



IPSWICH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Ipswich Borough Council Housing Delivery Action Plan 2025

Foreword

The Council's Corporate Strategy identifies '*Meeting the housing needs of our community*' as one of our priorities for the Borough.

The Ipswich Local Plan 2018-2036 includes a housing need figure of 8,280 new homes by 2036, as a starting point and supports a range of homes to be provided in terms of size, type and tenure.

The town planning function is a key driver for improving housing delivery, alongside the property, housing, and environmental health functions, which together, can bring about a significant positive change to housing delivery in Ipswich.

This Housing Delivery Action Plan describes the challenges facing the Council in terms of housing delivery and sets out actions to address them.

We look forward to working with partners in implementing this plan and delivering new homes for the people of Ipswich.



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Ipswich the Place

Ipswich is the county town of Suffolk and performs a regional role in terms of its population, in delivering growth and how it functions as a major employment, shopping and service centre, and hub for transportation.

The town has a well-connected transport network. Train services provide good and regular access to London (in around 60 minutes) and direct links to Norwich, Cambridge and Peterborough. Ipswich is also closely connected to the trunk road network with the A12 providing access to London, the M25 and Stansted Airport and the A14, linking Ipswich to the Midlands and the Port of Felixstowe.

The population of Ipswich is younger than the county, regional and national averages. The largest age group in Ipswich is the 25–44-year-olds (26.6%). In addition, 18.6% are aged 14 or under. Conversely, 18.5% of the Ipswich population is aged over 65 years. Ipswich's history is rich as a port and, in recent years, its Waterfront has been transformed to include hotels, the University campus, the Jerwood Dance House, a range of bars and cafés and high-quality residential apartments.

Ipswich is a compact town. Nowhere is further than 4 miles from the town centre. It is also a town on a human scale, which lends itself to walking and cycling.

Ipswich is developing dynamically and prosperously and has strong prospects for growth. This growth is supported at a central, sub-regional and local government level, enabling Ipswich to develop while acknowledging the sense of place established by many historic buildings and its large, landscaped parks.

Christchurch Park provides one of the largest green spaces in any UK urban centre, and together with the numerous other beautiful parks and open spaces, contributes significantly to the setting of the town. Other attractions include the many historic buildings and numerous theatres, with Ipswich enjoying more National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) than any other location outside of London.

Beyond, Suffolk boasts a splendid rural backdrop, including a renowned coastal region, Dedham Vale and the mid-Suffolk area, with strong links to Gainsborough and Constable Country.

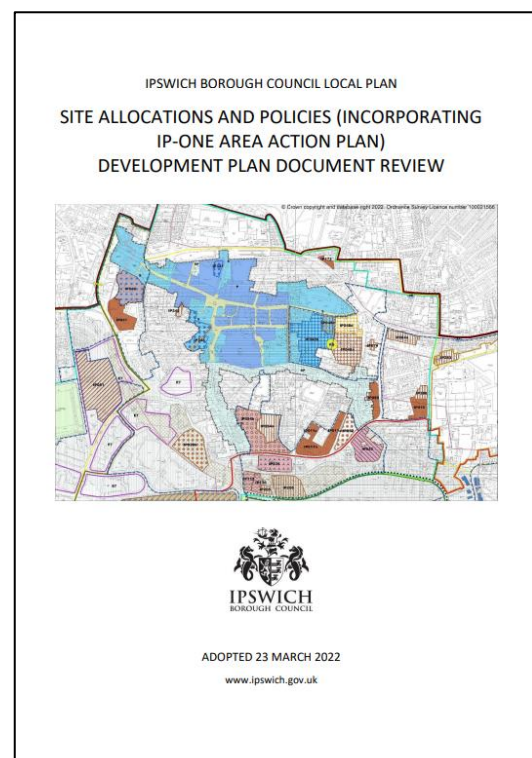
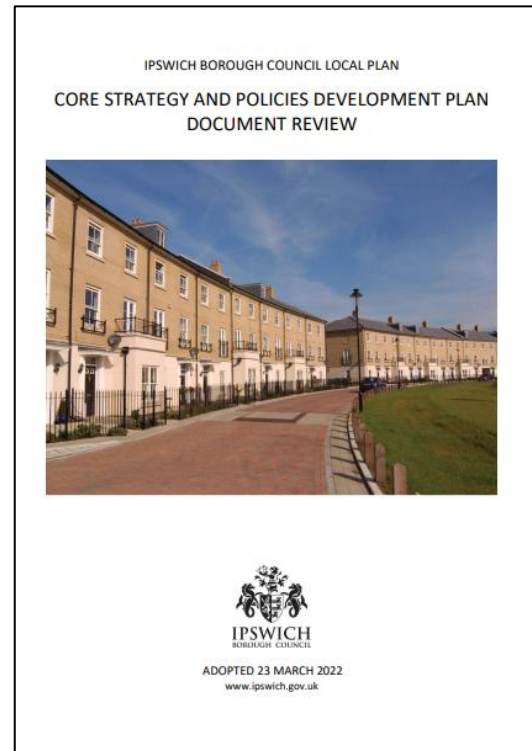
Local Planning in Ipswich

On the 23 March 2022 Ipswich Borough Council adopted its third Local Plan in under ten years. The Local Plan looks forward fifteen years and allocates land for future housing and employment growth, along with planning for infrastructure to support it. It also serves as a key tool in delivering the spatial aspects of the Council's Corporate Strategy.

With the formal adoption of the Ipswich Local Plan on the 23 March 2022 by Full Council, the Borough had a five-year land supply. As of the most recent assessment, Ipswich now has a 3.46-year housing land supply. This represents a shift from March 2022, when the adopted Local Plan enabled the Council to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply for the first time in 12 years.

The Ipswich Local Plan continues to provide a framework for the delivery of 8,280 new homes by 2036. This includes new homes at Ipswich Garden Suburb and associated infrastructure such as a new 24.5ha country park on the northern edge of Ipswich.

Outside of the Ipswich Garden Suburb the focus of new housing is within the central area of the town, known as the IP-One Area, and redevelopment of brownfield land.



Housing Delivery in Ipswich

Much of the recent development in the town has been focused around the central area of Ipswich (IP-One Area). Ipswich Waterfront is the location for the largest single regeneration project in the East of England and the focus of significant commercial, cultural and institutional investment.

Whilst Ipswich has seen quality housing delivered across the Borough, the housing market has not delivered the scale of housing needed.

The purpose of this document is to identify what steps the Council needs to take in order to assist with delivering sufficient number and quality of new homes for all. This report examines the current state of play; exploring the challenges and opportunities to build the scale of housing needed in Ipswich.

The Council recognises that it plays a significant role in driving the delivery of new homes. It is committed to making a significant contribution itself both to housing delivery and to the public realm.

The Council has an excellent record of making timely and good decisions. For December 2022 to December 2024, over 95% of all planning applications were determined within time. For March 2023 to March 2024 71% of all planning appeals were dismissed.

There are however some things that are beyond the control of the Local Planning Authority, for example the lack of power to properly incentivise the implementation of planning permissions when they are granted. For example, on the 1 April 2024 there were approximately 2,057 dwellings in Ipswich with permission which had not commenced.

The Borough is now entered a delivery phase, prioritising housing delivery over launching straight into the preparation of another Local Plan. This is being assisted through a partnership with Homes England.

Housing Delivery Test

The Housing Delivery Test measures net additional dwellings provided in a local authority area against the homes required to meet local need. The current Housing Delivery Test covers the period between 2020 and 2023.

Where delivery falls below the homes required, policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will apply.

The consequences apply concurrently, for example, those who fall below 85% should produce an Action Plan as well as the 20% buffer. The consequences will continue to apply until the subsequent housing delivery test measurement is published the following year.

All local planning authorities with less than 95% of the delivery target must prepare an Action Plan.

An Action Plan is intended to be a practical document focussed on effective measures aimed at improving housing delivery in an area and needs to be underpinned by evidence and research.

The 2022 Housing Delivery Test result for Ipswich Borough Council was 116%. The 2023 Housing Delivery Test result for Ipswich Borough Council was 77% (which would have required a 20% buffer); however, Ipswich Borough Council wrote to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to dispute this, as it considered that, when correctly calculated, the result should have been 85.375% (Action Plan).

On 26 March 2025, the Council received a letter from the Ministry which, after consultation with the Office for National Statistics (ONS), confirmed that they agreed, and the score was subsequently raised to 85%. The revised Housing Delivery Test measurement for Ipswich took effect upon receipt of the letter, as did any consequences that apply as a result of the measurement.

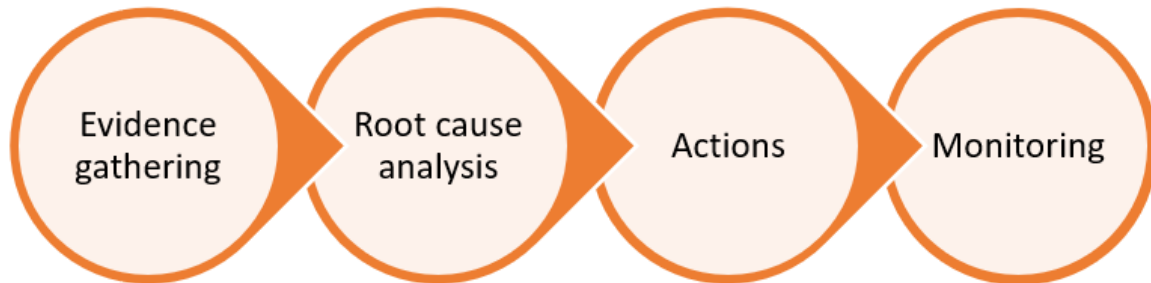
New Standard Method for Calculating Housing Need

The NPPF published in December 2024 revised the standard method for calculating Local Housing Need, introducing the size of the existing housing stock of an area into the approach, as well as an additional uplift where affordability has worsened over time.

The revised standard method generates a LHN of 719 dpa for Ipswich. However, the 2023 Housing Delivery Test measurement has been calculated using the previous standard method (first introduced in 2018 and amended in 2020), which generated a LHN of 200 dwellings in 2020/21, 300 dwellings in 2021/22 and 300 dwelling in 2022/23. LHN calculated using the previous standard method saw the figure change every year to reflect population growth estimates and published affordability ratios.



Evidence and Root Cause Analysis



The Action Plan process is shown in the diagram above and requires local authorities to understand why delivery in their area is below government expectations.

A range of data sources have been analysed to identify the main local issues and challenges influencing delivery rates.

Based on data collected and analysed the Council considers that the main barriers to delivery continue to be:

- The tight, compact urban nature of the borough;
- Higher cost of development and lower land values;

- Low private sector delivery levels of affordable housing;
- The inability of the local planning authority to incentivise delivery of housing, or sanction non-delivery;
- Reliance on brownfield sites; and
- Greenfield sites, which offer fewer constraints, sit outside of Borough boundary.

Key Actions

Through a 'root cause analysis' the Council has identified the main local issues and challenges influencing housing delivery rates. These issues have been used as the basis to evolve actions to boost delivery.

The actions comprise a range of short, medium and long-term actions, to help provide immediate improvements to delivery, but also help with long-term planning for growth.



1

Support Private Sector Affordable Housing Provision

1. Support Private Affordable Housing Provision

The Council is committed to increasing the delivery of affordable homes in the Borough. It is keen to see the private sector play its parts in meeting affordable housing need.

The Council is progressing a programme of affordable housing and has plans to build 1,000 new homes in a decade. Furthermore, the Council has invested £11 million in improving its existing housing stock. All of the Ipswich Borough Council homes meet the Decent Homes Standard and enhanced Ipswich Standard.

Working with the private sector is key to accelerating the supply of affordable housing in Ipswich. The Council can outline the necessary housing mix and bedroom numbers required for a particular site to best meet local waiting list demand.

Planning officers can highlight sites to housing service colleagues so they can work in partnership with private developers to help better deliver affordable housing. This work is supported through the Ipswich Housing Strategy 2025-2030.

Finally, the Council is committed to ensuring it has the resources in place to deliver affordable homes. The Council will therefore explore the capacity and resource to strengthening its partnership role.

Actions

- **Improve partnership working to ensure better private sector delivery of affordable housing (medium-term).**
 - **Explore capacity and resource to strengthen the enabling role within the Council (ongoing - short to medium-term).**
-

2

Work with Neighbouring Authorities to Deliver New Homes

2. Work with Neighbouring Authorities to Deliver New Homes

The Council recognises that Ipswich is tightly bounded and by working in partnership with its neighbouring authorities (Babergh & Mid Suffolk Councils, East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council), it can, in the future, identify land strategically to deliver housing.

The four authorities have a demonstrable history of working together on strategic planning issues through the Ipswich Strategic Planning Area Board (ISPA Board).

The Council is committed to continuing this work with adjoining authorities through the ISPA Board, in order to develop a sustainable approach to housing delivery beyond the Borough boundary.

The Council will continue to work closely with ISPA authorities to deliver housing jointly for the Ipswich Housing Market Area and progress all opportunities collaboratively as necessary.

Action

- **Work with neighbouring authorities to identify strategic sites to bring forward new housing development and associated infrastructure (ongoing).**
-

3

Monitor and Bid for Infrastructure and Housing Funding

3. Monitor and Bid for Infrastructure and Housing Funding

The Council will take advantage of all relevant funding opportunities to support the delivery of new housing and infrastructure to support housing delivery.

The Council recognises that parts of Ipswich have viability issues arising from high and abnormal development costs and may benefit from upfront funding, and/or other funded support to accelerate the release of land for housing. The Council will seek to bid for funding opportunities which provide upfront capital to facilitate the delivery of new homes.

The Council already has a proven track record of securing appropriate investment. In February 2018, Ipswich Borough Council successfully bid for £9.8 million from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) from Homes England to facilitate the delivery of 3,500 homes at Ipswich Garden Suburb (IGS). IGS is a strategically important site and will contribute significantly (36%) in meeting the Borough's housing need up to 2036.

The HIF funding has been used to deliver new infrastructure at the site, including a 24.5-hectare country park and a bridge across a main railway line.

In March 2021 Ipswich was successful in its bid for £25 million from the government's Towns Fund. The funding has already contributed to the development of the Integrated Care Academy at the University of Suffolk, the 'Net Zero' Skills Centre at Suffolk New College, and the transformation of the Old Post Office on the Cornhill into The Botanist. The Public Realm elements comprise a range of measures that will 'green' Ipswich Town Centre and the route to the waterfront as well as improving the public realm in and around Lloyds Avenue and Major's Corner.

Action

- **Continue to bid for infrastructure funding to facilitate the delivery of new homes, with a particular focus on securing funding which provides upfront capital (ongoing).**
-

4

Bringing Empty Homes Back into Use.

4. Bringing Empty Homes Back into Use.

An important part of the Council's wider Housing Strategy is to tackle long term empty homes.

Increasing the number of empty homes bought back into use increases the overall supply of new housing and reduces blight on neighbourhoods. The Council's Empty Homes Policy aims to reduce the number of long-term empty homes in Ipswich returning homes back into use and discouraging owners from leaving properties empty. The objectives of the Policy are to provide advice and assistance to those wishing to bring empty homes back into use and where necessary, use appropriate enforcement action to return the property to use.

The Council has an excellent track record of bringing empty homes back into use. Through the Council's Empty Homes Policy, the number of long-term empty homes has fallen from 574 in 2020 to 398 in 2024.

In the 2022-2025 period Ipswich's Private Sector Housing Team assisted in bringing 48 long term empty properties back into use.

The Council's annual target for restoring empty homes back into use is 50. This is 10% of the estimated number of long-term empty properties in Ipswich. Based on previous results, it is expected that the majority (80%) of empty homes will be brought back to use as a result of encouragement letters sent to owners. It is expected that 10% will be brought back into use via grants and 10% via enforcement action.

Action

- **Continue to work with the owners of homes left vacant for extended period in order to meet the Council's annual target of restoring 50 empty homes back into use (ongoing).**
-

5

Work with Small and Medium Sized Builders to Facilitate the Delivery of New Homes

5. Work with Small and Medium-Sized Builders (SMEs) to Facilitate the Delivery of New Homes

Approximately one third of all new homes in Ipswich are delivered on smaller sites of between one and ten dwellings. The majority of these sites are developed by small and medium sized developers who play a critical role in helping to meet our housing need.

Small sites are important to the Council's overall housing supply as they typically build out more quickly and provide additional choice in the type and design of housing.

The Council's own housing sites will look to make use of small and medium sized local businesses as appropriate, to build out their own smaller development sites.

Action

- Support our Housebuilding Company, Handford Homes, to develop the local construction market to enable local small and medium sized construction firms to bid for the construction of new council housing (ongoing - short to medium-term).
 - Engage with developers to progress those sites which have consent but have not commenced on site (ongoing – short to medium-term).
-

6

Review S106 Procedures for Housing Applications

6. Review Section 106 Procedures for Housing Applications

Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act is the Council's preferred approach to securing high-quality mitigation to make proposals acceptable.

The Council recognises the importance of timely negotiation and agreement of developer contributions and is working to reduce the time taken to complete Section 106 Agreements by carrying out preparation of draft agreements alongside planning application processing, thus accelerating the decision-making process.

Going forward, the Council will continue to encourage engagement at the pre-application stage (see Action 7) of the planning process so that issues are resolved, and a package of obligations are agreed in principle with the applicant before the planning application is considered. This will provide greater certainty for developers and greater transparency to the local community.

The Council will work to ensure that affordable housing is provided through S106 Agreements to reflect the Council's corporate housing priority.

The Council is actively engaging with Suffolk County Council (SCC) on updated an SCC Developers Guide to Infrastructure Contributions in Suffolk. The guide is intended to improve transparency and consistency in planning obligation requirements by providing guidance to developers and all stakeholders involved in the development process.

Finally, the Council is committed to ensuring it has the resources in place to agree, process and monitor planning obligations under (Section 106 Agreements). To this end the Council has recruited a dedicated officer to support the delivery of planning services.

Actions

- **Promote early S106 negotiations with the aim of agreeing a package of obligations in principle with the applicant as part of the pre-application discussions (ongoing – short-term).**
-

7

Promote Use of the Pre-applications Service

7. Promote Use of the Pre-applications Service

Ipswich Borough Council is committed to improving its pre-application advice process. The main aim is to simplify the process and focus on issues essential to securing planning permission.

To support these improvements, the Council has undertaken a review of its charging schedule to ensure it reflects the level of service provided and the resources required to deliver high-quality, constructive pre-application advice.

As part of this, the Council has produced formal written guidance that clearly outlines the procedures for submitting a pre-application enquiry. This guidance sets out what applicants can expect from the process, what information they need to provide, and how the advice will be delivered. It also includes practical tips and best practice recommendations to help applicants make the most of the opportunity — from preparing clear and complete submissions to engaging effectively with planning officers.

The aim is to make the process more transparent, accessible, and ultimately more beneficial for applicants and the Council alike.

Actions

- **Continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the pre-application advice system to ensure it remains, clear consistent and user focussed.**
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8

Review Application Procedures

8. Review Application Procedures

The Council is committed to delivering efficient and high-quality development management services.

The Council continues to utilise Enterprise software to improve business efficiency and productivity.

The greater focus on identifying and resolving issues will lead to a more efficient and a timely planning application process.

The Council is currently undertaking a full review of its Local Validation List. For applications to be assessed effectively and expeditiously, it is important that local validation requirements are met. Updating the Local Validation List will provide applicants with greater certainty about the application process. Consultation on the draft Local Validation List will take place in August 2025.

It will also improve the quality and detail of application submissions, allowing applications to be assessed effectively, expeditiously and with full transparency.

Actions

- Review the Local Validation List to enable applications to be assessed effectively and expeditiously (ongoing - short-term).
 - Continue to utilise Enterprise software to increase business efficiency and productivity (complete - short-term).
-

9

Place Marketing and Promotion to
Stimulate and Grow Market Interest

9. Place Marketing and Promotion to Stimulate and Grow Market Interest

There is a need to encourage developers and investors into Ipswich to increase the quantity of housing being delivered.

Place marketing and promotion will be used to actively promote Ipswich and its key development locations to stimulate market interest and consumer demand.

Place marketing will set out the unique selling points of the town, including its heritage assets, the Waterfront, the fact that it has a well-connected transport network with train services providing access into London in just over an hour and links to Norwich, Cambridge and Peterborough.

It will emphasise that Ipswich Borough Council is keen to work with housebuilders and developers to deliver the homes required.

Place marketing and promotion will be backed up with continued efforts to de-risk development in less viable locations, through the provision of gap funding and infrastructure investment to remove as many abnormal costs as possible.

Actions

- **Investigate opportunities to work with partners to market the town (short-term to medium-term).**
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The Council is committed to delivering and monitoring the progress on these actions.

Implementation periods

Ongoing	=	Work has commenced
Short-term	=	12 - 18 months
Medium-term	=	19 - 36 months
Long term	=	36 months or more



Useful Links

Ipswich Housing Strategy 2025-2030 -
[ipswich.gov.uk/sites/ipswich/files/2025-01/IBC- Housing Strategy.pdf](https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/sites/ipswich/files/2025-01/IBC- Housing Strategy.pdf)

Adopted 2022 Ipswich Borough Council Local Plan
Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document Review -
https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/sites/www.ipswich.gov.uk/files/core_strategy_and_policies_development_plan_document_7_maps.pdf

Adopted 2022 Ipswich Borough Council Local Plan
Site Allocations and Policies (Incorporating IP-One Area Action Plan)
Development Plan Document Review -
https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/sites/www.ipswich.gov.uk/files/site_allocations_and_policies_dpd_0.pdf

Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment -
https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/sites/www.ipswich.gov.uk/files/shelaa_january_2020_final.pdf

Housing Delivery Test: 2023 measurement
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-delivery-test-2023-measurement>

