

Subject: Housing Delivery in the Borough

Report to: Economic Development Committee 21st November 2016

Report by: John Clements, Principal Strategic Planner (Growth Group)

SUBJECT MATTER

A continuing serious shortfall in housing delivery, and its implications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee notes the current adverse position regarding housing delivery, and the likely implications of this.

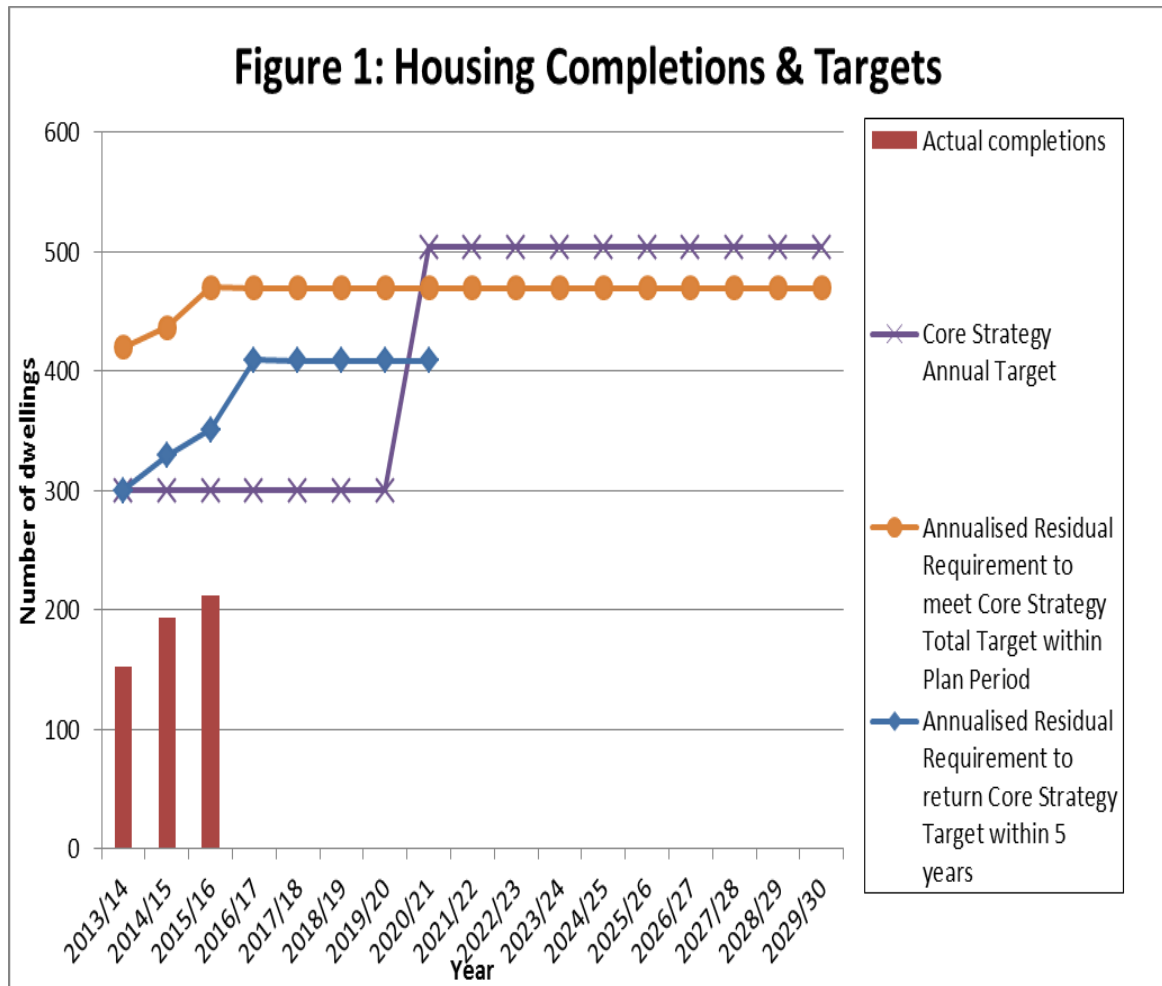
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 As reported to both the Local Plan Working Party and the Executive Management Team, the chronic shortfall in housing delivery in the Borough is now approaching a critical point. A range of measures is in train to support delivery, but these measures are unlikely to fundamentally change the situation.

2. HOUSING DELIVERY AND HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

2.1 Since the formal start of the current plan period in 2013, the Borough has delivered only 62% of the dwellings required by the adopted Great Yarmouth Local Plan Core Strategy (Dec 2015).

2.2 Although delivery has increased slightly over the three years, this increase is vastly outweighed by the combination of the growing backlog and the further future increase in the annual housing target now starting to take effect in the relevant calculations. In order to meet its targets the Borough needs to be delivering housing at more than twice the recent rate year after year, and continue to do so until 2030 (see Figure 1). The prospects for achieving this in the current economic climate are remote.



2.3 As a result of these factors, the Council will likely soon find itself unable to demonstrate the five year supply of ‘deliverable’ housing land required by national planning policy. In 2014 the Council had a 7 year housing land supply, in 2015 a 5.6 year supply, and in April this year just a 5.17 year supply. Once the supply falls below 5 years, national planning policy suggests that any local plan policies which restrict the supply of housing development should be treated as out of date. In practice this means that it would be very difficult to resist any proposed housing development that is not severely problematic or clearly contrary to national planning policy.

2.4 In such circumstances the Council (like others before it) would probably find itself having to grant planning permissions which are contrary to established practice and adopted Local Plan policies, with the reputational risks that involves, or risk being awarded costs against it in any planning appeal against the refusal. Such planning permissions may well have adverse longer term consequences in planning terms, including those on access to services, local character and landscape, the capacity of infrastructure, etc.

2.5 In the interim, the pressure is on for the Council to grant more planning consents and to identify further sites capable of early development, though these are unlikely to avoid the impending situation. They will also not in themselves necessarily result in additional housing delivery, as the number of planning permissions has risen significantly faster than housing completions in the Borough in recent years (as elsewhere).

2.6 The Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted December 2015) commits the Council to delivering 7,140 houses over the years 2013 to 2030. This figure is derived from the Borough's 'Objectively Assessed Need' (evidence base) for housing over that period. National planning policy is to boost significantly the delivery of housing, and local planning authorities are expected to meet the whole of their housing need.

2.7 The Local Plan Core Strategy target averages out at 420 dwellings per annum over the plan period (a little less than a 1% increase on existing housing in the Borough each year). Recognizing that this represented a major increase on the previous rates of delivery, the independent Planning Inspector examining the Local Plan Core Strategy accepted a lower target of 300 per annum for the first seven years, to be made up by a higher target of 504 dwellings per annum from 2020. However, only around 200 dwellings per annum were built between 2013 and 2016.

2.8 The Borough is not alone in struggling to meet its planned housing commitments: many other authorities are in a similar position. This seems to be primarily related to the economics of housing development, which have not been very favourable since the 2007 crash, but is exacerbated within the Borough by relatively low property values, and constraints including flood risk, protected landscapes and habitats, and infrastructure limitations.

2.9 A number of measures are in hand to address the situation:

- seeking to allocate additional sites as soon as possible through the Local Plan Part 2 document;
- a corporate officer 'Housing Delivery Working Group' identifying and addressing blockages holding up potential housing developments;
- working with other Norfolk authorities on researching barriers to delivery and effective techniques to address these;
- consideration of a revision of the current 'Interim Housing Land Supply Policy'.

However, these are unlikely to make sufficient difference to avoid the scenario outlined above.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The shortfall in housing delivery may impact on income from, e.g. New Homes Bonus, and there could be pressure to commit additional resources to bring development forward to meet housing needs and targets.

3.2 In the event that the Council became unable to demonstrate a five year land supply, any refusals of planning permission for housing development which was broadly compatible with the National Planning Policy Framework would risk the award of appeal costs against the Council.

4. RISK IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are potential reputational risks should the Council be unable to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land, including the likely need to grant planning permissions contrary to established practice and Local Plan policies.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 There has been a chronic under delivery of housing against local needs and targets. Despite active endeavours to support delivery, it is unlikely that there will be a sufficient increase in completed dwellings in time to avoid the eventual loss of a five year supply of deliverable housing land. In that event it will become difficult to give much weight to Local Plan policies affecting such development, or resist housing development proposals that are not seriously problematic in terms of national policy.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee notes the current adverse position regarding housing delivery, and the likely implications of this.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- National Planning Policy Framework
- GYBC
 - Local Plan Core Strategy, December 2015
 - Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report, December 2015
 - Interim Housing Land Supply Policy, July 2014
 - Draft Housing Land Supply Position Statement, November 2016

8. ATTACHMENTS

None.

Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if so

how have these been considered/mitigated?

Area for consideration	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	n/a
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	n/a
Existing Council Policies:	Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted December 2015). Saved policies from the 2001 Local Plan. Corporate Plan.
Financial Implications:	See Section 3 above.
Legal Implications (including human rights):	n/a
Risk Implications:	See Section 4 above.
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	n/a
Crime & Disorder:	n/a
Every Child Matters:	n/a