

The East Suffolk Developers Charter

A best practice guide for
developers of major
residential schemes

Major Home Builders Forum
24th October 2024



What is the purpose of the East Suffolk Developers Charter? (1/2)

1. To incentivise **developers** of major residential developments to '**go above and beyond**' the minimum legislative and policy requirements and deliver exceptionally sustainable, healthy, and attractive development schemes which have been informed (and improved) by virtue of meaningful engagement with the **local community** and **the Council**.
2. To encourage more **proactive and positive engagement from communities**, supporting them to be effective in communicating their concerns and aspirations for development that impacts them, and less reactive in their approach to planning matters more generally.
3. To **widen participation** for communities, by making engagement activities more accessible to typically harder to reach groups.



What is the purpose of the East Suffolk Developers Charter? (2/2)

4. To **build a culture of collaboration and trust** between all three key stakeholders (developers, communities, and the Council).
5. To **speed up the planning stage** by improving the quality of the development proposals that are submitted to the Council for approval.
6. To improve environmental quality for communities during the construction process by encouraging a '**considerate construction**' approach to the overall delivery process.
7. To ultimately **improve the quality and healthiness of developments and the built environments** of the district, therefore improving health and wellbeing and quality of life outcomes for the population.



Engagement

Presented the idea of a Charter at the Town and Parish Forum on 11th & 25th June 2024 for comment.

Consulted developers in one-to-one meetings in July/August 2024 and the following themes emerged:

- A faster planning system would be the primary incentive for developers to voluntarily use a Charter.
- Desire for more informal meetings and time with planners.
- Awards and recognition appealing some developers, particularly to SME builders.
- Some people would prefer a Charter to be a material consideration when determining planning applications.
- Requests for no pre-app fee if signed up to the Charter.
- Suggestion that the Charter is accompanied by free topic-based workshops and webinars provided by ESC.
- Concern for the financial cost of going above and beyond Building Regulations and Planning Policy requirements.
- Concern the Charter will be too onerous and making planning applications longer.

Feedback has been taken into consideration when drafting the Charter.



Status of the Charter:

Engagement with the Charter is entirely voluntary. It is intended to be an **incentive** for developers only.

It is also an incentive for the Council to be more pro-active with developers.

The Charter is **not** policy, and is not an SPD.

We therefore cannot take account of schemes' performance against the Charter's themes in the determination of planning applications (i.e. it will not be a '**material consideration**').



The Charter is proposed to be organised around five ‘themes’:

1. Participation & Engagement

This theme is intended to encourage developers to ...:

- ...take a consistent and meaningful approach to engagement with the local community and the Council (and other developers, if relevant) throughout the design-planning-delivery process.
- ...support the key stakeholders to build trust and a culture of collaboration.
- ...widen participation, particularly for ‘hard-to-reach’ groups in planning processes (e.g. under 55s).
- ...set out the Council’s commitments to delivering a high-performing and well-resourced planning service.

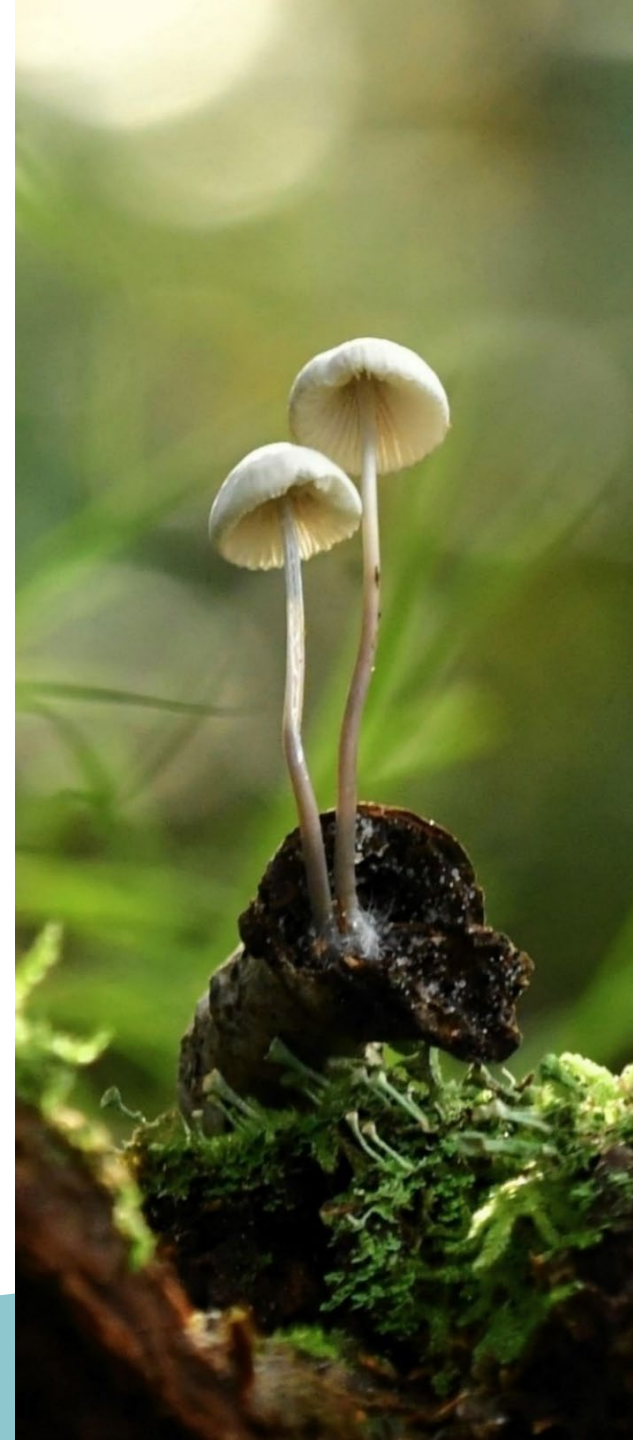
It is also intended to help empower communities (Town and Parish Councils, residents, businesses, local service providers, and voluntary organisations) to play a proactive part in engagement activities to ensure their needs and aspirations are heard and have influence.



2. Landscape & Biodiversity

This theme is intended to encourage developers to...:

- ...take a landscape-led approach to the design and layout of schemes
- ...go 'over and above' on biodiversity net gain legal requirements (+10%)
- ...undertake Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) to inform how their scheme (including but not limited to the green infrastructure offer) can be designed to better support health and wellbeing and healthy lifestyles.
- ...provide 'Welcome Packs' to new occupants that go over and above the standard Travel Plan offer for encouraging sustainable living.
- ...offer a tree planting scheme.



3. Homes

This theme is intended to encourage developers to...:

- ...assess and consider local housing needs to inform their proposed housing mix (sizes, types and tenures), including engagement with the district's Disability Forums, Registered Providers, and the Council's Housing team.
- ...deliver homes that are designed with the intention/suitability to be primary residence homes, rather than second homes.
- ...deliver homes that have high resource efficiency, support health and healthy behaviours, residential amenity, and give the flexibility to work from home.
- ...deliver more and in-demand self-build plots (as per the Council's Self Build Register).



4. Sustainable Design

This theme is intended to encourage developers to...:

- demonstrate use of the Sustainable Construction SPD's tools,
- take a 'fabric-first' approach to create thermally efficient, airtight buildings,
- design homes with healthy internal environments, considering matters such as warmth, sound-proofing and internal air quality,
- incorporate renewable energy generation on-site,
- support new occupants to understand the building performance technologies in their new home,
- ensure there is sufficient, and convenient cycle storage, which makes cycling an easy choice for short journeys,
- reuse or recycle materials/soil on-site.



5. Considerate Construction & Community Ownership(1/2)

This theme is intended to encourage developers to...:

- ...provide communities with a community liaison contact, and have regular check ins with key community contacts (e.g. the Town/Parish Council) to update on progress and respond to questions/concerns.
- ...comply closely with agreed Construction Management Plans.
- ...provide information on the anticipated hours of work, deliveries, the construction traffic routes, and how noise and dust generation will be avoided/suppressed
- ...make site and delivery information publicly accessible via physical information boards in accessible locations on site edges.
- ...be influenced by the local natural, historic or cultural context and engagement with communities on street/spaces naming and numbering.



5. Considerate Construction & Community Ownership(2/2)

This theme is intended to encourage developers to...:

- ...build out the site within a reasonable timeframe from commencement.
- ...manage the site's surface water effectively.
- ...work collaboratively with the Council, the Highways Authority, and the Lead Local Flood Authority.
- ...avoid excessive off-site development adverts in the way of large physical signs, etc., particularly in remote locations.
- to provide regular updates to the Council on progress, including feeding back on information requests related to Housing Land Supply/Housing Action Plans, etc., and the submission of post-completion reports.
- undertake corporate environmental and social responsibility activities in the district, such as offering apprenticeships and supporting community groups.



Why would developers engage with the Charter?

Proposed incentives:

- **Awards:** awards that can be awarded at (1) planning permission stage and/or (2) completion stage for schemes consistent with the Developers Charter.

Developers can use the awards for marketing/ reputational purposes; a system that's similar to the existing East Suffolk Quality of Place Awards.

- **Council's commitments** as set out in the Charter.



Timeline

- Town and Parish Forums – July 2024
- Engagement with developers – August 2024
- Drafting – first draft
- Major Housebuilders Forum – 24th October 2024
- Drafting – finalising the content
- Cabinet – 3rd December
- Published – Winter 2024