Updated Preferred Option 7/09 Housing Distribution Consultation - Frequently Asked Questions

1. How much housing has to be provided and over what timeframe?

The amount of new housing the District Council is required to provide through its development plan is set at the regional level through the Regional Spatial Strategy – East of England Plan. The timeframe within which the housing is to be provided is between 2001 and 2025. For Suffolk Coastal this amounts to 12,240 new dwellings (around 500 dwellings per annum) and is sub-divided between what is termed the Ipswich Policy Area (see Map 1) and the rest of the district. The Council has no choice but to provide for this number of new dwellings.

2. If the time period started in 2001 how many houses do we have left still to provide?

The base date for the Core Strategy is 2008. The number of new houses provided between 1st April 2001 and 31st March 2008 has therefore been subtracted from the total requirement. The outstanding number of new dwellings to be provided through the Core Strategy is 7,710 (around 450 dwellings per annum).

3. Will all the new dwellings be provided on new greenfield sites?

No. This 7,710 figure includes sites which already have the benefit of planning permission, but where work has yet to start on site. It also includes brownfield opportunities within the larger urban areas, towns and villages. It remains the case however that new greenfield sites will need to be found for some 4,080 dwellings. Priority will be given to developing brownfield sites in advance of new greenfield sites.

4. How is the new housing proposed to be distributed and who decided?

The decision on how the new housing should be distributed has been the subject of a series of public consultations since 2006 (see Sheet 1). These consultations have gradually refined the distribution strategy to that where most new housing development should be directed towards the main urban areas, the market towns and larger villages as this is where most people already live and work and where facilities are concentrated. The largest amount of new housing proposed is in the Ipswich Policy Area, at Martlesham, east of the A12, and at Felixstowe/Walton and the Trimley villages. Whilst the strategy is for housing to be provided in one broad area east of the A12 at Martlesham, the strategy for Felixstowe/Walton and Trimley areas is for one of dispersal. The dispersed option was not one which the Council originally suggested in its Further Issues and Options consultation (Feb '08), but was put forward by Members at a meeting of the Local Development Framework Task Group on 4th August 2008, when they met to discuss responses made on the Feb '08 consultation. (The Local Development Framework Task Group consists of a cross-party group of district Councillors whose role it is to oversee the production of the Local Development Framework and its relevant documents and report to the Council's Cabinet). To see what is proposed for where you live please refer to Sheet 2. The latest changes have been put forward by the Council in response to comments made on the Preferred Options consultation which ended in February 2009 (Preferred Option 12/08). It is these revised figures on which your comments are now sought.

5. How many houses are proposed for each area and how have the numbers been derived?

Table 1 on Sheet 3 sets out the numbers of new houses to be provided across the district. Two sets of figures are shown. The figures shown in brackets are those which were consulted upon in the Preferred Options consultation 12/08.

The other figures are the updated figures on which your comments are now sought and which have been revised in the light of comments received in response to the Preferred Options 12/08 consultation. In brief the changes are as follows:

- the amount of new housing now proposed for east of the A12 has increased by 950 units to 2,000 units
- the amount of new housing now proposed for the market towns has increased by 470 units to 870 units.
- the amount of new housing proposed for Felixstowe/Walton and the Trimley Villages has decreased by 660 units to 1,000 units.
- the amount of new housing anticipated from small windfall sites (eg small scale redevelopment; building on side gardens etc) has been reduced by 780 to 540 units.

Whilst these numbers may appear high, it should be noted that the changes in relation to how the existing housing stock is distributed across the district, remains very similar and balanced (see Table 2, Sheet 4).

Factors in determining how the housing numbers have been distributed include amongst others:

- The distribution of the existing housing stock
- Known constraints including for example risk of flooding; landscape and nature conservation designations;
- Meeting the RSS housing requirements within the Ipswich Policy Area
- Addressing the needs of individual towns, particularly the need to address the regeneration issues at Felixstowe
- Retaining the character of individual settlements
- The level and scale of facilities and services available and the potential for these to be improved or increased; and
- The capacity of existing infrastructure particularly transport; and
- Access to employment opportunities
- The ability of communities to absorb new housing growth

Changes to the housing distribution continue to have regard to the factors listed above, but in addition also to comments made in response to the preferred option 12/08 consultation. It should also be noted that the significant evidence base on subjects such as transport, infrastructure and environmental impact is facilitating the debate on housing numbers and their distribution (see Appendix 1 of the main consultation document). Note 7,710 new dwellings represent an increase of 13.5% (rounded) over the 2008 dwelling stock.

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

6. Why are so many houses proposed at Martlesham (east of the A12) and why has this changed?

The land to the east of the A12 is considered, when taking all of the relevant factors into consideration to be the most sustainable and to offer the most potential benefits of the areas within the Ipswich Policy area upon which the Council consulted on in February 2008. (Further Issues and Options consultation – “blobs on map”). That is not to say that it is perfect nor met with universal approval. Its location raises concerns including impact on important landscape and nature conservation interests, as well as neighbouring communities. All of the areas the Council considered as options raise concerns regarding impact on the main and local road network as well as education, health, environment etc. Notwithstanding these facts the area east of the A12 offers the best opportunity to develop a new stand alone community, well related to existing and new jobs, other facilities and public transport. It is considered that careful planning and well designed landscaping can mitigate the possible adverse affects on the neighbouring countryside and nature conservation interests. The 1,050 units set out in the Preferred Options proposed represented the number required to make up the RSS minimum requirement for the Ipswich Policy Area.

Having considered all the relevant factors including the desire on behalf of the Council to create a new self contained sustainable community, but well related to the surrounding area,, the Council considers the case for exceeding this number is compelling in order to meet the aims and aspirations of the area vision. The suggested increase in housing numbers has therefore been carefully considered and is put forward on the basis that it provides the opportunity to also introduce wider community benefits than could be achieved with 1050 units. In particular, it brings in the need to create new secondary school provision for the benefit of the proposed and existing dwellings. Through the economies of scale and taking into account existing settlements in Martlesham, modern new community facilities can be delivered. Aspects such as highway capacity etc can be managed subject to the necessary developer contributions without causing unacceptable disturbance to the area. Such larger scale development also offers the opportunity to provide significant well designed and managed local open space to encourage new residents, and existing residents to remain within a quality locality rather than increase visits to the nearby estuary e.g. for dog walking, thereby helping to mitigate the impact of development. Significant new landscaping can also be expected to be provided to help mitigate the visual impact within the countryside and from neighbouring communities.

Either way, it is essential the development on this scale only occurs as part of a comprehensive development, with a clear set of priorities as to what new infrastructure will be provided, when and by whom.

7. Why are so many houses proposed for Felixstowe/Walton and Trimley Villages

The numbers of houses proposed for Felixstowe/Walton and Trimley Villages is based on the need to regenerate a seaside town experiencing some significant negative trends. This decline is in part due to the decline of the traditional seaside resort, an over-reliance on the Port of Felixstowe for jobs, an ageing population and a town and seafront area in need of regeneration. In addition, the town experiences an overall influx of people commuting into the town for work than commute out. These findings were based on an independent report by David Lock Associates which set out a range of scenarios as to how these problems could be addressed. The Council agreed that a strategy of going for growth was the correct approach, providing a measure of housing above local needs to provide the opportunity for those having to commute into the town to live nearer. At the same time supporting policies propose a diversification of the local economy to lessen the reliance on the Port.

In response to concerns raised in the Preferred Options 12/08 consultation it is now proposed that the number of new dwellings at Felixstowe/Walton and Trimley villages be reduced. That number is now at the lower end of the going for growth scenario; takes note of progress with a number of regeneration schemes; and the support shown for more emphasis to be given to promoting the tourism role for the town. In relation to jobs, it allows more time for the local economy to diversify. Regeneration of the town to provide it with a healthy long term future remains the overriding objective. The total growth proposed for Felixstowe/Walton and Trimley Villages is 1,410 or approximately 80 dwellings per annum.

8. What impact will all these houses have on local infrastructure, roads, education, healthcare etc.?

The housing distribution strategy as set out in the Preferred Options 12/08 consultation, and as now currently proposed has been drawn up in consultation with the relevant service and transport providers. Additional studies were commissioned to look in more detail at the infrastructure requirements for Ipswich Policy Area, east of A12, and Felixstowe/Walton and Trimley Villages. None of these studies show that the scales of development proposed and the distributions suggested cannot be accommodated. What they do provide is information on what new or upgraded infrastructure or services will be required, when it will be required and how it could be provided. This information is vital to ensuring that the new housing that has to be provided is provided in a way which maximises the benefits to the existing and new residents and communities and minimises adverse impacts. Copies of all of the studies are available for inspection at the Council Offices, Melton Hill Woodbridge or via the Councils website
http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/planning/review/evidence/studies/default.htm

In addition, a sustainability appraisal and appropriate assessment have also been carried out. These provide an objective assessment of what is proposed highlighting good and bad points and suggesting ways in which the bad points can be avoided, mitigated or minimised as well as any impacts which cannot be satisfactorily mitigated.

9. Why have the "small windfall" housing numbers been reduced by so much.

For the Council's plan to be found sound, it is important that the housing strategy it is proposing is deliverable. It is for this reason that national planning policy advice states that Council's should not rely on sources of housing which by their very nature are not "certain". Whilst the Council can point to historic rates of such small sites coming forward, there is a finite limit as to how much development on side gardens or small scale redevelopment of single housing plots etc is acceptable. In response to comments received on the Preferred options 12/08 consultation the Council is therefore suggesting that it needs to be on the cautious side and significantly reduce its estimated contribution from this source. It should be noted however that any such small sites which do come forward and are built out during the early years of the plan will still contribute to the total housing provision and therefore the monitoring of new greenfield land release for housing.

10. What do the increases in numbers mean for the market towns?

The total number of new dwellings to be provided for at the market towns is proposed to be increased in total by some 470 units. It is suggested that this increase would not be expected to be provided until the end of the plan period i.e. 2020 – 2025. At this point the capacity of existing towns would be re-examined to assess capacity as well as any other changes in circumstance which may have occurred. In the meantime, no changes are suggested to the amounts of development allocated to individual settlements set out in the Preferred Options 12/08 consultation.

SHEET 1

LDF CORE STRATEGY - PROGRESS TIMELINE

KEY CONSULTATION DATES	DATE	SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS
	2004	
PLANNING & COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004 (May 2004)	May	
	2005	
	2006	
Vision & Objectives	March	Supporting Evidence (See Appendix 1)
	2007	
Issues & Options	February	Supporting Evidence (See Appendix 1)
	2008	
Further Issues & Options	Feb	Supporting Evidence (See Appendix 1)
Preferred Options	Dec	Supporting Evidence (See Appendix 1)
	2009	
Cabinet	July	
Housing Distribution	Sept	Supporting Evidence (See Appendix 1)
Cabinet	Dec	
	2010	
Full Council	Jan	
Submission to Secretary of State	July	LDF Evidence base documents
Examination in Public	Nov	Specific Evidnece base papers
	2011	
Inspectors Report	Feb	
Adoption of Core Strategy	March	

SHEET 2
REVISED SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY
(Changes. Some settlements have changed levels and are indicated in bold. +/- indicates if they have gone up or down. # shows new settlement.**)**

Settlement Type	Scale and level of existing facilities	Settlements		
Major Centre	Sub-regional centre for commercial and social facilities	Felixstowe Ipswich Fringe i.e. Kesgrave, Martlesham Heath, Purdis Farm; Rushmere St Andrew (excluding village)		
Town	Focus point for employment, shopping and community facilities. A transport hub	Aldeburgh Framlingham Leiston Saxmundham Woodbridge (with parts of Melton & Martlesham)		
Key Service Centre ***** settlement considered capable of accommodating more strategic levels of growth	Settlements which provide an extensive range of specified facilities, namely most or all of the following: • Public transport access to town • Shop)s) meeting everyday needs • Local employment opportunities • Meeting place • Post office • Pub or licensed premises • Primary school • Doctors surgery	Alderton Blythburgh Bramfield Dennington Earl Soham Eyke Grundisburgh Hollesley Knodishall Martlesham (village) Melton (village) Orford Otley Peasenhall (with part of Sibton)	Rendlesham Snape Trimley St Martin* Trimely St Mary* Westleton Wickham Market Witnesham Yoxford	
Local Service Centre	Settlements providing a smaller range of facilities than Key Service Centres. At least 3 from: • Public transport access to town • Shop)s) meeting everyday needs • Local employment opportunities • Meeting place • Post office • Pub or licensed premises	Aldringham Badingham Bawdsey Bucklesham Benhall Blaxhall Brandeston Bredfield **Bruisyard (+)** Butley Campsea Ashe Charsfield Chillesford Darsham	Dunwich Easton Hacheston Hasketon Kelsale **Kirton (-)** Little Bealings Little Glemham Marlesford Middleton Nacton Parham Rendham	Rushemere St Andrew (village) Shottisham Stratford St Andrew Sutton Heath Swilland Theberton Thorpeness Tunstall **Ufford (-)** Walsberswick Waldringfield Wenhaston Westerfield
Other Village	Settlements with few or minimal facilities	Boyton Bromeswell Chediston **Clopton (-)** Cransford Cratfield Cretingham Falkenham Farnham Foxhall **Friston (-)**	Great Glemham Heveningham Huntingfield **Kettleburgh (-)** Levington **Melton Park (#)** Newbourne Pettistree Playford Saxtead Sudbourne	Sweffling Tuddenham Walpole

		Great Bealings (-)	**Sutton (-)**	
Countryside	The area outside the settlements above, including the hamlets and small groups of dwellings that are dispersed across the district	Boulge Brightwell Burgh Capel St Andrew Cookley Culpho Dallinghoo Debach	Gedgrave Hemley Hoo Iken Letheringham Linstead Magna Linstead Parva Monewden	Ramsholt Sibton Sizewell Sternfield Stratton Hall Swilland Thorington Ubbeston Wantisden

SHEET 3

Revised Housing Distribution

(Earlier Preferred Options Housing Distribution shown in brackets)

Table 1.

	Outstanding planning permissions (31/3/2008)	**Urban Potential (large brownfield)**	**Minimum new allocations (greenfield)**	**Outstanding housing allocations from previous local plan**	**Small windfall (small brownfield)**	**% of new dwellings total**	**TOTAL NEW HOUSES**
Ipswich Policy Area	420 (420)	220 (180)	2000 (1050)	0 (0)	Included in total below	34% (21%)	2640 (1650)
Felixstowe Walton & the Trimleys	160 (160)	250 (250)	1000 (1660)	0 (0)	Included in total below	18% (27%)	1410 (2080)
Market Towns	670 (670)	400 (410)	870 (400)	150 (150)	Included in total below	27% (21%)	2090 (1630)
Key & Local Service Centres	530 (530)	170 (180)	210 (200)	120 (120)	Included in total below	13% (13%)	1030 (1030)
District wide					540 (1320)	7% (17%)	540 (1320)
TOTAL	1780 (1780)	1040 (1030)	4080 (3310)	270 (270)	540 (1320)	100% (100%)	7710 (7710)

SHEET 4
Table 2
Housing Provision 2008 – 2025 From All Planned Sources
Comparison of Original Preferred Option and Updated Preferred Option as Percentage of Existing and Proposed Housing Stock
Numbers of dwellings (housing stock) in Suffolk Coastal, existing and proposed

	Existing Housing Stock		Original Preferred Option					Updated Preferred Option				
			New Housing			Totals 2025 (existing stock + new housing)		New Housing			Totals 2025 (existing stock + new housing)	
	Units	%	Units	% of new housing	Per annum	Units	% of total housing stock	Units	% of new housing	Per annum	Units	% of total housing stock
Ipswich Policy Area	11,248	20%	1,650	21%	100	12,898	20%	2640	34%	155	13,888	21%
Felixstowe Walton & the Trimleys	13,718	24%	2,080	27%	120	15,798	24%	1410	18%	80	15,128	23%
Market Towns	11,514	20%	1,630	21%	95	13,144	20%	2090	27%	120	13,604	21%
Key & Local Service Centres	17,590	31%	1,030	13%	60	18,620	29%	1030	13%	60	18,620	29%
Other villages and countryside	3,135	5%	0	0%	0	3,135	5%	0	0%	0	3,135	5%
Windfall (unidentifiable small sites)	-		1,320	17%	75	1,320	2%	540	7%	30	540	1%
District Total	57,205	(100%)	7,710	100%	450	64,915	100%	7,710	100%	450	64,915	100%

Note 7,710 new dwellings represent an increase of 13.5% (rounded) over the 2008 dwelling stock.

Note Percentages shown in table are rounded up or down to nearest whole figu

MAP 1.

Suffolk Coastal Showing Ipswich Policy Area