

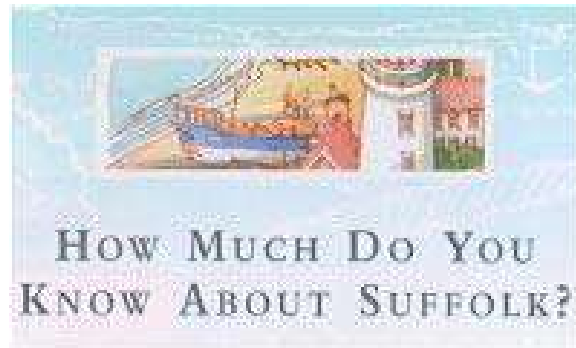
Suffolk's Environment

...towards sustainable
development

**"Planning to
protect our
valuable
resources"**

Suffolk Local Planning
Authorities - May 99





Do you know:

- how many new houses are built each year?
- how many listed buildings and wildlife sites there are?
- the length of cycleway in our towns?
- how slow worms are faring?

Read on! We have the answers to these questions and many others!

In 1996 the eight Suffolk local planning authorities began an exciting and unique project to measure change in the Country's towns, villages and countryside.

This project is called
"Suffolk's Environment ...
towards sustainable development".

How are we doing this?



Suffolk's local planning authorities have developed measurements of change (known as indicators). The indicators aim to provide information on the quality of Suffolk's environment. Information comes from a variety of sources, including decisions taken on planning applications, existing information held by local planning authorities and information from other organisations.

Why is the project special?

Because it:

- is the first in the country to measure the environmental impact of the many day-to-day planning decisions;
- collects information which has never before been brought together within Suffolk;
- involves Suffolk's planning authorities all working together and sharing resources in a long term partnership to improve what we know about the environment.

The project looks at Suffolk's environmental quality and investigates ways in which the planning system has affected it over the past year.



Housing

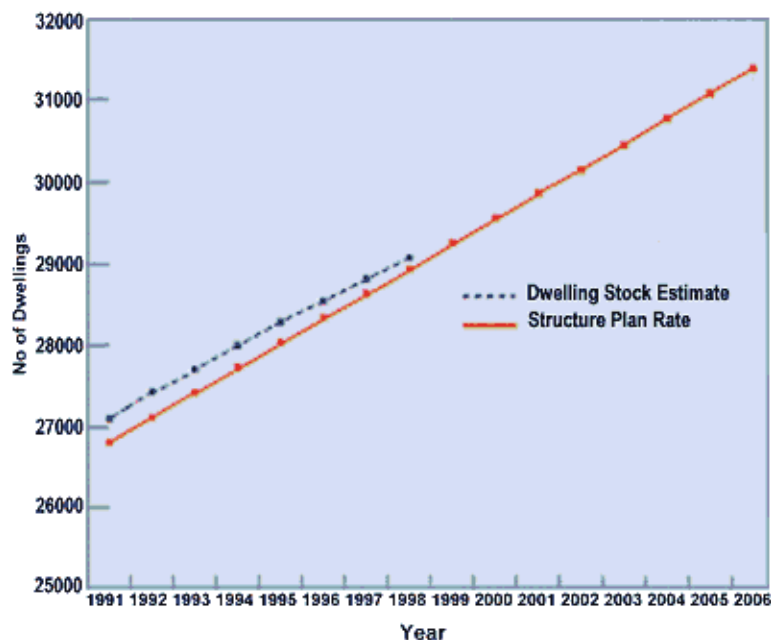
Suffolk is a thriving county and has a population of over 650,000. Since 1993, the population has grown by 9,000 - or just under half a percent each year.

As Suffolk's population grows, and the structure of households change, more houses are needed. Since 1988, housing development in Suffolk has been slightly higher than the 3000 new homes a year provided for in the County Structure Plan.



Between 1995 and 1997, 73% of new homes were built in Suffolk's 22 towns - half of these in the three main towns of Ipswich, Lowestoft and Bury St. Edmunds.

An important future issue will be where new housing is built and the extent to which previously developed land (brownfield sites) is re-used.



Graph housing stock change 1991 - 1997 and Structure Plan Rate

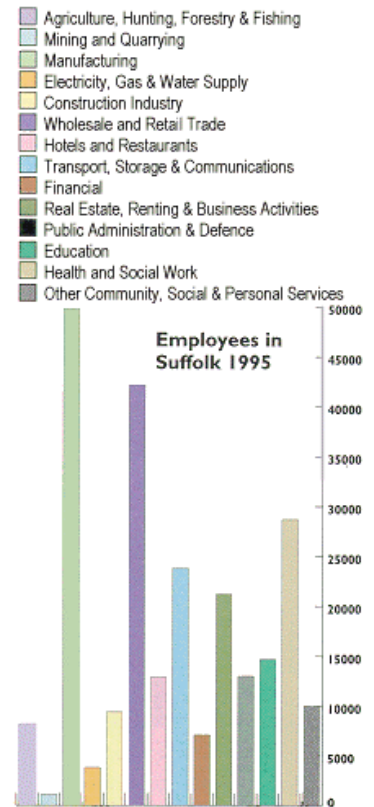
Jobs

As the number of people and houses has grown, so too has the number of jobs. There are now some 290,000 jobs in the local economy, although the rate of employment growth has been slower in the 1990's than it was in the 1980's.

The nature of employment in Suffolk is changing. Between 1993 and 1995, the number of jobs in manufacturing, retailing and general business activities increased, whereas the number in public administration (including defence), financial and agricultural sectors declined.

The unemployment rate in Suffolk is currently slightly below the national average at 4%, although parts of the County have unemployment significantly above that level.

The planning system is sometimes seen as a barrier to job creation, particularly in rural areas. However, between 1997 and 1998, 89% of all planning applications for commercial activity in rural areas were approved. The approval rate for applications seeking to expand existing commercial activity was even higher at 94%.



Other information in the monitoring report includes:

- number of "affordable" homes provided in accordance with local plan policies;
- land available for commercial development;
- number of bedspaces available for visitors;
- number of tourist attractions and visits to them; and
- approval rate of planning applications for tourist related development.



Wildlife

In Suffolk there are hundreds of internationally and nationally important wildlife sites and many more of local importance.

Between 1997 and 1998, 17 planning approvals were issued which affected these designated sites. Only one of these resulted in damage, to a County Wildlife Site, which was affected by a road scheme, causing loss of a hedgerow and scrub. However, the scheme provided for new planting which should in time compensate for the damage.

In the same year eight planning applications were refused in, or with a reason of refusal relating to, sites designated as having nature conservation value.

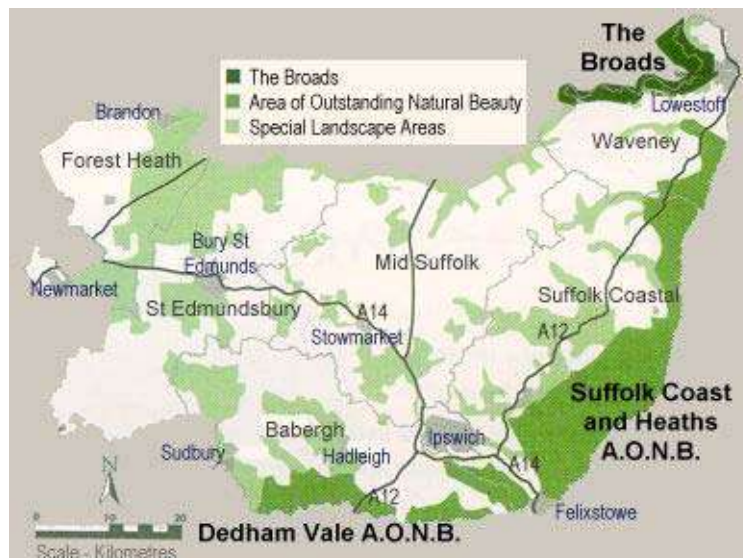
Barn Owls, Slow Worms, Great Crested Newts and Bats have all been protected by specific measures associated with planning approvals.



Protected Landscapes

The Broads, the Coast and Heaths and the Dedham Vale are protected because of their national landscape importance. Areas such as the Brecks and the Suffolk river valleys are designated as Special Landscape Areas in recognition of their local importance.

Planning policies seek to protect these areas from inappropriate development. Despite this, nearly 90% of planning applications within designated areas were approved. This is partly because towns (such as Aldeburgh and Southwold) and numerous villages are included within the areas covered by landscape designations. It is also possible through careful planning to enable certain kinds of commercial and recreational development to take place without harming the landscape.



Other information in the monitoring report includes:

- change of use of land in rural areas; and
- impact of development on historic parks, commons and village greens.





Listed Buildings

There are just under 16,500 listed buildings in Suffolk.

Between 1997 and 1998, 946 applications for work to listed buildings were determined. Of these, 94% were approved - potentially affecting up to 6% of Suffolk's listed buildings.

Between 1995 and 1997 the number of listed buildings at risk reduced from 138 to 133 - 40 buildings were removed from the list (38 of which had been repaired), and 35 new buildings added to the list.



Smock Mill, Felixstowe - 1995 and 1997



Worlingham Manor, Worlingham - 1994 and 1997

Archaeology

Suffolk has a large number of archaeological sites, although only a small proportion of these are known. Sites can be protected from harmful development by planning policies. In 1997/98 no planning applications were refused for archaeological reasons.



In nearly all cases where known sites were affected by development, prior excavation or recording during development was undertaken. This process yielded important discoveries such as an iron age settlement at Lovetofts Drive in Ipswich.

Other information in the monitoring report includes:

- town centre floorspace and vacancies;
- major development permitted outside of town centres;
- number of design briefs on major development sites;
- the extent of derelict land;
- conservation areas; and
- tree preservation orders.



Transport policies aim to promote the use of public transport, cycling and walking.

Public Transport

Between 1996 and 1998, 16 parishes received new bus services. In Suffolk's towns, the total length of bus lanes increased from 1.75 km to 3.75 km.

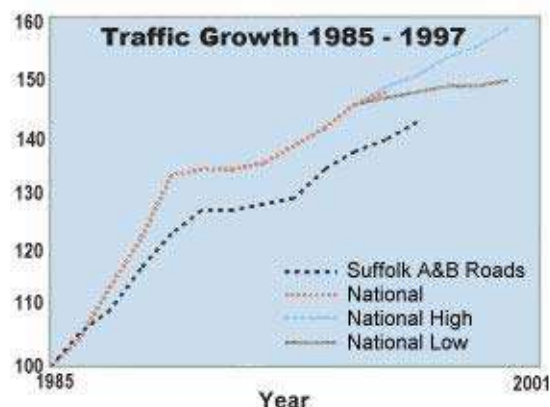


Cycling

Between 1996 and 1998 the length of urban cycle route in Suffolk increased from 49km to 79km. Over the same period the number of public cycle parking spaces in towns increased from 279 to 480.

Car Parking

Since 1996, the number of long stay town centre parking spaces in Suffolk's three main towns has reduced to encourage more sustainable modes of travelling. This reduction has been offset in Ipswich by the opening of the park and ride facility at Copdock.



Despite these initiatives, road traffic in Suffolk continues to grow. In the late 1980's the rate of growth in Suffolk's traffic was slower than the national average, but since the 1990's, Suffolk's growth has mirrored the national pattern.

Other information in the monitoring report, includes:

- pedestrian friendly road crossings;
- accident statistics;
- planning applications refused for road safety reasons; and
- funds allocated to traffic management schemes.



Since 1996, 20 new children's playspace facilities have been provided, and the number of local countryside walking routes promoted has steadily increased.

Sports facilities and recreational areas are important features of Suffolk's towns and villages. Policies help to promote recreation and sport facilities - such as outdoor playing space and children's play areas.

The planning process helps ensure that new and improved facilities are provided for Suffolk's communities, including the new Brackenbury Sports Centre at Felixstowe, (see right) and a further centre at Holbrook.



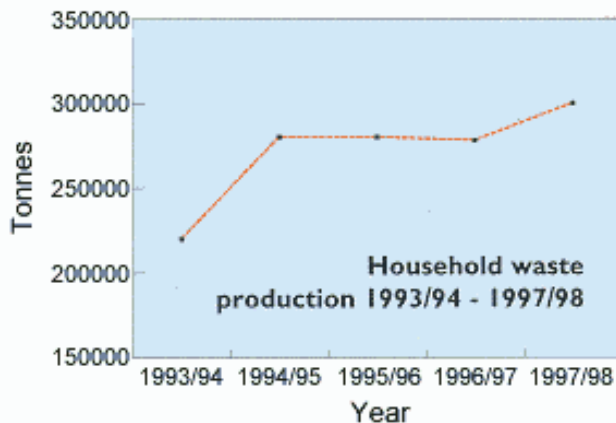
Other information in the monitoring report, includes:

- provision of allotments;
- provision of golf facilities;
- publicly accessible open space;
- recreational facilities lost as a result of planning approvals;
- number of visitors to selected recreation sites.



Waste

Waste management policies aim to reduce, reuse, recover and dispose. However, over recent years, the amount of household waste produced in Suffolk has increased rapidly.



In practice, local authorities alone can do little to influence the amount of waste produced. However, they are responsible for dealing with the waste.

Since 1995, the quantity of household waste recycled in Suffolk has almost doubled, but still only represents 15% of all the household waste produced.

Between 1997 and 1998 89% of all planning applications for waste disposal and recycling facilities were approved.



Renewable Energy

Renewable energy sources include the sun, wind and water. Waste materials that can be burnt or broken down are other sources of renewable energy. In 1998, renewable energy power plants in Suffolk could generate 16.9MW of electricity, or enough to provide power for around 17,000 homes. This is 3 MW higher than the 1996 figure, due to the operation of two landfill gas schemes.

Between 1997 and 1998 one planning application for renewable energy development, a 2.2MW landfill gas scheme at Great Blakenham was approved.



Foxhall landfill gas station

Minerals

Most of the mineral extraction carried out in Suffolk is for sand and gravel for use as an aggregate. Smaller quantities of chalk, clay and peat are also extracted. Planning policies seek to encourage the use of sensitive working practices during extraction.



Suffolk water park Bramford - a former gravel pit

In 1998 there were sufficient reserves of sand and gravel to meet expected demand for a period of nearly 10 years. Supplies of chalk and clay were available to meet expected demand over longer periods. A high proportion of former mineral workings are being used for nature conservation or recreational activities after extraction is finished.

Other information in the monitoring report, includes:

- planning applications refused because of water quality or flood risk reasons;
- production of secondary (recycled) minerals.



Suffolk's Environment...towards sustainable development is a long term project to continually monitor the progress of the local planning authorities in contributing to sustainable development.

As part of this process, indicators will be constantly reviewed and updated. It is hoped that monitoring will increase our understanding of the role of the development plan process in achieving sustainable development.



In the short term, new indicators will evolve from:



- The Millennium Challenge landscape recording project - a partnership between the Suffolk local authorities, the Suffolk West and Suffolk East Federations of Women's Institutes and the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Project. This innovative project aims to assess change in our local landscape, in over 156 kilometre squares spread across the County.

- Local Transport Plans In July 1999, the first Local Transport Plan for Suffolk will be submitted to the government. This will measure the effectiveness of the County Transport Strategy. It is likely that some of the indicators in the new strategy will be added to Suffolk's Environment.

- Biodiversity Action Plans

The Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan was produced in 1998. The document includes action plans for key habitats and species which make Suffolk special, together with a wide ranging series of more general recommendations. Monitoring the role of the planning system in protecting Suffolk's biodiversity will be important.

The monitoring report is available to view at local authority offices