

West Suffolk Housing Delivery Action Plan: Final Review

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In February 2020, the housing delivery test was published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). It reports on the performance for housing delivery over the previous three years. West Suffolk Council is required to achieve a target of 95 per cent and delivered 105 per cent of its identified need. As a new authority in April 2019, rates were published for each separate former authority, which showed as an under delivery.
- 1.2 In agreement with MHCLG, West Suffolk prepared a 'light touch' housing delivery action plan which was published in July 2020. This ensured the council is proactively delivering against the housing need of West Suffolk. The plan sets out the actions and commitments the council will take to help increase delivery.

2. Monitoring

- 2.1 Since publication, the action plan has been reviewed monthly for progress on each action, timescales, and the overall housing delivery rate. The action plan was used to set priorities over the specified time and ensured services were working together.

3. Outcomes

- 3.1 The delivery of affordable homes has been a challenge over the past year. Partnership working and communicating with registered providers and developers has supported us to achieve the annual delivery test total required with a final figure of 112 per cent reported in February 2021.
- 3.2 Our figures equate to a total of 297 affordable homes that have been completed. This is approximately 35 per cent affordable housing delivered, including 29 homes which are for social rent.
- 3.3 West Suffolk developed relationships with stakeholders through forums which were attended by housing developers and registered providers. The forums have increased engagement for the emerging local plan and through the five-year land supply. An agenda is jointly produced on current themes such as affordable housing products. This has been a positive outcome and supported engagement and relationship building.

- 3.4 West Suffolk commissioned community action Suffolk (CAS) for a one-year pilot to assist in working with several parish councils to bring forward affordable housing in rural areas. The outcome of the pilot was for two parishes to work with CAS and produce a housing needs survey to evidence that a housing need exists in their parish.
- 3.5 West Suffolk have a lead person for schools and colleges that works closely with agencies involved in the construction industry. The West Suffolk lead also works alongside the new Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership where there are courses in place for new and updating skills and updating construction industry skills gaps which had been identified in the action plan.
- 3.6 West Suffolk housing needs assessment was completed October 2021 although it had been expected October 2020. Due to the pandemic there were delays in the consultation process and delivery of the data. The action plan is currently being developed and will help West Suffolk understand housing needs now and into the future. It will also create change through the local plan on policy change and good practice that increases delivery of housing to meet needs in West Suffolk.
- 3.7 The action plan has been supportive for identifying how West Suffolk could increase housing delivery. It has also been helpful to establish some areas for improvement such as stakeholder relationships which will support housing development to meet the needs of our communities.

4. Next steps

- 4.1 The housing delivery action plan has now been completed. The council will continue to monitor delivery and completions through internal business plans. The council have also completed a mid-term review of the housing strategy implementation plan this year. The review has been used as an opportunity to create a plan which supports joined up working and monitoring across the council.