

# Coastal Services

## Case Study - Happisburgh 'roll back' of nine residential properties



North Norfolk District Council delivered this property replacement scheme through the [Pathfinder](#) programme.

The aim of this project was to purchase, demolish and replace residential properties imminently at risk from coastal erosion. The expected outcomes were: an enhanced cliff top environment; removing the blight associated with the at-risk properties (that were becoming increasingly dilapidated from lack of maintenance); and bringing confidence to the local housing market through the new investment in the replacement development. This could only have been achieved with the support of the owners of those properties, who, through the process followed, were able to recover substantial value from their properties that were previously considered virtually worthless, liberating them to make choices about their own futures. The approach was a test of the Council's own coastal 'rollback' planning policy ([Core Strategy EN12](#)) and provided lessons for similar cases elsewhere in the district (and around the UK).

Not all property owners chose to take part in the scheme but those that remain in-situ can gain some comfort from the practical demonstration of the beneficial effect such an approach can have in providing both financial value and realistic choices about their future.



Photo 1 - Aerial photo showing the purchased properties and the replacement site.

### ***The roll-back process is set out below***

#### ***Demolition***

- North Norfolk District Council purchased nine residential properties in Happisburgh, all of which were predicted to be lost to coastal erosion within a twenty year period from the date of the project. Once the owners and occupiers of those properties had agreed the sale and made suitable arrangements they moved out, leaving the Council in vacant possession.
- The owners of the properties were involved in establishing the principles of the scheme as well as engaging in the negotiations on the final offer price. Neighbours and other interested parties in the local community fed into the process and were involved throughout its implementation.
- Some of the properties were perilously close to the cliff edge and this, coupled with the desire not to prolong the appearance of dereliction, prompted the Council to move quickly to demolish. This led to the decision to demolish prior to the grant of consent for the replacement properties.

- Asbestos surveys and ecological evaluations were conducted on the properties and the results influenced the methods and timing of demolition.
- A 'prior notification of proposed demolition' was submitted and advertised on site. This was unchallenged and the demolition was therefore permitted, subject to consent under Section 80 of the Building Act (1984), which was also subsequently obtained.
- A 'Coastal Erosion Assistance Grant' of £6,000 per property was claimed from the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to assist with the demolition and remediation costs.
- Demolition and landscaping contracts were awarded accordingly (following a tendering process).
- Final preparations were made (prior to demolition) with the media and local residents to ensure demolition went smoothly and the emotional attachment of people to their former homes was respected.
- The complicated process of demolition was completed without incident and materials were recycled /salvaged where feasible.
- Following demolition the site was landscaped and made available for informal recreational access.

### ***Replacement Properties***

- A selection of possible sites and development options were identified (based on sites previously considered for housing allocations).
- An appraisal of the available sites and development options was completed and a site which was believed to be the most likely to be deliverable and appropriate was selected in Happisburgh. (A site could have been sought elsewhere but it was considered important for Happisburgh's future sustainability to make the investment in the village).
- The chosen site was owned by a local farmer and so an agreement was made to undertake the venture jointly; the Council (as owner of the properties to be replaced) bringing the opportunity to get planning permission and the landowner providing the site. The agreement included details of who would prepare and submit the planning application, how the costs would be allocated and ultimately, should the proposal prove successful, how the development site would be disposed of and the proceeds split.
- Following a pre-application consultation which assisted in refining the proposal, an application for outline planning consent was prepared and submitted (by the landowner) to the Local Planning Authority.
- Following further archaeological investigations outline planning permission was granted (with conditions) for nine residential properties (note that these properties, once built, are to be for sale - there was no requirement for affordable housing).

It is expected that the site with planning permission will soon be put up for sale on the open market. The Council's share of the proceeds from the sale will be used to recoup some of the expenditure on the house purchase and will be available for future coastal change management initiatives.

Further information in relation to this case study, or about housing roll-back or relocation schemes generally can be had by contacting the Coastal Management Team at:

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