band B with an earlier date. The exception will be where an application is/has been in the 'reduced preference' band: in these circumstances the band B date will only be effective from when the reduced preference reason is resolved
Negotiated tenancy surrender	<p>Applicants in this category will be placed in band A if tenancy surrender has been negotiated and meets these conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were a council or RP tenant when taken into custody and the offence did not mean that they had broken their tenancy or the tenant has to go into a mental health or other special facility for an extended period; and • They have or are likely to be sent to prison or an institution for more than 13 weeks (including the time spent on remand) and; • They have conducted their tenancy in a reasonable way and have not broken their tenancy agreement; and • Their rent is up to date: and • They have not been served with a 'notice seeking possession;' and • They offer to end their tenancy <p>Before agreeing to a tenancy surrender, the landlord will agree this with the PO. Tenancy surrenders will not go ahead until the PO gives their written confirmation.</p> <p>Tenancy surrenders are only applicable within the Gateway area of operation.</p>

Nominations	To help POs retain spaces within specialist or supported accommodation, POs have agreed to house a certain number of clients each year from this type of accommodation. These applicants will be placed in either band A or band B of the scheme at the discretion of the PO.
Partner Organisation (PO)	The term PO refers to the seven local authorities which participate in the scheme.
Prevention duty	Under the prevention duty, POs will try to help applicants who are both eligible and threatened with homelessness to stay in their current accommodation where it is safe for them to do. If this is not possible, the PO will support applicants to secure alternative accommodation.
Relief duty	Under the relief duty, POs will help applicants who are both eligible and homeless to secure suitable accommodation, with a reasonable prospect that accommodation will be available to them for six months.
Registered Provider	RP are private, non-profit making organisations which provide low cost social housing. Sometimes they are referred to as Housing Associations. Where we refer to registered providers throughout the policy, this can also include community land trusts, almshouses and charities
<u>Regular forces</u>	All references made to ‘armed forces’, ‘regular forces’ and ‘reserve forces’ throughout this document refers to all those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown.
Relationship breakdown of a secure/assured tenant in the sub-region	<p>This applies to existing secure and assured tenants only.</p> <p>If a joint tenant ends the tenancy when moving out, if the remaining applicant qualifies to be offered the same property, they will be offered this property.</p> <p>If they are not offered the property, the remaining tenant will be placed in band A if they either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualify to be offered a smaller property; or • Qualifies for the property size but does not need the adaptations within the current property <p>If a joint tenant ends the tenancy when moving out, the property is not automatically offered to the tenant remaining. However, if an applicant qualifies to be offered the same property they will be made an offer of that property.</p> <p>If an applicant qualifies to be offered a smaller property they will be placed in band A and will be able to bid for properties under the scheme. These applicants will be subject to a time limited bidding restriction of 6 months. During these six months, the POs reserve the right to express an interest on the applicant’s behalf for suitable properties.</p> <p>If a property is then subsequently refused, the applicant may lose their right to remain in their current property.</p>
<u>Reserve forces</u>	All references made to ‘armed forces’, ‘regular forces’ and ‘reserve forces’ throughout this document refers to all those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown.

Social housing	Social housing is a term used to describe accommodation owned and managed by local authorities and registered providers. This includes accommodation let on social and affordable rent levels.
Social rent	Local authority or RO accommodation let a lower rent level compared to affordable rent.
Stock holding local authority	Stock holding refers to local authority who have a housing stock and are responsible for the overall management and provision of housing services.
Tenant Incentive Scheme	Existing social housing tenants within the Gateway area of operation who wish to downsize into smaller sized social housing.
Threatened with homelessness	A person is 'threatened with homelessness' if they are likely to become homeless within 56 days or if a person has had a valid section 21 notice issued in respect of the only accommodation available for their occupation and the notice will expire within 56 days.

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Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

The characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 are:

Disability	Age	Sex (gender)
Gender reassignment	Marriage/civil partnership	Pregnancy/maternity
Race	Sexual orientation	Religion/belief

By law we must have due regard to the need to:

- (a) *eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act*
- (b) *advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it*
- (c) *foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

In effect, this means that we need to ensure that our policies and services are fair, equitable and proportionate and where possible mitigate against any adverse impacts on people from the different protected characteristics.

In addition to the above protected characteristics you should consider the impact of living in a **rural area** as part of this assessment. Where people live is not a characteristic protected by law, but for an organisation such as Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils it is good practice to consider carefully how location may affect people's experience of a policy or service.

The Rural-Urban definition, defines the rurality of very small census based geographies. Census Output Areas forming settlements with populations of over 10,000 (which are urban), while the remainder are defined as one of three rural types: *town and fringe, village or hamlet and dispersed*.

Details	
Service or policy title	Babergh & Mid Suffolk Amendments to the Choice Based Lettings Allocations Policy
Lead officer <i>(responsible for the policy or service/function)</i>	Justin King, Housing Needs & Standards Manager
Officers carrying out the EQIA <i>(at least one must have done EQIA training and it is recommended that an officer responsible for the policy or service/function is involved in completion)</i>	Justin King
Is this new or a revision? <i>(If revision state when previous EQIA undertaken)</i>	New
Is this the first time this policy or function has been assessed?	Yes (Updated Policy). Original Policy assessed in 2008/9.
Date of completing this EQIA	May 2022

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

Description

What exactly is proposed? *(Describe the service/policy and the changes that are being planned)*

The Allocations Policy is used to assess applications for social housing and sets out the criteria, which should be used in the allocation of social housing.

Changes are required to the currently allocations policy. Some are related to government guidance, such as 'Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse' and issued new a new 'Code of Guidance called, Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local authorities' and some amendments include clarifying wording in the policy so that key decisions are made fairly and consistently by all Gateway Local Authorities.

Some of the changes include:

- Addition and clarification of wording in relation to domestic abuse cases;
- Adding clear wording regarding Sensitive Lets;
- Adding wording regarding Care Leavers and their connection to the districts;
- Amending various inconsistencies around homelessness;
- Adding clear wording around effective dates for homeless applicants; and
- Various minor amendments

Why? *(Give reasons why these changes are being introduced)*

These changes are required to the Allocations Policy because of either legislative changes; such as legislation related to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and Allocation of Accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England and some amendments include clarifying wording in the policy so that key decisions are made fairly and consistently by all Gateway Local Authorities.

The changes do not directly impact on the EQIA as housing applications will continue to be assessed in the same way and banding awarded in accordance with current policy.

For Domestic Abuse cases, these will be referred to the Housing Solutions Team for support and assessment of immediate accommodation needs. E.g., Temporary Emergency Accommodation.

What will the effect of the changes be? *(Describe which people, communities, localities etc. will be affected by the changes)*

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

<p>The changes ensure the Local Authorities involved in the Gateway to Homechoice system meet all legislative requirements and that key decisions are made fairly and consistently by all officers using the policy.</p>
<p>How will it be implemented? <i>(Describe the decision making process, timescales, process for implementation)</i></p> <p>All Councils who form part of the Gateway to Homechoice Partnership will be presenting the proposed changes to Elected Members for approval.</p>
<p>When is it due to start? <i>(Planned start of new/revised policy/service)</i></p> <p>August 2022</p>
<p>Any other relevant details</p> <p>None</p>

<p>Data about the population</p> <p>What is the demographic profile or make up of the community you are serving? <i>(A brief overview of quantitative data used and qualitative research undertaken, including customer surveys and focus groups, plus links to reports, local or national data that you have used, suggested sources of information can be found at the end of this document)</i></p> <p>The Allocations Policy covers any application made from a resident of the Districts, who is requesting assistance with accessing social housing.</p>
<p>What is the profile or make up of your service users by protected characteristics? <i>(Where this data is available. If it is not currently available state any plans to collect this in future)</i></p> <p>BMSDC Districts Population Data</p> <p>Age</p> <p>Babergh:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 16 years or under: 18.14%; - 16 to 64 years: 60.48%; - 65 years and over: 21.38% <p>Mid Suffolk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 16 years or under: 18.43%; - 16 to 64 years: 61.44%; - 65 years and over: 20.13%

<p>Implications for communities and workforce</p> <p>Disability</p>

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

What is the impact on people with a disability (including children with additional needs) and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	There is no direct impact on anyone who is disabled. The policy details how applications from disabled persons will be considered and dealt with.
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	N/A
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	N/A
Age	
What is the impact on people of different ages and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	Anyone age 16 plus can legally make a Social Housing Application.
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	N/A
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	N/A
Sex (gender)	
What is the impact on people of different genders and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	The CBL Allocations Policy, does not take this into consideration when assessing or allocating housing. Any person of any gender is able to make an application for Social Housing.
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	N/A
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	N/A
Gender reassignment	
What is the impact on people who have undergone gender reassignment (i.e. transgender people) and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	The CBL Allocations Policy, does not take this into consideration when assessing or allocating housing. Any person aged 16 plus is able to make an application for social housing.

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

How does it have a positive or negative impact?	N/A
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	N/A
Marriage/civil partnership	
What is the impact on people who are married or in a civil partnership and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	The CBL Allocations Policy, does not take this into consideration when assessing or allocating housing. Any person aged 16 plus is able to make an application for social housing.
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	N/A
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	N/A
Pregnancy/maternity	
What is the impact on people who are pregnant women or those with a young child and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	Any person aged 16 plus is able to make an application for social housing.
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	N/A
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	N/A
Race	
What is the impact on people from different races or ethnic groups and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	The CBL Allocations Policy, does not take this into consideration when assessing or allocating housing. Any person aged 16 plus is able to make an application for social housing.
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	N/A
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	N/A
Sexual orientation	

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

What is the impact on people according to their sexual orientation and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	The CBL Allocations Policy, does not take this into consideration when assessing or allocating housing. Any person aged 16 plus is able to make an application for social housing.
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	N/A
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	N/A
Religion/belief	
What is the impact on people according to their religion or belief and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	The CBL Allocations Policy, does not take this into consideration when assessing or allocating housing. Any person aged 16 plus is able to make an application for social housing.
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	N/A
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	N/A

Rurality	
Where people live is not a characteristic protected by law: but for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils it is good practice to consider carefully how location may affect people's experience of a policy or service.	
What is the impact on people according to whether they live in an urban or rural environment and what evidence do you have? <i>(If you do not believe there is any impact describe why not)</i>	The CBL Allocations Policy enables individuals to choose where they wish to live, so they are not prevented from living in certain areas. The only restriction relates to s106 sites, which are determined as part of the planning process and where an applicant needs to meet the strict local needs criteria.
How does it have a positive or negative impact?	N/A
What could be done to mitigate any adverse impact or further promote positive impact?	N/A

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

Making Decisions	
Having completed this equality impact assessment indicate which decision is recommended to be taken.	
Should the policy or service be implemented as the correct course of action?	Yes
Should the policy or service be amended as suggested by the report so that mitigating actions are taken to address an adverse or negative impact on any characteristic?	No
Should the policy or service be reviewed and revised more significantly to take into account its impact on different groups?	No
Should the policy or service not be actioned as there are too many negative impacts?	No

Monitoring Impact	
Assessing the impact on equality is an ongoing process that does not end once a policy or service had been agreed or implemented.	
How frequently will the policy or service be reviewed?	The Policy is regularly reviewed, especially as new legislation is released.
Who will be involved?	Housing Solutions, Members
Will there need to be an action plan completed for any amendments?	No
What further evidence or consultation will be needed to check that the policy or service is working well?	No

Completion	
Authors signature	Justin King
Date of completion	3 rd May 2022

Additional sources of data can be found on the following links:

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

[Suffolk Observatory – Welcome to the Suffolk Observatory](#)

<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/>

<http://suffolkcf.org.uk/publications/hidden-needs-2016/>

<https://www.nao.org.uk/>