

EASTSUFFOLK
C O U N C I L

THE EAST SUFFOLK DEVELOPERS CHARTER:

A BEST PRACTICE GUIDE FOR DEVELOPERS OF
MAJOR RESIDENTIAL SCHEMES

Major Residential schemes are developments of 10 or more homes which may be delivered by small, medium, regional or national home builders

Table of Contents

Foreword	3
Why do we need a ‘Developers Charter’?	4
The five themes of the Developers Charter	6
Participation & Engagement	8
Landscape & Biodiversity	13
Homes	15
Sustainable Design	17
Considerate Construction & Community Ownership	19
Recognition	22
Eligibility	22

Foreword

All developers, both large and small, operating in East Suffolk have a critical role in positively shaping the future through the delivery of healthy, inclusive, biodiverse, resource efficient, and climate-change resilient developments that meet the district's future development needs.

East Suffolk Council is committed to supporting a more sustainable, healthier and happier district through the quality of its built and natural environments, and how this supports the health and wellbeing of its communities.

This commitment is reflected through the Council's adopted Local Plans and [Supplementary Planning Documents](#), in particular the [Healthy Environments SPD \(2024\)](#) and [Sustainable Construction SPD \(2022\)](#), and through East Suffolk Council joining the Good Homes Alliance's Local Authority and Housing Association Network.

Acting on the challenge of creating greater climate change resilience for the district is critical. This is reflected in the objectives of the East Suffolk Strategic Plan ('[Our Direction 2028](#)') and the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency in July 2019.

Integral to achieving that is meaningful engagement between communities, the Council and developers. This is critical to the successful delivery of schemes that produce an overall 'net gain' for existing and future communities. Developers who engage proactively and positively with communities and the Council throughout the planning and delivery process deserve to be celebrated and formally recognised.

The Council have produced the Developers Charter to give structure to this formal recognition.



**Councillor Mark Packard,
Cabinet Member for Planning
and Coastal Management**



Why do we need a 'Developers Charter'?

The purpose of the Developers Charter is to:

- ↳ establish the Council's high-level expectations for the sustainability and quality of major residential developments in East Suffolk
- ↳ set out how developers, communities, and the Council can work together to best achieve meaningful engagement with each other, and
- ↳ give support and recognition to developers that have achieved high standards both at the planning application and construction stages of development.

The Charter is intended to support the community (residents, businesses, Town and Parish Councils, and local voluntary organisations), the Council, and developers to harness the value that can be gained through collaboration. Close collaboration between the key stakeholders enables developers to gain a better understanding of communities' development needs and aspirations, and the Council's vision for the future of local areas. By working together closely and collaboratively, developers' capacity to make a greater positive difference can be significantly increased, allowing truly exceptional schemes to be delivered in East Suffolk.

Collaboration will also help communities and the Council to identify how they can better enable developers to go 'above and beyond' policy and normal planning processes. Together we can facilitate the delivery of sustainable and attractive places, and healthier, happier communities now and in the future.

Whilst this document is aimed at developers delivering major residential schemes (10 or more homes), many of the high-level key principles outlined are also encouraged to be applied to smaller scale and other types of development, too.

Having a Charter document will help to communicate the Council's key high-level principles for residential development and the benefits this will bring to communities. This will also allow the Council to more easily assess, recognise, and celebrate those developments that have achieved high standards, and which have benefited from collaboration with communities. Developments that perform well against the principles of the Charter will also be eligible for awards (see '[Recognition](#)' section).

In addition to the sustainability and community benefits associated with the Charter, adopting the principles of the Charter may also bring other benefits to developers such as greater market appeal and getting 'ahead of the curve' in relation to future practices.

By working with us and seeking to deliver on the ambitions set out in our Charter, the Council will in turn provide commitments as part of our role. Our commitments are set out throughout the themes in the Charter, and will continue to be developed as support from developers for this initiative is gained.

The key principles listed in each of the Charter's theme areas are by no means exhaustive lists of all possible ways in which excellence in design, collaboration, and/or practice can be achieved. The Council invites developers to be creative and show us what they can do to excel in these key areas, and well-deserved recognition will be awarded.

The Charter does not cover policy requirements, or detailed design matters. Policy is contained in the Council's Local Plans and in 'made' Neighbourhood Plans, and accompanying guidance is contained in the Council's suite of [Supplementary Planning Documents](#).

It should be noted that although engagement with the Charter is strongly encouraged, it is voluntary. Engagement with it will not be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.





The **five themes** of the Developers Charter:



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.



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.



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.



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.



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.



Participation & Engagement

Effective engagement between developers, the community, and the Council throughout the planning process is critical to supporting the delivery of high quality, well-designed development.

The value of collaboration lies in its ability to create shared understanding and respect between different parties and their viewpoints, to build understanding in what are often complex planning processes, and to share important knowledge and updates throughout the pre-planning to post-completion stages.

Developers can add value by:

- ↳ Providing communities with accessible and inclusive opportunities to engage in pre-application consultations and the subsequent planning application. This should include:
 - engagement activities which do not always require digital access, and options which enable engagement of people that are unavailable to attend in-person events, and;

- asking communities about their preferred means of communication and engagement activities, so as to reach different groups within the community – particularly those that are typically hard to reach, such as young people.

Engagement should be proportionate to the type and scale of development being proposed; a 'one size fits all' approach to consultation across different developments is unlikely to be appropriate.



- ↳ Researching the area and using this information to inspire and inform both the development itself and the approach to consultation. This could include a combination of desktop research and community engagement. Developers are encouraged to make good use of any existing capacity within their team for local knowledge and connections or direct development delivery experience to increase community trust and connection to the development.
- ↳ Using the feedback received from communities and the Council to inform the development.
- ↳ Keeping the community updated on the progress of planning applications, including any surveys being carried out and any changes being made to the design (e.g. via community liaison officer communications, website updates, e-newsletters, physical information around the site etc.). Engagement with communities should make clear where changes to the design have been as a direct result of feedback received from the community and consultees, so as to make clear the value being added through their collaboration.
- ↳ Keeping the community informed throughout the construction and delivery process, ideally through the provision of a dedicated community liaison contact

or community liaison forum. (see [Considerate Construction & Community Ownership](#) theme).

- ↳ Deliver the development scheme within a reasonable timeframe, given the scale and complexities of the site and permission. Where delays occur, developers should keep communities and the Council informed.
- ↳ Collaborating with other developers on neighbouring sites/where delivering as part of a larger, masterplanned site to improve the overall outcome. The focus of the collaboration should be to bring forward a joined-up community infrastructure offer (i.e. streets, active travel, education, green infrastructure, etc.) and strong design relationship between the different areas operating as a whole.



Communities can add value by:

- ↳ Providing important local knowledge, experience, and views on key matters such as infrastructure requirements, the local vernacular, natural environment, historic environment.
- ↳ Providing constructive feedback and design input through attending or responding to engagement activities, during the pre-application and application stage. Also, by being open minded in approaching development, recognising that disagreement will exist but also finding common ground and ways in which constructive feedback can be gained.
- ↳ Working with developers and the Council to address false information and misunderstandings in the community. Recognising that abuse of anyone from any perspective involved in the planning and development process is not acceptable, including through social media.
- ↳ At planning application stage, acknowledge in consultation responses where the developer has clearly taken onboard community feedback in its design. Equally, where submitted schemes' designs have fallen short, communities can add value by making clear how the scheme needs to be further amended; feedback should be clear on which aspects of the scheme the respondent supports, and which aspects they would like to see changed.

- ↳ Supporting continuity for community involvement and transfer of local knowledge by keeping a record of correspondence which can then be passed onto new developers if the site is sold. This can be done effectively with dedicated web pages on Town/Parish Council websites, documenting involvement.

Town and Parish Councils have a key role in enabling their community (residents, businesses, local service providers and voluntary organisations) to add value to the planning process. They can help ensure the community's knowledge, aspirations, and views are captured by:

- raising awareness of proposals and engagement opportunities,
- providing opportunities for expression and discussion of views, and
- coordinating a response to planning applications that accurately captures these views.

Town and Parish Councils are encouraged to consider how they can effectively reach different groups within the community, and how they can best extract the most value from their engagement process. Town and Parish Councils are therefore encouraged to create their own 'communication and engagement strategy' that sets out their engagement protocol for any development.

The Council can add value by:

- ↳ Engaging with communities and developers in a way that is collaborative and consistent with the Council's adopted [Statement of Community Involvement \(SCI\)](#). The Council's processes will be open and transparent, and the sharing of information with communities from the pre-application stage will be planned for with the developer.
- ↳ The Council can help to facilitate the relationship between developers and the community – seeking to build relationships and overcome differences in views where possible – including by arranging meetings together.
- ↳ Encouraging developers and Town and Parish Councils to produce a Communication and Engagement Strategy for their scheme/town/parish, and by providing feedback on them, where submitted for review.
- ↳ Encouraging the use of collaborative design tools, such as the Suffolk Design Management Process.
- ↳ Involving external consultees (e.g. Highways) early, and by promoting a 'single team' approach to proposals, wherever possible. The Council will endeavour to resolve issues that undermine a

landscape-led approach to site design, such as conflict between street trees and SuDs requirements versus Highways' requirements.

- ↳ Providing the [Pre-Application Service](#), and engaging in the setting of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs). The Council will commit to suitable investment in the resources required to provide good quality input through funds from pre-application fees and PPAs. Resources will be planned for depending on the circumstances of the development, the environment it affects and the specific community needs.

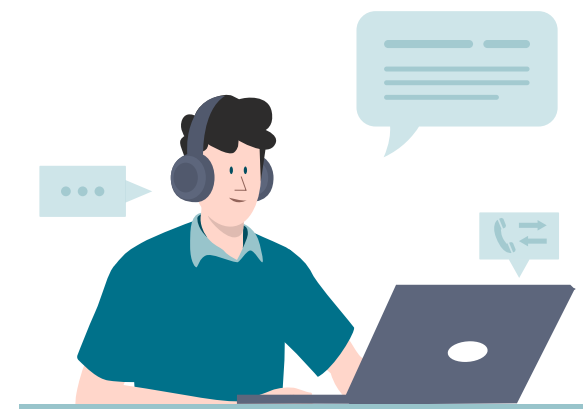


The Council will provide valuable feedback when pre-application advice is sought, being constructive and imaginative in the design process. The pre-application service is able to be provided in person, virtually or through written advice, as per the nature of the scheme being considered. The availability of officers to those positively engaging with the charter will be enhanced.

The pre-application service can include (but is not limited to):

- Providing developers with useful information about the site and the local context which may support and inform the early stages of the proposal's design.
- Where plan-led development comes forward in a collaborative manner, the Council can provide feedback on the extent to which the range of adopted policies of the development plan (the relevant Local Plan and neighbourhood plans) that are applicable to the proposed scheme are being met.
- The Council can provide feedback on the extent to which the proposed scheme is consistent with the design policies of the development plan and the design quality aspirations of the Council and the community for the location and type of development being proposed are being met through the proposed scheme; the Specialist Services team will be placed at the forefront of engagement – bringing design, landscape, heritage and ecology advice to the table early.

- Providing information on which issues should be covered (scoping opinion) and focused on in an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and/or other forms of holistic impact assessment, such as a Health Impact Assessment, or individual impact assessments/technical reports, such as noise impacts or land contamination assessments.
- Directing discussions about potential infrastructure requirements, planning obligations (S106/CIL, etc.), and planning conditions, attempting to address these early in the process.



The pre-application service is able to be provided in person, virtually or through written advice, as per the nature of the scheme being considered. The availability of officers to those positively engaging with the charter will be enhanced.

[Further information on the pre-application service is available on our website.](#)



Landscape & Biodiversity

The Council is committed to the delivery of inclusive, healthy environments that support the health and wellbeing of people of all ages, abilities and incomes, and to supporting the flora and fauna of East Suffolk's much valued natural environments to thrive.

Developers can add value by:

- ↳ Demonstrating use of the [Healthy Environments SPD](#) guidance where this could assist in going 'above and beyond' planning policy requirements.
- ↳ **Landscape-led:** delivering developments that have been designed using a landscape-led approach, to make them richer and more immersive in nature – benefiting both people and nature. Developments should preserve trees and hedgerows and include street trees wherever possible.
- ↳ **Biodiversity net gain (BNG):** delivering developments where the BNG delivered on site exceeds the legal minimum, and demonstrably exceeds the minimum expectation of habitat quality and variety advised by the Council. The Council's Ecologists will provide guidance on this and will work with key stakeholders like the Suffolk Wildlife Trust to further support this.



- ↳ **Health Impact Assessments (HIAs):** undertaking Health Impact Assessments to further inform and improve design quality and focus the design on how it can best create 'health net gain' for the existing and new communities.
- ↳ **Welcome Packs:** providing 'welcome packs' for new occupants which could include information on local green open spaces and equipped play areas, local goods and services, growing food at home that is tailored to the spaces being provided, how to access an allotment plot, local wildlife, local healthcare services, local hobby clubs and other opportunities to make new local social connections. Welcome packs could also be supplemented with providing new residents with on-plot tree planting opportunities via a gifted tree.
- ↳ **Wildlife friendly green infrastructure and buildings:** delivering developments with integrated features which support wildlife also create more attractive and desirable places to live and work. Features could include swift boxes, insect hotels, bee bricks, trees, hedgerows, as well as more significant, strategic-scale features such as wildlife corridors or green corridors (where active travel infrastructure is integrated through the corridor).

- ↳ **Stewardship and robust maintenance plans:** producing robust maintenance plans for the lifetime of the development, including its BNG. Maintenance plans should include review points (e.g. Years 1, 5 and 10). Developers should monitor and report back the performance of landscaping schemes; Landscape Officers will help in reviewing and guiding improved outcomes and maintenance plans.





Homes

The Council is committed to delivering the homes that the district needs set within healthy, inclusive environments in sustainable locations for housing. Developments should not be about designing for a pre-conceived number of homes or housing types/sizes mix that lacks relationship with the district's needs.

The Council expects developers to use a **'landscape-led'** approach to the design of sites: considering green infrastructure matters first, including open space, ecology and surface water drainage, followed then by sustainable movement.



Developers can add value by:

- ↳ **Appropriate housing mix:** Identifying local housing needs and, where possible, making that information easily publicly available. The Council will work with developers to inform the optimum housing mix for the site, including securing an appropriate level of affordable housing. The Council will support developers to communicate effectively with Registered Providers and the [Council's Housing Team](#).
- ↳ **Disability Forums:** engaging with the district's [Disability Forums](#) is strongly encouraged so as to identify the specific needs of the community to make the development as inclusive as possible.
- ↳ **Dwellings designed to be primary residence homes:** rather than as second homes or holiday lets. Key design variables that support primary residence include adequate bedroom sizes, storage, parking, (on major schemes) inclusion of affordable homes, and consistency of proposed mix with local housing sizes.
- ↳ **Layout:** providing developments with intuitive and useable layouts. Demonstrate the layout supports a variety of lifestyles and different stages of life, including working from home.
- ↳ **Quality:** providing homes with intuitive and useable layouts, high building performance (well soundproofed, ventilated, and efficient in energy and water use, etc.), high quality kitchen and bathroom facilities, and higher levels of accessibility so as to help support healthy behaviours (healthy eating, exercise, socialising, etc.), high residential amenity, and appropriate space that provide the flexibility to work/study from home and for different stages of life. Design should also ensure high levels of natural light in habitable rooms.
- ↳ **Accessibility and adaptability:** going over and above the policy requirements for accessible and adaptable and/or wheelchair user homes to ensure occupants of the scheme are supported should their mobility needs change for any reason during their occupation of the home.
- ↳ **Variety:** providing a visual and material variety of home types that are attractive and have aesthetic and functional relationships with the site's local context. A variety of garden sizes can support different needs and lifestyles.
- ↳ **Self-build:** providing self-build plots that exceeds minimum requirements for quantity, where appropriate, and that reflect demand identified in the Council's [Self Build Register](#).



Sustainable Design

The delivery of healthy, high performing, environmentally sustainable buildings that reduce fossil fuel and water use in the district, is a key ambition for the Council.

Building Regulations standards are minimum standards which are updated periodically. Below we've listed key principles that provide examples of how developers can design and deliver exemplary schemes.

The Council's Building Control and Planning teams will work closely with developers to ensure that optimum solutions for resource efficiency are achieved at the planning stage.



Developers can add value by:

- ↳ **Demonstrating use of the Sustainable Construction SPD**: using the document's guidance and tools to go 'above and beyond' planning policy and Building Regulation minimum requirements:
 - For a cohesive approach to achieving higher standards, we support the voluntary use of sustainable construction industry methodologies and certification schemes, such as: [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](#).
 - Through use of recognised industry standards, a fabric-first approach to building performance can add value to a range of design matters such as: thermal comfort, airtightness, ventilation (for indoor air quality), overall operational and embodied carbon, renewable energy generation/use, sustainable heating technologies, and rainwater harvesting.

- ↳ **Thermal comfort:** delivering buildings that are located, orientated, and designed to reduce the amount of internal heat lost and to optimise solar gain/solar shade, whilst preventing overheating, creating comfortable and constant temperatures all year round at lower running cost.
- ↳ **Internal air quality:** ensuring all homes are airtight and benefit from excellent ventilation – natural or the use of mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) – to support excellent indoor air quality.
- ↳ **Renewables:** incorporating renewable energy generation on-site, wherever this is possible.
- ↳ **Technical information for new residents:** ensuring that new occupants fully understand the technology in their homes. This could be through demonstration show homes, virtual exploration tools, and buyer information packs.
- ↳ **Water:** going over and above policy requirements for water efficiency. Designing buildings that have incorporated enhanced holistic water efficiency measures such as rainwater harvesting systems, green roofs or blue roofs.
- ↳ **Not car-centric:** giving priority to walking and cycling routes within, to, and from the site rather than private vehicles, making active modes of travel an easy choice for short journeys. Developments include secure, accessible cycle storage in or outside of key buildings (homes, schools, workplaces and community facilities).





Considerate Construction & Community Ownership

The Council is committed to enabling the timely and considerate delivery of development schemes.

Developers can add value by:

Community engagement

- ↳ Providing and publicising a community liaison contact who is directly involved in the delivery process of the site and has the power to take action in response to complaints.
- ↳ Providing clear public information on the anticipated hours of work, hours of deliveries, construction traffic routes, and noise and dust suppression.
- ↳ Maintaining good quality site information on environmental controls.
- ↳ Provision of public information on layout plans and the public benefits of the development. Physical public information boards located in accessible locations on site edges are encouraged so as to ensure that community members without internet access are able to be kept informed.
- ↳ Having regular two-way check-ins with key members of the community, such as the Town/Parish Council, where they can be updated on delivery progress, and can have an opportunity to give feedback on any impacts the build-out process is having on the community.
- ↳ Early engagement on street naming and numbering should take place. Developers should engage with communities and Town and Parish Councils on local influences on street names to ensure they are reflective of the locality and its natural, historic, and cultural context.

Construction management

- ↳ Ensuring compliance with agreed Construction Management Plans, including good control of the activities and behaviour of contractors, and ensuring operation-wide awareness and understanding of the planning influences on how the site is to be developed.
- ↳ Building out within a reasonable time frame from the grant of permission and from the point of commencement, so that communities are not adversely impacted by uncertainty.

Environmental quality

- ↳ Ensuring excellent environmental quality throughout the build. Where disruption is unavoidable, it should be kept to a minimum.
- ↳ Responsibly managing site soil and materials by maximising opportunities for on-site re-use. Intentions to temporarily store soil and materials were included in the planning application details.

- ↳ Ensuring construction traffic routes are clearly communicated to the community and are strictly adhered to during the build-out process, through contractual expectations.
- ↳ Managing construction sites' surface water effectively and collaboratively with the Council, Highways Authority, and the Lead Local Flood Authority.
- ↳ Avoiding excessive development site adverts. The Council will be permissive and pragmatic with suitable signs in appropriate locations; remote off-site signs will not be supported. The Council will explore ways to aid the promotion of new homes across the district collectively.

Corporate environmental and social responsibility

- ↳ Making commitments to local suppliers, investing in local employment and committing to the creation of local apprenticeship opportunities.
- ↳ Demonstrating local social value by supporting community groups, helping communities develop skills and capacities.

Post-planning communications with the Council

- ↳ Maintaining communication with the Council on progress with the delivery, including any issues arising.
- ↳ Feeding back on Housing Land Supply requests on build out trajectories in a timely and well-informed manner.
- ↳ Ensuring that developer information for our Housing Action Plans is provided when requested, particularly when there are site delays, and we will work with you to help to resolve issues preventing commencement and completion, where possible.
- ↳ Production of post-completion reports, sharing information on the sales and occupancy of developments, helping us to further understand the difference housing is making in communities. Documenting the actual measurable benefits and local investment of developments so this can be collated and included in reports by the Council.





Recognition

The Charter's recognition scheme will enable developers to be awarded at two of the key milestone points in the overall planning and delivery process – permission (full or last of the reserved matters) and completion. In more detail, these two award stages are:

- ↳ **Awarded at the end of the planning application process where permission has been granted** – recognition will be given after permission has been granted (full or last of the reserved matters) if the scheme's engagement activities performed positively against the principles set out in the Participation & Engagement theme.
- ↳ **Awarded following the completion of a delivered scheme** – recognition will be given following completion of the scheme if the completed development performs positively against the **Landscape & Biodiversity, Homes, Sustainable Design** and/or **Considerate Construction & Community Ownership** themes.



Eligibility

The awards must be applied for in order to be awarded. Formal recognition is intended for developers of major residential schemes; this includes not-for-profit and community-led developers, as well as commercial developers.

Developers will be recognised on a per-scheme basis. Larger phased developments can be recognised on a phase-by-phase basis, or upon completion. If recognition was received on a by-phase basis, once the scheme as a whole has been entirely completed, developers can apply for recognition of the full scheme.

Submissions can be for developments that are either entirely residential or mixed-use with residential. All submissions will be considered, and feedback will be given if an [East Suffolk Quality of Place Awards](#) category would be better suited to the submitted scheme.

This specific route of recognition is not intended for architects, whom can be recognised and awarded for design excellence in their schemes through the East Suffolk Quality of Place Awards.

Further details of the awards process will be made available on the Council's website and publicised.

It should be noted that the Charter does not apply to development within the area of East Suffolk where the Broads Authority is the Local Planning Authority

Write to us

East Suffolk Council

Planning Policy and
Delivery Team

Riverside, 4 Canning Road,

Lowestoft, NR33 0EQ

Call us

Planning Policy and Delivery Team
(Local Plans)

01394 444557

Development Management
(Planning Applications)

01394 444832

Email us

Planning Policy and Delivery Team
(Local Plans)

planningpolicy@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

Development Management
(Planning Applications)

planning@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/Planning

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.