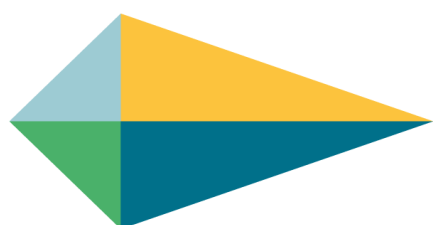


East Suffolk Developers Charter:

Assessment and Recognition Framework

October 2025



EASTSUFFOLK
C O U N C I L

Contents

Purpose of this document 3

The Developers Charter: content recap 3

Proposed award structure: by-theme area 3

Assessment process..... 4

Assessment criteria for each theme area award 4

Eligibility requirements..... 7

Evidence requirements for all applications 7

Recognition annual cycle 8

Purpose of this document

This document sets out the detail of the assessment and recognition scheme as approved by the Head of Planning, Building Control and Coastal Management in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management.

The Developers Charter is available to view here:

<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/east-suffolk-developers-charter/>.

The Developers Charter: content recap

The Developers Charter's overall imperative is to 'raise the bar' for all developers delivering in East Suffolk through five theme areas:

1. The aim of the **Participation & Engagement** theme is to support developers in taking a consistent and meaningful approach to engagement with the local community and the Council throughout the process – from initial discussions through to post-delivery. It will empower communities to play a proactive part in engagement activities to ensure their needs and aspirations are heard and have influence.
2. The first aim of the **Landscape & Biodiversity** theme is to encourage a 'landscape-led' design approach and site stewardship approach which maximises the benefits that integrating natural elements (as green infrastructure) into developments can bring for communities' mental, physical, and social health and wellbeing. The second aim of this theme is to encourage the inclusion and design of green infrastructure which supports plant and wildlife biodiversity, and that the principle of supporting nature's ability to thrive is integral to the scheme's design.
3. The aim of the **Homes** theme is to encourage developers to maximise their opportunities to deliver the right housing mix (size, types, and tenures) and designs, considering the needs and aspirations of the local community, and recognising that good quality and well-designed homes is a key determinant of occupants' health and wellbeing. This theme also encourages the balance of housing delivery with infrastructure, amenities, and more self-build plots.
4. The aim of the **Sustainable Design** theme is to encourage the voluntary exceedance of current policy requirements and Building Regulations in the sustainable design of schemes, and to encourage developers to ensure that any environmental benefits are well promoted and communicated in applications and ongoing developments.
5. The aim of the **Considerate Construction & Community Ownership** theme is to maintain high environmental quality throughout development delivery, and to promote good communication with the community and the Council at all stages.

Proposed award structure: by-theme area

We have a scheme where developers will receive recognition for developments that are overall-consistent with one of the Charters theme areas. Recognition will be awarded post-planning permission or post-delivery, depending on the content of theme area. The by-theme-area award structure is as follows:

Theme area	Awardable at post-planning permission stage	Awardable at post-delivery stage
Participation & Engagement	Yes	No
Landscape & Biodiversity	No	Yes
Homes	No	Yes
Sustainable Design	No	Yes
Considerate Construction & Community Ownership	No	Yes

The ‘Participation and Engagement’ theme area of the Charter defines what we consider to be best practice in terms of developers’ engagement with ESC and the community throughout the full planning process – from pre-planning through to the granting of planning permission.

What is permitted at outline or even reserved matters (or full) stage is not necessarily what ultimately gets built. This is because of variation of conditions, changes to Section 106 agreements, and non-material amendments. There is also further complexity involved in phased and hybrid developments. Recognising schemes that have been built, and therefore can’t be further altered helps to avoid this.

The recognition for the ‘Considerate Construction & Community Ownership’ theme area will capture engagement and collaboration with ESC and communities following the granting of permission from material commencement through to post-occupancy, meaning ultimately there is recognition of engagement and collaboration covering the entire process.

Assessment process

Applications to receive Council recognition for a development will be assessed by East Suffolk’s Design Advocates. Design Advocates are officers that have volunteered to support and promote design and placemaking across the district. They are a mix of Development Management Officers, Planning Policy Officers, Design and Heritage Officer, Landscape Officers and other officers from Specialist Services.

The assessment process will involve Design Advocates reviewing information submitted and carrying out site visits to assess the development against the criteria set out in the Charter. All developments that are judged to meet the overall criteria for one or more of the theme areas in the Charter will be presented to the Local Plan Working Group for their consideration. The Local Plan Working Group is made up of Councillors from across the parties and chaired by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management.

Assessment criteria for each theme area award

The criteria set out in the Charter itself is not meant to be rigid but rather indicative – meaning that schemes which have delivered high quality development or engagement/participation activities, but have done so in different ways than the Charter has set out, will still be recognised if they are considered to be consistent with the Charter’s overall aims and principles. This will help to encourage innovation.

Each theme area has a basic assessment criterion to secure the best outcome, the assessment criteria is deliberately not too detailed, or ‘binding’. The outline assessment criteria are flexible for officers and councillors to make their assessment based on the overall principles and aims set out in the Charter and their own judgement of quality representation related to that theme.

A development is not required to meet all the categories listed in a theme area. A development can be submitted for recognition under one or more theme areas. Exemplar practice can be recognised in relation to a single theme area, and we encourage submission of such examples to build up our portfolio of innovative practice.

There is also no maximum number of developments that can be recognised in any one year.

Proposed assessment prompts for consideration by theme area	
Theme area	Category prompts
Participation & Engagement	<p>Did the developer go ‘above and beyond’ in their use of a range of different communication tools (surveys, leaflets, emails, website updates, in-person meetings, co-design workshops, etc.)?</p> <p>Was the developer able to engage with a wide range of people in the local community?</p> <p>Was the community kept sufficiently updated on the progress of the scheme’s design and planning application?</p> <p>Is there any evidence that the engagement with East Suffolk Council and the community influenced and improved the design of the development?</p> <p>For Town or Parish Councils - did the Town or Parish Council take a positive approach to supporting opportunities for consultation and engagement?</p>
Landscape & Biodiversity	<p>To what extent does the approach to green infrastructure on the site engage with the ‘above and beyond’ guidance set out in the Healthy Environments SPD’s ‘Green Infrastructure’ chapter?</p> <p>Has the development retained and enhanced existing trees, plants and natural features to an extent that goes beyond the expectations of the Local Plan planning policy criteria?</p> <p>Was consideration given to landscaping’s relationship to the local natural environment, native species, selection of climate resilient species, and/or otherwise resilient and appropriate species (e.g. edible plantings in open spaces, hardier trees in less sheltered locations, perennials that can withstand dynamic root conditions in more hardscape setting or SuDS features, etc.)?</p> <p>Was a Healthy Impact Assessment undertaken early enough in the process to have influence? Was it well informed by good quality data, particularly from engaging directly with the community? Has it clearly impacted the design and key qualities for supporting health in the delivered scheme?</p> <p>Was a robust plan for more than the statutory minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain achieved on-site?</p> <p>Did the scheme incorporate wildlife friendly design principles such as those set out in the Wildlife Trust’s ‘Homes for People and Wildlife’?</p> <p>Have Welcome Packs provided information on local cycling and walking routes, green open space, local social infrastructure, local clubs and hobby activities, etc for supporting new residents’ health and wellbeing?</p>

	<p>Have welcome packs included information about local wildlife and wildlife sites, such as Suffolk Wildlife Trust, RSPB sites, and the Wildlife Wise scheme, including information about the effects of recreational pressure on sensitive habitat sites, where relevant?</p> <p>Does the scheme have a robust and enduring maintenance plan?</p>
Homes	<p>Did the design of the homes within the scheme include a significant amount of visual variation between units/blocks, whilst still being broadly in keeping with local character, and otherwise appropriate for the setting?</p> <p>Are there intuitive and useable layouts with adequate internal space – particularly in the context of providing flexibility for different purposes, e.g. social, working from home, home exercise, etc?</p> <p>Did the scheme exceed policy and/or regulatory minimums for the proportion of units delivered to accessible and adaptable standards (M4(2)); were any wheelchair user (M4(3)) homes included?</p> <p>Did the scheme follow the Lifetime Neighbourhood's guidance in the Healthy Environments SPD on making a holistically, 'joined up' accessible and enabling environment at (major) scheme level?</p> <p>Has consideration been given to how street design and off-street/parking-court based parking solutions could prevent car dominated streetscapes and support social interaction opportunities?</p> <p>Is there adequate external space, with at least a portion of it that is highly private by having no or limited overlooking/other design matters undermining privacy in that space (e.g. fencing heights/selected materials)?</p>
Sustainable Design	<p>Has an industry sustainable design standard been used and achieved throughout the scheme? Key potential standards include: Passivhaus, BREEAM, BRE Home Quality Mark, LETI's EUI target, RICS Whole Life Carbon Assessment Standard, or the emerging UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard.</p> <p>If no industry standard was used, has a high level of fabric-first energy and water efficiency standard been used and achieved throughout the scheme?</p> <p>Does the scheme incorporate the use of renewable energy generation, including micro-generation?</p> <p>Were new residents provided with Welcome Packs that included technical information on how to use the building technologies within their home? Examples include the central heating system, how the solar panels work, air source heat pumps FAQs, etc.</p> <p>If applicable, did the show home tours include information or virtual exploration tools on how to use the new home's building technologies? Was buyer positive feedback received?</p>

Considerate Construction & Community Ownership	<p>Was a comprehensive, ‘above and beyond’ Construction Management Plan submitted, and adhered to?</p> <p>Was a community liaison contact appointed to manage any complaints received from the community? Did they have relevant check ins with the community, attend public meetings or otherwise make themselves available at clear times so that they had enhanced availability at least some of the time?</p> <p>Was clear information on the anticipated hours of work, hours of deliveries, construction traffic routes, noise and dust suppression, etc made easily publicly accessible on physical signage/information boards on or near the site?</p> <p>Was the scheme built out within a reasonable time frame from when the planning permission was granted?</p>
--	--

Eligibility requirements

All schemes should meet the following requirements:

- The Charter is principally aimed at housebuilders delivering major schemes (10 or more dwellings), however, smaller multi-dwelling schemes will be considered.
- Schemes must be located within the East Suffolk district boundaries.
- Schemes can be submitted against multiple categories but cannot be resubmitted in subsequent years unless there have been significant changes to the scheme that may justify re-assessment for recognition.
- For the three design categories: the scheme must have been completed since 2010.
- For the Landscape & Biodiversity design category: the scheme should be between 1 – approximately 5 years post completion (‘completion’ as per the requirements of the Landscape & Ecological Plan).
- Phased schemes may submit against the Landscape & Biodiversity award category, however they will only be able to be provided with a partial recognition, because biodiversity net gain performance cannot be assessed until the development has been completely (all parcels) delivered. As set out above, it is recommended that schemes put forward for the Landscape & Biodiversity award category are at least 12 months post-completion, but ideally around five years post-completion.

Evidence requirements for all applications

Schemes may be submitted by the developer, owner, occupier, Town/Parish Council or members of the public.

All applications should include the following ‘basic’ evidence submissions, as a minimum. The below requirements are suggested:

- **Application evidence document** (standard application form to be produced):
 - The theme area(s) for which recognition is being sought
 - Award nominee contact details
 - Scheme name and address
 - Basic description of the scheme
 - Planning application reference number (e.g. DC/25/0000/FUL) if known and list of key planning application documents and/or drawing numbers that should be considered as part of the application.
 - Photos of the development, where relevant.
 - Any potential conflicts of interest (e.g. Council employee).
- **Brief statement** that explains how the development meets the criteria set out the Developers Charter.

Recognition annual cycle

The Developers Charter will follow the same annual timeline as the Quality of Place Awards with nominations opening in April, site visits and assessment of applications in late summer (August/ September) and recognition in the autumn (October/November).

Email us 

Planning Policy and Delivery Team (Local Plans)

Planningpolicy@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Development Management (Planning Applications)

planning@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Call us 

Planning Policy and Delivery Team (Local Plans)

01394 444557 / 01502 523029

Development Management (Planning Applications)

01502 523100

Write to us 

East Suffolk Council
Planning Policy and Delivery Team
Riverside, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft
Suffolk NR33 0EQ

This document is available in alternative formats and in different languages on request. If you need support or assistance to help you read and/or understand this document, please contact the Council using one of the methods above.

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planningpolicy