

# Neighbourhood Planning Guidance for Housing

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# Neighbourhood Planning Guidance for Housing

## 1. Introduction

Housing is a basic need for everyone and a vital issue for communities. It is widely acknowledged that we are in a housing crisis and finding a suitable home in the right place can frequently be a challenge for people. This guidance document will help explain the role that Neighbourhood Plans can play in addressing some of the issues which local communities may face in accessing the homes they need.



*Walton High Street, Felixstowe – contemporarily designed mix of flats and dwellings providing a range of different homes*

## Local Housing Issues

There can be a wide range of housing issues affecting local communities. It might be that young people and/or those with young families are being forced to leave the area where they grew up because homes there are simply unaffordable to them and there is a lack of suitable housing opportunities for them. Or perhaps there is a lack of smaller homes for people who want to downsize from the family home. Communities may aspire to grow for varying reasons. New homes can stimulate life and vitality and can help support local services or facilities. For example, families moving to new homes in an area could help struggling schools, shops or pubs to continue. These new residents may also be available to work for local businesses who might have difficulty finding employees, especially where



house prices are high, and second homes or holiday homes are prevalent. A new housing development could potentially secure some land and/or funding to help deliver new facilities desired by local people. This might result in a new play space, community centre or allotments. Or a community may desire certain types of new homes such as for those on low incomes; retired people; or serviced plots for people to build their own homes on. The list goes on.



*Housing in a rural location, Parham, featuring mixed sizes of dwellings*

Good **community engagement** from the outset will give you an insight into the housing needs, infrastructure needs, and aspirations in your area. Understanding this will help you to plan for a solution through your Neighbourhood Plan which is tailored to the unique circumstances of your area. Early engagement helps foster support and understanding, while delays can lead to conflicts. Furthermore, publicity and consultation are a legal requirement which must be demonstrated via a 'consultation statement' when submitting a neighbourhood plan.

## Neighbourhood Plans – Some Background

Neighbourhood Plans give communities the power to shape their locality. A Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision which responds to local issues and addresses the needs and aspirations of the community. This vision can cover a wide range of topics that are important to local people. To help deliver this vision, the Neighbourhood Plan will set out planning policies which will be a statutory consideration for planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area and will directly shape new development and prioritise infrastructure to support growth. Neighbourhood Plans are created by the local community. They apply to a geographical area (the 'Neighbourhood Area') defined by the community. Often this is a whole Parish, but it can be larger or smaller than this. The Parish or Town Council will play an important role, but the plan must be based on a shared vision which reflects the wishes

of the community. Neighbourhood Plans are not compulsory, they are an optional tool for communities who wish to have more of a say in planning for their area. East Suffolk Council have a duty to provide assistance to groups preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Once made (ie. adopted), Neighbourhood Plans become part of the Development Plan for the area. This means that they function alongside the relevant Local Plan. East Suffolk has two local plans in place:

The '[East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan](https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Planning-Policy-and-Local-Plans/Suffolk-Coastal-Local-Plan/Adopted-Suffolk-Coastal-Local-Plan/East-Suffolk-Council-Suffolk-Coastal-Local-Plan.pdf)'<sup>1</sup>. This applies to the former Suffolk Coastal part of East Suffolk.

The '[East Suffolk Council - Waveney Local Plan](https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Waveney-Local-Plan/Adopted-Waveney-Local-Plan-including-Erratum.pdf)'<sup>2</sup>. This applies to the former Waveney part of East Suffolk.

Part of the East Suffolk district falls within the Broads Authority area. For this part of the district, the 'Local Plan for the Broads' will be the relevant Local Plan.



*Burlingham Close, Leiston – allocated site within the Leiston Neighbourhood Plan*

The Neighbourhood Plan; the Local Plan; and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will all be used together to provide the policy framework for deciding planning

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Planning-Policy-and-Local-Plans/Suffolk-Coastal-Local-Plan/Adopted-Suffolk-Coastal-Local-Plan/East-Suffolk-Council-Suffolk-Coastal-Local-Plan.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Waveney-Local-Plan/Adopted-Waveney-Local-Plan-including-Erratum.pdf>

applications. A Neighbourhood Plan should not repeat elements of local or national planning policy. They should also reflect the spatial strategy of the local plan.

After a Neighbourhood Plan is made, infrastructure projects which have been prioritized in the plan will be added to East Suffolk Council's Infrastructure List within the [Infrastructure Funding Statement](#)<sup>3</sup> at the next annual review point.



*Candlest Road, Felixstowe - new homes on the edge of the town*

## How can Neighbourhood Plans help to address housing issues?

Neighbourhood Plans can play a powerful role by including policies which give positive support to delivery of new homes in response to the community's housing needs and/or aspirations. These policies could work in different ways. For example, a Neighbourhood Plan could directly allocate land for new homes in a Parish, setting the numbers of homes and including design requirements. Alternatively, a Neighbourhood Plan could include a policy which allows new homes to be built where certain criteria are met. A Neighbourhood Plan could also incorporate a policy which addresses the size of new homes which are needed and the tenures of Affordable Housing which are required to meet local housing need. More information on the above policy options is provided later on in this document. It is not

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/developer-contributions/community-infrastructure-levy/cil-spending/>



obligatory for a Neighbourhood Plan to plan for additional homes, but also they cannot promote less growth than is planned in the Local Plan.

It is also open to local communities to directly grant planning permission for new homes via a 'Community Right to Build Order' or a 'Neighbourhood Development Order'. More information is provided on these in the [Technical Guidance](#) chapter. These Orders do not form part of a Neighbourhood Plan and are a separate process in themselves, but they could be complementary to a Neighbourhood Plan and prepared at the same time.

The [Suffolk Coastal Local Plan \(Policy SCLP12.1\)](#)<sup>4</sup> identifies the minimum number of homes that designated neighbourhood areas are expected to plan for, as at November 2018. If your neighbourhood area was designated after November 2018, it will not appear in policy SCLP12.1. The Waveney Local Plan, having been prepared prior to the publication of the 2019 NPPF, does not set out housing requirements for designated neighbourhood areas.

If you are considering planning for housing, and your neighbourhood area is not covered within policy SCLP12.1, you can request that East Suffolk Council provide you with an indicative number of homes to plan for. We will calculate the indicative number of homes using our published methodology available [here](#)<sup>5</sup>:



*Pryors Drive, Snape – the Affordable Housing is well integrated into the overall development*

<sup>4</sup> [Local Plan - East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan \(Adopted September 2020\) - East Suffolk Council, Strategic Planning Consultations](#)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Neighbourhood-Planning/Preparing-a-Neighbourhood-Plan/Neighbourhood-Plans-Indicative-Housing-Requirements-methodology.pdf>

## What types of homes could a Neighbourhood Plan help provide?

There are different types of homes that a Neighbourhood Plan could plan for - this document includes chapters covering the types below:

- Affordable Housing
- Community-Led Housing
- Open Market Housing
- Custom and Self-Build Housing

A 'technical guidance' chapter is also included at the end of the document to provide additional information and explanation around some of the processes involved with planning for new homes. Words occurring in the text that are shown in **bold** font are defined in the document's Glossary.



*Land at Red House Lane, Leiston. Affordable housing provided via policy SA2 of the Leiston Neighbourhood Plan.*



## 2. Affordable Housing

### Why is affordable housing needed?

There has always been a need for affordable housing, however the current housing crisis has exacerbated this across the country, and there remains a lack of suitable affordable housing. The general cost of housing outstripping wages leads to fewer people being able to get on the property ladder, with these impacts being particularly felt by the younger generations. Frequently this results in young people having to move away from places where they have grown up in order to find housing, which undermines the sustainability of local communities.

Simply put, an increasing number of people are unable to house themselves or access housing via the usual open market route (ie. renting or purchasing properties), as this has now become out of many people's reach financially.



*Affordable housing units at School Lane, Bawdsey*

The latest Government statistics show that the ratio of earnings to house prices is on average 8.35 in East Suffolk (i.e. the average housing is 8.35 times the average earnings). This indicates that many people will struggle to afford their own housing within the district.

Affordable Housing needs were assessed as part of the preparation of the Council's two Local Plans. This showed a net need of 94 affordable dwellings a year in the Suffolk Coastal

Local Plan area and a need for 208 affordable dwellings a year in the Waveney Local Plan area.

The local plans contain policies to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing. However, in the Waveney area, it is recognised that commercial housing developments cannot viably deliver the identified need of 208 affordable dwellings a year on their own and the shortfall will not be made up by Registered Providers. Delivery through other policy-compliant means is therefore of even greater importance.

## Benefits of affordable housing

Affordable housing not only meets the specific identified housing needs of local people, but in many cases, it can also help to maintain the viability of services and amenities in the locality, such as, local schools, village shops, posts offices and support other local businesses.

The creation and provision of affordable housing can also help to maintain social networks within the parish, reducing social isolation and providing an opportunity for families to remain near to each other for support. This can help reinforce mixed communities by enabling young people to remain in the community.

This is particularly important in high-value areas where residents may be easily priced out of the local housing market and must, as a result, move away from their support networks.



*Buckton Place, Leiston - Affordable Housing*

## What is Affordable Housing?

Annexe 2 of the [NPPF](#)<sup>6</sup> defines Affordable Housing as: ‘housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers).’

The NPPF provides definitions for the following tenures:

- Social rent
- Other Affordable housing for rent
- Discounted market sales housing
- Other affordable routes to home ownership

In 2021 the Government also introduced First Homes, a new form of discount market housing. The NPPF stipulates the definition to be read in conjunction with the Affordable

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<sup>6</sup><https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675abd214cbda57cacd3476e/NPPF-December-2024.pdf>



[Homes Update Written Ministerial Statement \(May 2021\)](#)<sup>7</sup>. Planning Practice Guidance on First Homes provides an explanation of what constitutes as a First Home<sup>8</sup>.

Additional information can be obtained from the [East Suffolk Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document \(May 2022\)](#)<sup>9</sup> regarding the different types of affordable housing and tenure.



*Hastoe Housing Association affordable rent Passivhaus development at Ditchingham, Norfolk*

## What is the difference between ‘housing that is affordable’ and Affordable Housing?

Affordable Housing is a specific tenure of housing that has been defined in the NPPF (see above). Housing that doesn’t meet the definition of affordable housing, but that may in some way be less expensive, is not affordable housing.

Affordable Housing is often delivered by a **Registered Provider**, which can either be the Council or a Housing Association. This type of tenure can also be developed and retained by a community-led housing organisation.

<sup>7</sup> <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-05-24/hlws48>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/first-homes>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Planning-Policy-and-Local-Plans/Supplementary-documents/Affordable-Housing/Affordable-Housing-SPD.pdf>



*Affordable dwellings at Candlet Road, Felixstowe*

## Types of Affordable housing

There are several different tenures of affordable housing:

- **Affordable Rent:** Affordable rented properties must not exceed 80% of the open market rental value. Affordable rental properties are usually owned and managed by **Registered Providers** but could also be owned and managed by the Council.
- **Social Rent:** This is set at a lower monthly cost than affordable rent, typically around 50-60% of market rental costs and capped at the Local Housing Allowance, which is calculated through a formula published by the Government.
- **Rent to Buy:** This is a method that enables occupants to rent a property, usually at 20% below the open market rent, whilst allowing occupants to save a deposit towards purchasing the home in the future. This is a relatively new tenure and there is some uncertainty around some aspects of how these types of homes will be delivered.
- **Shared Ownership:** This type of tenure enables occupants to buy a share of a property whilst paying rent and service charges on the remaining value. The differences between shared equity and shared ownership are that with a shared equity scheme the resident owns all of the property, albeit with a loan on the

resident's part of the deposit – whereas with a shared ownership scheme the resident only owns a portion of the home with the opportunity to purchase a greater share when this becomes affordable to the occupant (known as 'staircasing').

- **Discounted market sales housing:** This term is used to describe housing, which is sold freehold, usually at a value of up to 80% market value. There are no rental costs on the remaining 20% share, and the discount would be applied at the same percentage in any future re-sale.
- **First Homes:** This is a type of discounted market sales housing introduced in 2021. First Homes are available to purchase with a minimum discount of 30% below market value. This discount is retained in perpetuity and the initial sale price must not exceed £250,000. First Homes are available to first time buyers with an annual household income not exceeding £80,000. The government has published Planning Practice Guidance on [First Homes](#)<sup>10</sup>.
- **Intermediate Housing:** This type refers to homes for sale and rent, provided at a cost above social rent but below market levels. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low-cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing. Intermediate rent will usually be set at 80% of open market rent.

Further information on the different affordable housing tenures can be obtained via the following: Council's [Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document](#)<sup>11</sup>.

Affordable Housing should remain at an affordable price for future residents, and this is usually secured through planning obligations.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/first-homes>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Planning-Policy-and-Local-Plans/Supplementary-documents/Affordable-Housing/Affordable-Housing-SPD.pdf>





*Charsfield: Affordable housing, land behind the Three Horseshoes Inn*

## ‘Right to Buy’ and ‘Right to Acquire’

Firstly, the distinction between ‘right to buy’ and ‘right to acquire’ needs to be established. Whilst they are similar, there are a few differences between both options. Right to Acquire is meant for housing association tenants and is the mechanism for fully owning a rented home, and Right to Buy is for council tenants who wish to purchase their rented home.

The Right to Buy does not apply to housing delivered through a Community Land Trust.

## Staircasing

Staircasing is a method of providing housing ownership that starts as shared ownership, or shared equity, but ultimately enables greater or full ownership of the property. This allows occupants to buy shares on an ongoing basis, potentially up to full ownership. However, this will depend on the legal agreement for the property which in some cases will only permit the occupant to own up to a certain percent (for example up to 80%). This allows the housing association to retain some level of control over the housing, ensure it is kept affordable and to ensure that the housing is not used as a second home.

Care will need to be taken over how and when more shares can be purchased, and perhaps other legal mechanisms to retain the properties as affordable dwellings. Tibby’s Green in Southwold is an example where shares were bought almost immediately, and there were no

other legal protections, so what started as an affordable scheme progressed into open market housing almost immediately.

### Eligibility for Affordable housing:

Generally, to be considered for Affordable or Social Rented property an application for housing would be required and submitted through the [Gateway to Homechoice Housing Register scheme](#)<sup>12</sup>. Individuals who apply to the housing register scheme, and have an active application, would have the opportunity to bid (show an interest) in a property advertised via the website. At shortlisting/nomination stage the local authority/registered social landlord would review submitted applications to determine eligibility for their properties i.e. do they meet the local connection criteria set within the Section 106 agreement.

The eligibility to live in alternative affordable housing tenures is mainly determined by the local authority/registered social landlords and would be based on household income levels.

### Affordable Housing Policies in Neighbourhood Plans

There are various approaches to affordable housing policies within Neighbourhood Plans that can be followed and examples of these were brought to fruition in the following areas, and contain set local policies on affordable housing, tenure, and mix: Bungay, Halesworth, and Oulton Neighbourhood Plans.

They all collated evidence to support their Housing Needs Assessments.

### Housing Needs Assessments

A Housing Needs Assessment will allow Neighbourhood Plan Groups to gain an understanding of the affordable housing need within the parish. This understanding will help to inform the location, scale and tenure of affordable housing needed, in addition to a robust assessment of local need.

An assessment is generally made up of data collected from local households, usually by way of questionnaires, or other surveys. However, whatever method is used, it should include meaningful engagement with the community.

Housing needs assessments should address the following:

In terms of the housing mix, the data within the survey should seek to identify the quantity of housing required and the different tenure and sizes of affordable housing to help meet the local needs (rather than views or preferences).

Surveys should consider local household incomes, and subsequent ability to afford market housing, low-cost home ownership tenures or affordable rents.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk/>

Consideration should also be given within a survey as to whether specialist affordable accommodation is required, such as, sheltered, or extra care units for older people. In the East Suffolk Local Plan areas, accommodation for older people is particularly important and local plan policies expect the needs of older people to be provided for.

It is recommended that Neighbourhood Plan Groups seek specialist, experienced consultants to conduct housing needs assessments.

When applying the results of completed surveys the data should provide an indication of the scale of development needed. In determining scale, consideration will also need to be given to other factors such as availability of sites or landscape impact of any potential development.

There is a separate funding stream available via Locality if there is an identified need for delivering housing locally.

Further information on how to apply for funding can be found [here](#)<sup>13</sup>.



*Rural housing developed by Hastoe Housing, Mill Road in Badingham*

## What the Neighbourhood Plan can do:

Neighbourhood Plans can support the delivery of affordable housing by:

**Allocating land for housing development** - residential developments would be expected to provide a proportion of affordable housing (See section below for more information)  
Consideration could also be given to allocating sites primarily for affordable housing.

<sup>13</sup> <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>



**Exception site policies** – a Neighbourhood Plan could set out its own policies to promote affordable housing coming forward on exception sites and support the delivery of community-led housing schemes.

**Affordable housing mix** – a Neighbourhood Plan could include policies relating to the mix of affordable housing to be delivered based on evidenced needs.

### Allocating land for Affordable Housing

One method of delivering affordable housing that a Neighbourhood Plan Group may wish to consider is through allocating sites for housing. Under Local Plan Policies residential developments of 10 dwellings or 0.5ha or more (Suffolk Coastal Local Plan area) and 11 or more dwellings (Waveney Local Plan area) would be expected to deliver an element of affordable housing. Therefore, allocation of residential sites in a Neighbourhood Plan can assist with meeting affordable housing needs in the area. A Neighbourhood Plan could also seek to allocate a site primarily for Affordable Housing.



*Affordable rented dwellings at The Street, Peasenhall (Hastoe Housing)*

Early consultation should be used to gather information about housing needs and demands in the community. When seeking suitable sites, the Neighbourhood Plan Group can start this process by viewing the Council’s Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) and this can be used in conjunction with local knowledge to identify potential sites.

It is also important to undertake a ‘call for sites’ exercise if land is to be considered for the allocation of housing. A call for sites exercise is a process by which councils, or in this case

Neighbourhood Plan Group, ask for any interested parties (including landowners and developers) to propose land which may have potential for a future development, to support housing or employment in the area. It is important that sites for new housing are well related to existing settlements. More information on allocating sites can be found in the Technical Guidance chapter.

## Exceptions policy – rural exception sites

### What is an Exception Site?

Rural Exception Sites are small sites in rural locations where housing would not normally be granted planning permission that provide Affordable Housing in perpetuity to meet identified local needs.

Both East Suffolk Local Plans contain Settlement Boundaries (surrounding many villages as well as market towns and urban areas) within which housing development will be supported in principle, however the Local Plans provide limited opportunities for development outside of Settlement Boundaries. This approach generally lowers land values in these locations by removing the ‘hope value’ for market housing which attracts a higher value.

Paragraph 76 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out requirements for rural exception sites including the need to be adjacent to existing settlements. Paragraph 82 of the 2024 NPPF states that local planning authorities should support opportunities to bring forward rural exception sites that will provide affordable housing to meet the identified local needs.

Exception sites may be developed and managed by community organisations (such as community-led housing groups), Housing Associations or the Council.

These exception sites are sites that would come forward as ‘windfall’ sites i.e. where they are not allocated in a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan. This could include sites that have been submitted through the ‘call for sites’ process as part of the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan preparation, but not allocated for market housing. Identification through a call for sites process does not in itself provide any planning status to a site.

Homes can be brought forward on these sites if there is a proven unmet local need for affordable housing, as supported by a Housing Needs Assessment, which would also clarify the type of tenure that is needed. Through the Housing Enabling role, East Suffolk Council can provide advice and assistance on community-led housing proposals.

There would be an expectation that details of how the affordable housing would be protected in perpetuity would be agreed, and it would be usual that a Section 106 agreement or other legal agreement would be completed as part of the planning permission.



*Small rural housing development in Badingham which includes a pocket park to address a shortfall of public green space in the village*

### Occupancy of affordable housing on exception sites

Affordable housing that has been delivered on an exception site is usually allocated to people who have a local and/or work connection to the parish (or group of parishes).

For rural exception sites there is a need for local connections and usually a specific criterion which provides the basis for assessment. These criteria should be reflective of the local needs that the development is seeking to meet.

The [Affordable Housing SPD](#)<sup>14</sup> sets out the local connections cascade that should provide the basis for the local connections criteria.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Planning-Policy-and-Local-Plans/Supplementary-documents/Affordable-Housing/Affordable-Housing-SPD.pdf>



## 3. Community-Led Housing

### Key Points:

- Community-led housing is based on a core philosophy rather than one specific approach.
- The approach enables the community to choose the degree to which they own, manage, and supervise the homes, or build the housing. At its core there is a need for community involvement throughout the process.
- It isn't necessary to have a Neighbourhood Plan in place for a Community-led housing scheme to come forward, but a Neighbourhood Plan could be a very powerful tool in terms of achieving planning permission for the scheme.



*Community-led housing development in Middleton, including two self and custom build plots along with two-storey dwellings*

### Benefits of Community-Led Housing

- Community-led housing can deliver different housing tenures to meet identified local needs. This could include specific types of housing such as affordable housing or specialist accommodation.
- The community can, through preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan, allocate land or set policies to support the delivery of community-led housing development. Using a Neighbourhood Plan, the community can influence the location, layout, scale, design, and type of housing that will be delivered.

- The community can decide how and by whom the housing is delivered. This could involve the community building some or all of it themselves, learning new skills along the way.
- A local lettings policy can be established where evidence supports this.
- Development can embody the aspirations and pride of the community.

## What is Community-Led Housing?

Community-Led development is defined in the 2024 National Planning Policy Framework<sup>15</sup> as:

*“A development taken forward by, or with, a not-for-profit organisation, that is primarily for the purpose of meeting the needs of its members or the wider local community, rather than being a primarily commercial enterprise. The organisation should be created, managed and democratically controlled by its members, and membership of the organisation should be open to all beneficiaries and prospective beneficiaries of that organisation. It may take any one of various legal forms including a co-operative society, community benefit society and company limited by guarantee. The organisation should own, manage or steward the development in a manner consistent with its purpose, potentially through a mutually supported arrangement with a Registered Provider of Social Housing. The benefits of the development to the community should be clearly defined and consideration given to how those benefits can be protected over time, including in the event of the organisation being wound up.”*

Community-led housing is an overarching term for housing that is owned or managed by the community on a not-for-profit basis. Community-led housing developments are generally generated and established by groups of people living or working in the local area. Projects should be run via a democratic process incorporating strong community participation.

Different organisations can have different roles in the process. This may involve Town and Parish Councils, Community Land Trusts, Community Interest Companies, and Neighbourhood Plan Groups.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675abd214cbda57cacd3476e/NPPF-December-2024.pdf>



*Southwold Hospital development: this contains a community centre, cafe and Affordable housing and was brought about by a community land trust (SouthGen and Hastoe Housing).*

This chapter provides an overview of providing Community-led housing along with references to further sources of information.

Community-led housing isn't a 'one size fits all' type of development and each project can differ considerably and may have been brought forward for varied reasons. Community-led housing can be shaped to create individual developments to address key issues within the community.

## Forms of Community-Led Housing

Community-led housing can adopt a wide variety of forms. Common forms of managing and delivering community-led housing include:

- Cohousing
- Co-operatives
- Community Land Trusts
- Alms Housing





*Modern Alms housing in Framlingham consisting of family homes*

Other models of community-led housing can include the following:

- Self-Help housing
- Self-Finish
- Tenant Management Organisations
- Community Self-Build

Further details on community-led housing are available on the [Council's website](#)<sup>16</sup>.

Useful information is also available here:

<https://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk/community-led-homes-now/>

## What are the roles of different organisations in bringing forward Community-Led Housing?

A number of different organisations and individuals have roles in bringing forward a successful community-led housing development, including: (along with a community-led body to drive it forward), local residents, landowner(s), financial organisations (investors, lenders), the Council's housing service, and the **local planning authority**.

Community groups are often encouraged to form partnerships with housing associations, developers and contractors who can bring knowledge and experience to community-led housing developments.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/community-led-housing/>

An overview of the role of different key organisations is set out below and further information on the different types of Community-Led housing bodies is available on our [website](#)<sup>17</sup>.



*Community-led housing in Middleton*

## A Community-Led Body

Community-led housing schemes and developments will always be led by a community group and for the purposes of this document this is referred to as the ‘community housing group’, but it can take a variety of forms as set out below.

The community housing group will be involved from the outset. Once a development is complete the community housing group may continue via a management board or even live in the development themselves. The community housing group may also decide to go on and develop more housing.

**Community Land Trust** - Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are set up and run by communities to develop and manage homes. They are set up as a non-profit company and are legally defined entities with a Board comprising of people who live and work in the local area. The CLT oversees the financing and development of the housing project and retains long-term stewardship of the properties. This form of body is commonly involved in delivering community-led housing.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/community-led-housing/funding-for-community-led-housing/>

**Housing Co-operative** – under this model there is joint ownership and management of land and assets through a legally incorporated group. This form is similar to a Community Land Trust and set up and run to develop and manage homes to meet local needs.

**Co-housing** – under this model communities are created and run by the residents, who have like-minded interests in living in a co-housing community. The group would need to become legally incorporated.



*Community-led housing scheme in Lavenham on a former council depot site (photo reproduced with thanks to [Lavenham Community Land Trust](https://lavenhamclt.onesuffolk.net/)<sup>18</sup>)*

## Town and Parish Councils

A Town or Parish Council would not usually deliver housing themselves, but they could play an important role in establishing and supporting a community housing group.

A Town or Parish Council can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan which can be invaluable in helping a community-led housing development find a site and acquire planning permission.

## Neighbourhood Plan Group

A Neighbourhood Plan Group would not directly provide the community-led housing project. However, the Neighbourhood Plan can be invaluable in helping a community-led housing project find a site and acquire planning permission.

<sup>18</sup> <https://lavenhamclt.onesuffolk.net/>



## Registered Providers

Registered Social Landlords can include Councils who provide housing, Housing Associations, or any not-for-profit association that provides low-cost social housing. Registered Social Landlords can be involved in the construction and management of community-led housing.

Community housing groups can successfully partner with a Housing Association who can assist with the delivery of homes to meet community needs. Housing Associations provide a wealth of experience with securing funding, building, and managing affordable homes and can support community groups with getting projects started.

Housing Charities have a similar role to Registered Social Landlords, Housing Associations, and are usually associated with housing tenures such as Alms Housing. They offer support and advice to those who are homeless or face unfortunate situations and seeking to secure housing.

## East Suffolk Council

As a Housing Authority, East Suffolk Council actively works with developers, housing associations, and non-profit organisations to support and enable the delivery of affordable homes. East Suffolk Council have a duty to provide advice and support in relation to all aspects of housing, provide a housing register scheme, and allocate social housing effectively to enable people to move to suitable homes. More information is available [here](https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/)<sup>19</sup>.

## What is the role of Neighbourhood Plans in delivering Community-Led Housing?

It is not a requirement to have a Neighbourhood Plan in place to deliver community-led housing. Where a Neighbourhood Plan is not in place, the policies in the relevant Local Plan would be used in decision making on planning applications.

Neighbourhood Plans can be particularly valuable in supporting the delivery of community-led housing as they can include housing policies that directly support these projects, for instance, policies reflecting locally-evidenced housing need, the allocation of land or giving specific, positive support to community-led housing projects.

Neighbourhood Plans can include policies on local housing needs, identify the need for affordable accommodation and the needs of certain groups of individuals, such as, older people, young families, and households with disabled residents. Where a housing needs assessment is undertaken as part of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, this will identify needs for different types and tenures of housing. Consideration could then be given

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/>

as to whether policies or allocations in the plan could help deliver on the findings of the housing needs assessment.

Consultation and engagement are an integral part of Neighbourhood Plan preparation. Early consultation will help to identify the issues that are present, and could help inform consideration of whether community-led housing might be a way of addressing these. These issues may not all relate directly to housing needs, but could include other relevant factors such as open space provision or the opportunities for social interaction in the settlement.

The delivery of Community-led housing is separate to the Neighbourhood Plan process – but the two can be highly complementary to deliver on the community’s needs and aspirations. The Neighbourhood Plan can provide the planning policy framework to help deliver the community’s housing project.

The [Swaffham Bulbeck Neighbourhood Plan](#)<sup>20</sup> is a good example of a Neighbourhood Plan containing a criteria-based policy aimed specifically at supporting small scale, community-led residential development.

## Engagement

Community-led housing requires significant engagement with the community. This can inform what type of housing there is a need for and how it may be delivered. The engagement should be ongoing throughout the project.

Engagement can take place in different forms, such as, face to face discussions, exhibitions, or questionnaires, which would provide the community housing or Neighbourhood Plan Groups with an understanding of the communities’ needs and aspirations, including the needs of different groups in the local area. The Council’s Communities team can provide advice on engagement to inform the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Council’s [Statement of Community Involvement](#)<sup>21</sup> provides guidance on engagement around planning applications.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://eastcambs.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy-and-guidance/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-7>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Planning-Policy-and-Local-Plans/Statement-of-Community-Involvement/Statement-of-Community-Involvement.pdf>

## 4. Open Market Housing

### What is open market housing?

Open market housing can be broadly defined as housing sold or let at market value, and is therefore distinct from Affordable or social housing. Generally open market housing developments also deliver the majority of Affordable Homes in the district, through the policy requirement for a proportion of the homes to be affordable and secured by a Section 106 agreement. The two tenures therefore go hand-in-hand most of the time.



*Open market housing scheme delivered via the Bredfield Neighbourhood Plan allocation, Woodbridge Road, Bredfield*

Open market housing can take many forms, including custom and self-build housing or older persons housing. This chapter will not address matters specific to subsets of open market housing, which can be found in other chapters (e.g. chapter 5 – Custom and Self-build Housing).

### What are the benefits of open market housing?

There are a number of benefits of open market housing to future occupants and exiting communities.

#### Improve housing choice and affordability

The delivery of open market housing, as with all types of housing, provides improved choice for households. The chains of moves set off by new open market housing can enable several households to move home, into better quality homes and/or homes that better meet their needs and preferences.



In areas where demand for housing is not being met by sufficient provision of new housing everyone loses out, but especially households on lower incomes. This is because lower income households are less able to compete for the same housing as higher income households. Higher income households also lose out as they are forced to pay more for the same housing.

Open market housing can also help deliver Affordable Housing, without which those in housing need would be much worse off.



*Framlingham Neighbourhood Plan site allocation at Fore Street*

## New and improved services and facilities

Open marketing housing can help deliver new and improved services and facilities on and off site and/or provide financial contributions towards such services and facilities through Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy. These new and improved services and facilities for new and existing residents might include allotments, community centres, cycling and walking routes, gyms, leisure centres, open space, play areas, schools, car parking areas, and sports pitches.

Whilst some occupants of new housing could be from within the existing community, new households moving to an area can lead to an increase in spending in the local economy which can help to boost activity in local high streets and village shops, thereby supporting local jobs and businesses. This is particularly beneficial in places where local shops, pubs, and other facilities are struggling. New homes can also help support local schools through new families coming or returning to the area and the children attending the local school.

New open market housing, as with other types of housing, can stimulate the local economy and provide local employment opportunities not just during construction and on site, but across the supply chain.



*Leiston Neighbourhood Plan allocation: Land at Red House Lane, open market housing with play area.*

## Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Open market housing not only supports the delivery of infrastructure but also pays CIL in many parts of the District. CIL is a financial levy on housing and some other forms of development for the purpose of aiding the delivery of infrastructure to support growth. When a Neighbourhood Plan is in place, the Town or Parish will receive 25% of the CIL with no cap, rather than 15% of the CIL received from the development when there is no Neighbourhood Plan in place. See the Technical Guidance chapter for more information on CIL.

## Regenerating vacant or brownfield sites

Vacant and brownfield sites can be found all across the country and there may be some in your parish. These sites commonly comprise former industrial uses, making them complex and costly to bring back in to use. As such, delivering open market housing on these sites can help to make redevelopment financially viable, helping transform sometimes long-standing dilapidated land into high quality places where new and existing communities can thrive. Conversely, without being redeveloped, these vacant and brownfield sites can degrade to a worse state over time.



*Open market contemporary designed housing on the former Crown Nurseries site, Ufford*

## Where to start planning for open market housing

The above benefits of open market housing may lead you to consider planning for open market housing. Below are some suggestions on how you could do this to help get you started.

## What could a Neighbourhood Plan do to plan for open market housing?

A Neighbourhood Plan can incorporate planning policies to help bring forward new open market homes in the area. There are different ways this can be achieved, and some options are set out below.





*Open market housing on Old Grammar Lane Bungay, adjacent to the old Grammar School which has been converted into housing*

## General support

A Neighbourhood Plan could include a policy which states that housing will be supported. This will provide a general level of support, but on its own this lacks the precision and effectiveness of a site allocation or a criteria-based policy, as described below. Policies which set out where and when a development will be permitted are much more effective and provide far more certainty and clarity for everyone involved.

## Allocating sites

Open market housing can be built as individual homes; in small groups; or larger numbers on larger sites. A Neighbourhood Plan can identify specific sites, big or small, on which housing can be built. This is known as allocating a site (see the Technical Guidance chapter for more information). A Neighbourhood Plan Group can choose what size sites would be most appropriate for their area. Individual homes can help consolidate the built-up part of an existing town, village or settlement, providing new homes in a very small-scale fashion. Allocating sites for multiple homes would be more effective in providing a higher number of homes and could also deliver things like affordable homes where they meet the threshold in the Local Plans' affordable housing policies.

A number of Neighbourhood Plans across East Suffolk have allocated sites for housing – examples of these are set out in table 1 below.

See [chapter 6 \(Technical Guidance\)](#) for information on the process for allocating land for development.

## Criteria-based policies

A Neighbourhood Plan could include a policy which allows homes to be built where specific criteria are met. This could, for example, allow small numbers of homes to be built on the edge of a settlement or built-up area, or support re-use of redundant or under-used buildings. Another example would be a policy supporting new residential development in town centre areas where the town centre function is not undermined. Such criteria would need to be evidenced and justified, and would need to consider the relationship with the criteria-based housing policies set out in the relevant Local Plan (e.g. SCLP5.3: Housing Development in the Countryside; and WLP8.7: Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside). Design codes could supplement criteria-based policies to guide the appearance of new homes. Care must be taken to ensure that a criteria-based policy doesn't create a more restrictive approach to housing development than the Local Plan policies.



*Example of small open market homes on the former Crown Nurseries site, Ufford*

## Neighbourhood Plan Policy Examples

Examples of Neighbourhood Plans which include policies supporting open market housing:

- Bungay Neighbourhood Plan policy H4 (Land to the east of St Margaret's Road)<sup>22</sup> allocates land for approximately 70 homes
- Easton Neighbourhood Plan policy ETN3 (Land south-west of Wickham Market Road)<sup>23</sup> allocates land for approximately 12 homes
- Framlingham Neighbourhood Plan allocates a number of sites for housing development, which are set out in policy FRAM2 (Housing Strategy)<sup>24</sup>
- Leiston Neighbourhood Plan allocates a number of sites for housing, including policies SA1 (Land at Highbury Cottages, Saxmundham Road), SA2 (Land at Red House Lane), SA3 (Land to the Rear of St Margaret's Crescent), and SA4 (Land at Abbey Road)<sup>25</sup>
- Kesgrave Neighbourhood Plan allows for residential use in the Kesgrave District Centre above ground floor level as part of a mix of uses.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Neighbourhood-Planning/Designated-Neighbourhood-Areas/Bungay/Bungay-Neighbourhood-Plan.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Neighbourhood-Planning/Designated-Neighbourhood-Areas/Easton/Referendum/Easton-NP-Referendum-Version.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Neighbourhood-Planning/Designated-Neighbourhood-Areas/Framlingham/Framlingham-NP-Made-Version.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Neighbourhood-Planning/Designated-Neighbourhood-Areas/Leiston/Leiston-NP-Made-Version-March-2017.pdf>



Neighbourhood Plan (date made)	Site Address	Policy Reference	Number of Homes	Number of Affordable Homes (policy requirement)	Other Policy Requirements	Planning Permission Reference (where applicable)
<a href="#">Bredfield (2021)</a>	Land to the east of Woodbridge Road	BDP14	Up to 10	33%	Affordable housing	DC/16/3624/OUT
Bredfield (2021)	Land south of Tudor Cottage	BDP14	Approx 10	33%	Affordable housing, footpath link to village centre	DC/22/1763/FUL
Bredfield (2021)	Land west of Woodbridge Road	BDP14	Approx 10	33%	Affordable housing, decontamination of existing land	N/A
<a href="#">Bungay (2022)</a>	Land east of St Margaret's Road	H4	Approx 70	30%	Affordable housing, open space, 10% custom and self-build housing, active travel routes, 10% biodiversity net gain	N/A
<a href="#">Easton (2024)</a>	Land south-west of Wickham Market Road	ETN3	12	33%	Affordable housing, open space, equipped area of play, footway and pedestrian crossing	N/A
<a href="#">Framlingham (2017)</a>	Land off Saxtead Road	FRAM19	Up to 30	33%	Affordable housing, temporary school parking, open space	DC/18/2445/FUL
Framlingham (2017)	Land off Vyses Road/Brook Lane	FRAM22	Up to 15	100%	Affordable housing, community centre	DC/15/0960/FUL
Framlingham (2017)	The Green Shed, Fore Street	FRAM23	Up to 8	0% (under 10 homes)	None.	DC/16/5386/FUL
Framlingham (2017)	Land off Victoria Mill Road	FRAM25	Approx 30	33%	Affordable housing, neighbourhood equipped area of play, open space	DC/22/2831/OUT
Framlingham (2017)	Station Terrace	FRAM26	Up to 15	33%	Affordable housing, open space	DC/20/2356/OUT
Framlingham (2017)	Old Gas Works Site, College Road	FRAM28	Up to 7	0% (under 10 homes)	None.	N/A
<a href="#">Kesgrave (2021)</a>	Land at junction off Ropes Drive and Mead Drive	KE2	Unspecified	33%	Affordable housing, Ground floor shopping, leisure or employment uses	N/A

Neighbourhood Plan (date made)	Site Address	Policy Reference	Number of Homes	Number of Affordable Homes (policy requirement)	Other Policy Requirements	Planning Permission Reference (where applicable)
<a href="#">Kessingland (2017)</a>	Former Ashley Nurseries Site	SA1	Approx 25	35%	Affordable housing, employment uses, children's play area	N/A
Kessingland (2017)	Land at Laurel Farm West & South	SA2	Approx 55	10 homes	Affordable housing, enhanced and new playing fields, upgrade children's play area to local equipped area for play, green corridor	N/A
Kessingland (2017)	Land at Laural Farm East	SA3	Approx 25	100%	Affordable housing, open space, neighbourhood equipped area for play, green corridor	N/A
<a href="#">Leiston (2017)</a>	Land at Highbury Cottages, Saxmundham Road	SA1	150	33%	Affordable housing, cemetery extension, public toilets	DC/16/1961/OUT
Leiston (2017)	Land at Red House Lane	SA2	70	33%	Affordable housing	DC/17/1605/FUL
Leiston (2017)	Land to the Rear of St Margaret's Crescent	SA3	70	33%	Open space, allotments or community garden	DC/16/2104/OUT
Leiston (2017)	Land at Abbey Road	SA4	100	33%	Affordable housing, employment use	DC/20/5181/OUT
<a href="#">Melton (2018)</a>	Land off Wilford Bridge Road	MEL20	Approx 55	33%	Affordable housing, employment use, retail use, open space, lake, communal gardens, allotments / community growing spaces, café, children's play area, community farm, after school and holiday club	DC/20/1831/OUT
<a href="#">Wickham Market (2023)</a>	Land at Old School Farm	WICK12	Up to 85	33%	Affordable housing, open space, formal play space	N/A

Neighbourhood Plan (date made)	Site Address	Policy Reference	Number of Homes	Number of Affordable Homes (policy requirement)	Other Policy Requirements	Planning Permission Reference (where applicable)
Wickham Market (2023)	Land at Simon's Cross	WICK13	Up to 25	33%	Affordable housing	N/A

*Table 1. Neighbourhood Plan residential site allocations in East Suffolk*



## 5. Custom Housebuilding and Self-Build Homes

### What is Custom and Self-Build Housing?

The National Planning Policy Framework describes self-build and custom-build housing as being “built by an individual, a group of individuals, or persons working with or for them, to be occupied by that individual.” Custom housebuilding and self-build housing can provide a wide range of different types of homes. They can be group or individual projects, and they can involve a lot of hands-on work from the people who will live in them, or a much lesser amount where others are commissioned to design or build the home instead.



*Self-build homes at Graven Hill, Oxfordshire*

There is a difference between custom build and self-build housing. In broad terms, ‘self-build’ housing is where an individual or a group organise for themselves the design and delivery of their new home(s). They will have control over the design of the home and how it is built. Some will choose to undertake some elements of the construction and fitting-out of the homes themselves, but in many cases most of the work will be done by builders and tradespeople commissioned by the individual(s). ‘Custom build’ homes are delivered by the individual or group working with a specialist developer - called an ‘enabler’ - who will offer a range of customisable design options for them to choose from. The enabler will then build the customised home(s) to the specification of the individual(s). This is a more hands-off approach.

What is vital in any case is that the initial occupier of the custom or self-build home has primary input into its final design and layout.

Custom and self-build housing is commonplace in many European countries and more broadly around the world, but in the UK the sector is small. Delivery of custom and self-build housing is something which the Government has been working to expand for a number of years. The [Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015<sup>26</sup>](#) was introduced (and subsequently amended) and this requires Local Authorities such as East Suffolk Council to keep a register of individuals and associations who are seeking to acquire plots of land to build homes to live in. You can view data from this register on our [website<sup>27</sup>](#). East Suffolk must have regard to this register in carrying out its housing, land acquisition/disposal, planning, and regeneration roles. The planning policies in the Council's local plans are supportive of custom and self-build development and are bringing forward plots for development across the district. East Suffolk Council also provides guidance via the adopted custom and self-build housing supplementary planning document.

Custom and self-build housing projects can be a great way to deliver community-led housing projects and can also provide Affordable Home tenures.

## What are the Benefits of Custom and Self-Build Housing?

There are a number of benefits which this particular type of housing can provide for their occupiers and the neighbouring communities which sets custom and self-build homes apart from standard developer-built homes.



*Self-build house in North Road, Southwold*

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/17/contents/enacted/data.htm>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy-and-local-plans/self-build-and-custom-build/>

## Stronger Communities

People who design and/or build their own homes will develop stronger ties and connections to an area and will generally stay in these homes much longer than people who buy a second-hand home or a home built to the plans of a developer. They will hold a long-term view of their new home and the community, taking pride in their surroundings and acting with the long-term interests of the area in mind. If multiple homes are being built on a site, then the process of designing and building new homes alongside their new neighbours will encourage strong relationships to be forged, helping communities to grow from the very outset.



*Custom/self-build homes at Graven Hill, Oxfordshire*

## Advantages for the Local Economy

People who are involved in building their own homes or overseeing the build of their new homes are much more likely to employ local builders and tradespeople and use local materials and/or local suppliers. In this way the local economy can benefit much more from building projects taking place. [Research](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/353400/housing-strategy-2021-25.pdf)<sup>28</sup> shows that self-build homes contribute 45p in every £1 spent to the local economy, whereas housebuilders will contribute 22p out of every pound.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/353400/housing-strategy-2021-25.pdf>



## Potential for lower cost homes

More control over the design and specification of their new home means that the future occupier has more control over the cost of their new home. They could control things like the size, design, construction method, and finishes, meaning that the new home can be delivered to meet a particular budget.

## Diversity

Custom and self-build homes can give the new occupier freedom to design their home to meet their needs and wishes. This will avoid repetition of standard house types which you might find on housing developer-led developments and can allow for unique and interesting homes to be built (it should be noted that design codes can be used to provide some degree of design cohesion). If somebody has specific or specialist needs which they need their home to meet, then a custom or self-build home can be designed to address these needs.



*Self-build dwelling in Victoria Street, Southwold*

## Environmentally-friendly homes

People building or customising their own homes will in the vast majority of cases make the choice to make their homes more efficient and more environmentally friendly than anything

required in any regulations. Incorporating green technologies such as solar panels, heat pumps, rainwater recycling, and green roofs and walls (to name but a few) can be easily achieved when designed in from the outset. This will reduce consumption of energy and water and keep running costs down for the new occupier, which will go hand in hand with a long-term plan for a home.

### Led by people who will live in the homes - not developers

Custom and Self-build developments put decisions into the hands of the people who will be living in them. The future occupiers will have input into the design of the homes and also make decisions over how they are built. The degree of control will vary according to exactly how the homes will be delivered – it will be greatest with self-build projects. This will include how much of the building/fitting out/finishing work an occupier will do themselves, which can help open up different (and potentially more affordable) routes to acquiring a home which wouldn't be available with conventional developer-built schemes. The self-build method of delivering homes will also reduce the amount of money which would normally be extracted as profit by a commercial developer, potentially making them better value for money. Furthermore, the timing and build-out rates on a site can be determined by the custom or self-builders and they are not dependent on commercial decisions taken by a developer.



*Self-build home at Long Four Acres, Norfolk*

### Good for Groups and Community-Led Projects

Custom and Self-build developments can be particularly beneficial for groups of households working together or community-led housing projects. They offer unique opportunities for a

group of people to be in control of the development and also participate in the construction and finishing. Opportunities to work together can be created, sharing and increasing resources and knowledge. With the right support this can lead to people learning valuable new skills in building the new homes, these skills are also hugely valuable in maintaining the homes too. There have been examples of groups hiring professional builders to teach them particular skills needed to build the homes, enabling the group to go on and build the homes themselves. This brings about considerable cost savings as well as fostering a unique sense of pride and community.

## Where to start planning for Custom and Self-Build Homes

Custom and self-build homes offer unique opportunities and benefits and therefore it is fully recommended that these types of homes are included as an option for Neighbourhood Plans looking at how new homes may be provided in their area. Below are some suggestions to help get you started.



*Self-build homes at Graven Hill, Oxfordshire*

### Is there demand in my area?

In general, there is strong demand in East Suffolk for plots on which people can build their own home. East Suffolk Council publish data from the Self-Build register (see [introduction](#) to this



chapter) which can be viewed [here](#)<sup>29</sup>. This includes a map indicating how many people have expressed interest in custom or self-building in each Parish. This won't be a full and final number but will be a good starting point. There are also people on the register who will consider a plot anywhere in the district and/or outside of their preferred locations. Asking your community about custom or self-build homes through your engagement with them will be a good way to understand local people's views on these types of homes. If you are doing a Housing Needs Assessment to support your plan it is recommended that you include specific consideration of custom and self-build homes. There are much fewer opportunities for custom or self-build homes in the district than there are for developer-built homes, therefore there is likely to be good interest in these types of homes in your town or parish.



*Self-build house in Middleton, East Suffolk*

## Local Plan Policies

The Waveney and Suffolk Coastal local plans incorporate positive policies for custom and self-build homes. These provide general support for these types of homes, as well putting in place a

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy-and-local-plans/self-build-and-custom-build/>



mandatory requirement for large developments of 100 homes or more to provide 5% of the homes as custom or self-build homes on serviced plots. They also require a set of design principles to be agreed for developments of five homes or more. These policies are:

Suffolk Coastal Local Plan: [Policy SCLP5.9 - Self Build and Custom Build Housing](#)<sup>30</sup>

Waveney Local Plan: [WLP8.3 – Self Build and Custom Build](#)<sup>31</sup>

There are also policies in both local plans which allow small scale building in the countryside where certain criteria are met which are helpful in enabling custom and self-build homes to be permitted. These policies are:

Suffolk Coastal Local Plan: [SCLP5.4: Housing in Clusters in the Countryside](#)<sup>32</sup>

Waveney Local Plan: [WLP8.7 - Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside](#)<sup>33</sup>

The Local Plans can be accessed on the Local Plan pages of the East Suffolk [website](#)<sup>34</sup>.

These local plan policies will be a good place to start from, but keep in mind that Neighbourhood Plans can set out their own approach to providing custom and self-build homes.

East Suffolk Council has adopted the ‘Custom and Self-Build Housing Supplementary Planning Document’ which features further information and guidance on planning for these types of homes. This can be accessed [here](#)<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup><https://eastsuffolk.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/suffolkcoastallocalplan2020/viewCompoundDoc?docid=11955764&partid=11960116#11960116>

<sup>31</sup><https://eastsuffolk.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/eastsuffolkwaveneylocalplan/viewCompoundDoc?docid=11491476&partid=11497492#11497492>

<sup>32</sup><https://eastsuffolk.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/suffolkcoastallocalplan2020/viewCompoundDoc?docid=11955764&partid=11959796#11959796>

<sup>33</sup><https://eastsuffolk.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/eastsuffolkwaveneylocalplan/viewCompoundDoc?docid=11491476&partid=11497492#11497492>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy-and-local-plans/local-plans/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy-and-local-plans/self-build-and-custom-build/>



*Self-build home at Long Four Acres, Norfolk*

## What could a Neighbourhood Plan do to plan for custom and self-build homes?

A Neighbourhood Plan can incorporate planning policies and strategies to plan for and provide custom and self-build homes in the neighbourhood area. There are different ways this can be done, and some options are set out below, along with some other related planning matters that you may also wish to consider.

### Providing land for custom and self-build homes

Acquiring land which has, or is likely to be granted, planning permission is the greatest challenge for custom and self-builders. Neighbourhood Plans can be hugely effective in addressing this by including policies which directly allocate land or allow homes to be built where specific criteria are met.

### Allocating sites

Custom or self-build homes can be built as individual homes; in small groups; or larger numbers on larger sites. A Neighbourhood Plan can identify specific sites, big or small, on which custom or self-build homes can be built. This is known as allocating a site (see the [Technical Guidance](#)

chapter for more information). A Neighbourhood Plan Group can choose what size sites would be most appropriate for their area. Individual plots can help consolidate the built-up part of an existing town, village or settlement, providing new homes in a very small-scale fashion. Allocating sites for multiple plots would be more effective in providing a higher number of homes and could also deliver things like Affordable homes where they meet the threshold in the Local Plans' Affordable Housing policies.

The [Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan](#)<sup>36</sup> is an example of a Neighbourhood Plan allocating sites specifically for self-build homes (HP7 Custom and Self-Build Homes). The [Bungay Neighbourhood Plan](#)<sup>37</sup> makes specific provision for people wishing to build their own home on a site allocated in the plan (H4: Land to the East of St Margarets Road).

See the chapter 6 '[Technical Guidance](#)' for information on the process for allocating land for development.

### Criteria-based policies

A Neighbourhood Plan could include a policy which allows custom or self-build homes to be built where specific criteria are met. This could, for example, allow small numbers of custom or self-build homes to be built on the edge of a settlement or built-up area. Examples of criteria that could be included are listed below. Please consider that for some of them it will be particularly important for them to be justified with appropriate evidence.

- Location of plots
- Size of sites, or number of plots on a site
- Restriction to custom or self-build homes only
- Size of homes eg. gross floor area or number of bedrooms (*supporting evidence important*)
- Design eg. Site layout, height, design characteristics (*supporting evidence important*)

The [Brereton Neighbourhood Plan](#)<sup>38</sup> is an example of a Neighbourhood Plan with a criteria-based policy (HOU04 Self-Build Schemes) for custom and self-build housing. The [Napton-on-the-Hill Neighbourhood Plan](#)<sup>39</sup> (Stratford on Avon district) is an example of a Neighbourhood

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-development-plans/petersfield-neighbourhood-plan/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-plans-in-the-area/bungay-neighbourhood-area/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-plans/neighbourhood-plans-a-f/brereton-neighbourhood-plan.aspx>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.stratford.gov.uk/planning-building/napton-on-the-hill-neighbourhood-plan.cfm>

Plan which allows small scale custom or self-build homes adjacent to defined built-up areas (Policy 3 – Self-Build Homes and Custom Housebuilding).

## Enabling Custom and Self-Build Homes as Affordable Housing and/or Community-Led Housing

Neighbourhood Plans can play a key role in enabling the delivery of Custom and Self-Build Homes as Affordable Housing and/or Community-Led Housing.

Custom and self-build homes which also meet the definition of ‘Affordable Housing’ could be built on ‘rural exception sites’ (see chapter 2 ‘Affordable Housing’ for more information on Affordable Housing and rural exception sites). If local plan policies do not allow rural exception sites in your neighbourhood area, then consideration could be given to including a policy which allows custom and self-build development on rural exception sites. Rural exception sites must meet an identified local need for affordable homes and this identified need should reflect a need/demand for custom or self-build homes. Alternatively, a Neighbourhood Plan could allocate a site specifically for Affordable Housing including custom and self-build.

Custom and self-build housing can be a great way of delivering community-led housing projects, allowing the community to get directly involved and work together in designing and delivering the homes. See chapter 3 for more information on community-led housing. Rural exception sites could provide land for community-led housing projects. Alternatively, a Neighbourhood Plan could allocate land specifically for a community-led housing project to be built on. See chapter 6 [‘Technical Guidance’](#) for more information on allocating land for housing.





*Self-build dwellings at Graven Hill, Oxfordshire*

## General Support

A Neighbourhood Plan could include a policy which states that custom and self-build homes will be supported or given positive weight in decision-making. This will provide a general level of support for these types of homes, but on its own this lacks the precision and weight of a criteria-based policy or a site allocation policy, as described above. A general support policy will be much less effective in delivering planning permissions for custom or self-build homes. Policies which set out where and when a development will be permitted are much more effective and provide far more certainty and clarity for everyone involved.

Examples of Neighbourhood Plans which include policies of general support for custom and self-build homes include:

- [Cholsey Neighbourhood Plan \(South Oxfordshire District\)](#)<sup>40</sup>
- [Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan \(South Oxfordshire District\)](#)<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/neighbourhood-plans/emerging-neighbourhood-plans/cholsey-neighbourhood-plan/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/neighbourhood-plans/emerging-neighbourhood-plans/henley-and-harpsden-joint-neighbourhood-plan/>

## Other Custom and Self-Build Planning Matters

Policies in Neighbourhood Plans could address the following detailed matters which are relevant to delivering custom or self-build development.

### *Design*

The initial occupier of a custom or self-build home should have freedom to design their home to meet their needs and wishes. However, this freedom does not need to be without limits. It is common for custom and self-build homes to be built to a design code which will set out certain design parameters which must be adhered to. These might apply to height; size; position on plot; materials; landscaping; and car parking, amongst other considerations. These design parameters should guide the new homes to reflect or complement the locality whilst not being overly prescriptive and still allowing scope for individual design. A Neighbourhood Plan could set out design requirements for custom or self-build home developments.

Further information on design-codes for custom and self-build homes can be found in the Council's Custom and Self-Build Supplementary Planning Document.



*Custom/self-build homes under construction in South Gloucestershire*

*Restriction to custom or self-build homes*

In some cases, it may be necessary to restrict a home to a custom or self-build development only. This could be required where a Neighbourhood Plan policy specifically requires it. Or it may be required where homes are approved due to being custom or self-build development rather than standard forms of housing. For example, if a Neighbourhood Plan contains a criteria-based planning policy which gives support specifically to custom or self-build homes then it may be necessary to restrict homes which rely on this policy for planning permission to custom or self-build *only*. This restriction could be secured through a planning condition or a Section 106 legal agreement.

The Councils Custom and Self-Build Supplementary Planning Document contains the following model condition:

*The dwellings hereby permitted shall be delivered as custom and self-build homes in accordance with section 1 of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended).*

*Reason: To secure the use of the land for custom and self-build housing only.*

It should be noted that there may be some scenarios where this restriction is not justified. For example, where homes would also be permitted as standard forms of housing. In this case it may not be justifiable to restrict them to *only* custom or self-build.

## Neighbourhood Plan Policy Examples

Examples of Neighbourhood Plans which include policies supporting custom and self-build homes include:

- [Brereton Neighbourhood Plan \(Cheshire district\)](#)<sup>42</sup>
- [Bungay Neighbourhood Plan](#)<sup>43</sup>
- [Napton-on-the-Hill Neighbourhood Plan \(Stratford on Avon district\)](#)<sup>44</sup>
- [Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan \(South Downs National Park\)](#)<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-plans/neighbourhood-plans-a-f/brereton-neighbourhood-plan.aspx>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-plans-in-the-area/bungay-neighbourhood-area/>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.stratford.gov.uk/planning-building/napton-on-the-hill-neighbourhood-plan.cfm>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-development-plans/petersfield-neighbourhood-plan/>



- [Lawrence Weston Neighbourhood Plan \(Bristol City\)](#)<sup>46</sup>

## The Community Infrastructure Levy and Custom and Self-Build Homes

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge levied on new homes and some other types of new development in East Suffolk that helps fund infrastructure to support growth (see Technical Guidance chapter for more information). A proportion of the funds collected is passed on to Parish/Town Councils.

Custom and self-build homes are eligible to apply for an exemption from the Community Infrastructure Levy. Neighbourhood Planners may understandably see this as a downside to including custom or self-build homes in their plans, but the significant upsides that these types of homes offer to the community (as described earlier in this chapter) means they should not be overlooked as a very beneficial housing option. Furthermore, where communities are delivering or facilitating new housing then this can weigh favourably when decisions are being made around the use of CIL funds at the district level.



*Custom/self-build homes at Graven Hill, Oxfordshire*

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<sup>46</sup> <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/planning-and-building-regulations/planning-policy-and-guidance/neighbourhood-planning/lawrence-weston>



## 6. Technical guidance

This chapter provides information and explanation around some of the more detailed or technical matters referred to in the other chapters in this guidance document.

### Community infrastructure Levy (CIL)

CIL is a financial levy on housing and some other forms of development for the purpose of mitigating impacts of growth and supporting the development of the area.

A proportion of the CIL money collected is passed to the Parish or Town Council where the development is taking place. With a Neighbourhood Plan in place Parish and Town Councils will receive 25% of the CIL money collected, whereas without a Neighbourhood Plan this will be 15% of the CIL money. The increased CIL share will apply to planning permissions which were granted after the Neighbourhood Plan was made. The amount of CIL money received by a Town or Parish is capped at £100 per dwelling in the parish. This cap is removed where a Town or Parish has a Neighbourhood Plan in place. The use of neighbourhood funds should match priorities expressed by local communities, including priorities set out formally in Neighbourhood Plans.

The CIL rates relevant to open market housing, as well as other uses, are set out in the Council's [CIL Charging Schedule](#)<sup>47</sup>. The CIL rates for residential development (use classes C3 and C4) range from £0 per sqm in Zone 5 'Lower Zone' to £300 per sqm in Zone 1 'Higher Value Zone'.

More information about CIL can be found on the Council's [CIL webpages](#)<sup>48</sup>, and of particular relevance will be the Council's [CIL Guidance](#)<sup>49</sup> for Town and Parish Councils.

### Neighbourhood Development Order

Neighbourhood development orders (NDO) grant planning permission for specific types of development in a particular area. For example, if a proposed Neighbourhood Plan contains an allocation for housing or an employment site, a Neighbourhood Development Order could grant permission for that proposed use. This would in turn provide a greater level of certainty around the proposed development coming forward.

A Neighbourhood Development Order may be prepared by a qualifying body, which means town or parish councils, and neighbourhood forums. In addition, they require the support of the local community via a **referendum**, in a similar fashion to a Neighbourhood Plan itself. It is

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/developer-contributions/community-infrastructure-levy/cil-rates/approved-cil-rates-for-the-east-suffolk-area/>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/developer-contributions/community-infrastructure-levy/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Community-Infrastructure-Levy/Parish-Support/CIL-Parish-Guidance.pdf>

essential that early engagement with the community is undertaken to determine the need and type of development that a Neighbourhood Development Order should permit.

More information on Neighbourhood development orders can be found in the [Planning Practice Guidance \(NPPG\)](#)<sup>50</sup>

## Community Right to Build Order

A Community Right to Build Order (CRtBO) is a type of Neighbourhood development order which can be used to grant outline or full planning permission for specific development which complies with the order. This allows people to propose a development in their local area without having to go through the planning application process. It differs slightly from a Neighbourhood Development Order in that any proceeds from the development are used for community benefit. Affordable Homes developed using a CRtBO can be retained as housing that is affordable in perpetuity.

Further guidance on Neighbourhood development orders and Community Right to Build orders can be found in [Planning Policy Guidance \(NPPG\)](#)<sup>51</sup>

Further information on Neighbourhood development orders and Community Right to Build orders can be found on the [Locality website](#)<sup>52</sup>

## Neighbourhood Plan Indicative Housing Figure – East Suffolk Council process

Neighbourhood Plan Groups are not required to plan for new housing in their Neighbourhood Plans, however, should the Neighbourhood Plan Group identify a need or desire to do so, they can ask the Council for an indicative housing requirement. This is a minimum figure for housing delivery within their neighbourhood area. The Suffolk Coastal Local Plans contains policy SCLP12.1 – Neighbourhood Plans which details the minimum housing delivery target for neighbourhood areas in the former Suffolk Coastal part of the district for their respective plan periods.

The Waveney Local Plan sets out the strategy, supported by policies, for housing delivery across each of the towns, the Larger Villages and Smaller Villages within the plan area, but does not provide housing numbers for neighbourhood areas.

Both Local Plans can be viewed [here](#)<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#evidence-to-support-a-neighbourhood-plan>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#What-is-Neighbourhood-Development-Order>

<sup>52</sup> <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/neighbourhood-development-orders-community-right-build-orders/>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy-and-local-plans/local-plans/>

The council has also produced additional guidance on indicative housing requirements, which can be found [here](#)<sup>54</sup>.

## Housing Needs Assessment

A Housing Needs Assessment assesses the type of housing needed for an area, in terms of tenure, type, size and the need for specialist accommodation for specific groups. These are important to support Neighbourhood Plan policies which seek to deal with the size of new homes or tenure of Affordable Housing required, for example. Further information is available from Locality [here](#)<sup>55</sup>.

If a Neighbourhood Plan is seeking to address the need for housing, the **Local Planning Authority** may be able to provide some information on the types and sizes of housing there is demand for in your area. This could include open market housing, affordable housing, custom and self-build housing or community-led housing. The **Local Planning Authority** can provide some evidence of need from existing sources such as the **Strategic Housing Market Assessment** (SHMA), or through information provided by the housing needs team. It may be that additional evidence on quantity and type will be required to support the Neighbourhood Plan; additional guidance on collecting such evidence can be found on the Locality website [here](#)<sup>56</sup>.

Among other requirements, the Neighbourhood Plan must be in ‘general conformity with the strategic policies’ of the Local Plan; basically, the Neighbourhood Plan can propose more housing than the Local Plan, where the need can be demonstrated, but it cannot propose less.

## Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

All Neighbourhood Plans will need to meet the statutory ‘basic conditions’, which is tested through an independent examination. To meet the basic conditions, it is essential that a Neighbourhood Plan is ‘screened’ for the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment. A full assessment must be carried out where the screening process identifies a need for this.

A strategic environmental assessment is a process for identifying, reporting and proposing mitigation measures that will be included in a plan and its policies. This is carried through all stages of the process from the preparation of the plan to its implementation, and the monitoring and review of the plan once it is made.

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<sup>54</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Neighbourhood-Planning/Preparing-a-Neighbourhood-Plan/Neighbourhood-Plans-Indicative-Housing-Requirements-methodology.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/undertake-housing-needs-assessment-hna/>

<sup>56</sup> <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/How-to-undertake-a-Housing-Needs-Assessment-HNA-2021.03.15.pdf>

The initial step is what is referred to as ‘screening’ - this is a process which determines whether or not a full SEA is required. If the Neighbourhood Plan is not allocating any land for residential or employment development, then it is normally unlikely that an SEA would be required. If the plan does contain such allocations or if the neighbourhood area contains sensitive environmental assets such as National Landscapes (formerly known as the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)) or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which may be affected by the policies and proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan, it is more likely to require an SEA.

The sooner a Neighbourhood Plan is screened the better. East Suffolk Council will carry out the screening. It is not necessary for the Neighbourhood Plan to be fully drafted in order to screen it, a good indication of the policy aims and objectives and clarity over whether sites will be allocated or not is normally sufficient. You will need to provide East Suffolk Council with a written request to carry out the screening. Further guidance on screening and the Strategic Environmental Assessment is available on the Locality website [here](#)<sup>57</sup>.

## Habitats Regulations Assessment

To comply with the Basic Conditions, Neighbourhood Plans must be screened to determine whether there will be any likely significant effects on European protected wildlife sites (as specified by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended). These are: Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites. East Suffolk Council will provide a screening opinion of whether a **Habitat Regulations Assessment**, known as an ‘**Appropriate Assessment**’, is required with the proposed plan. It is not necessary for the Neighbourhood Plan to be fully drafted in order to screen it, a good indication of the policy aims and objectives and clarity over whether sites will be allocated or not is normally sufficient. You will need to provide East Suffolk Council with a written request to carry out the screening. If likely significant effects are identified via the screening process, an **Appropriate Assessment** will be required. If an **Appropriate Assessment** is required, this will also trigger the need for a full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

## Primary Residence Policies

Where very high numbers of homes are in use as second homes or holiday lets and have generated adverse impacts on the area, some Neighbourhood Plans have introduced a ‘principal residence’ policy. This has the effect of restricting new homes in the neighbourhood area to being used as the occupant’s principal or primary residence only. These types of policies require specific justification and should only be considered where the numbers of second homes or holiday lets are causing significant problems. Reydon Neighbourhood Plan and

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<sup>57</sup> <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/understand-plan-requires-strategic-environmental-assessment-sea/>



Southwold Neighbourhood Plan are examples of plans containing this type of policy (available [here](#)<sup>58</sup>).

## Allocating Sites for Development

A valuable tool in Neighbourhood Planning is allocating sites for new development. This section will explain the basic steps involved. The process can be complex in places, but East Suffolk Council are available to offer advice and support.

Consideration should initially be given to the role of the settlement in the Settlement Hierarchy contained in the **Local Plan**. Within the Countryside some small-scale development may be appropriate, however larger allocations are likely to be more appropriate when associated with defined villages or towns. Consideration should also be given to whether there is an existing allocation(s) or permission(s) that may meet the needs that have been identified.

Early consultation should be used to gather information about housing needs and demands in the community. The analysis of surveys and /or questionnaires may show that there is an aspiration or desire to deliver more housing within the Neighbourhood Plan area. It is especially important during these initial stages that the Neighbourhood Plan Group keeps an open mind and allows the evidence that has been gathered to be a guide as to what is the right approach for the community.

If, because of the initial evidence, the Neighbourhood Plan Group decide they would like to include the allocation of sites for housing within their Neighbourhood Plan, there could be a need to develop a more detailed understanding of what is required. This can indicate whether there is a need for certain types of housing including affordable housing. Community-led developments may be well suited to smaller sites, whereas open market developments often take place on larger sites.

### *Identifying Potential Sites*

This is an important early step in the process. It is essential to have a clear idea as to what and how much land may be available for development, how many sites are available and/or the sizes of the sites. This would enable Neighbourhood Plan Groups to have as much choice as possible when seeking to allocate sites in their Neighbourhood Plan, and to ensure that they provide the greatest opportunity to support the vision and objectives of the community and can best meet the identified housing needs.

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<sup>58</sup> <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-plans-in-the-area/>

It is possible to find out who owns a piece of land which may be suitable for development (if it hasn't been submitted as part of the call for sites exercise) and this can be obtained via the land registry.

It is recommended that you contact the East Suffolk Council Planning team as they may already have identified potential sites in your area via means such as through a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA), or live planning applications.

However, the age of the SHELAA's must be borne in mind, as new opportunities may arise, and land previously identified may no longer be available. Smaller sites, in more rural areas, may not have been put forward by landowners or a developer as part of the **Local Plan** process, but these small sites may prove valuable in the growth of the parish.

### *Call for sites*

In addition to considering sites identified by the **Local Planning Authority**, you should also do a Neighbourhood Plan 'Call for Sites'. This invites stakeholders such as local landowners, residents and businesses to submit sites for consideration. This provides all landowners with a fair chance of their land being considered and avoids potential challenges later in the process.

A standardised pro forma should be available for individuals to complete and would provide the opportunity to gather information about several aspects of the development that the Neighbourhood Plan Group may wish to know about and will keep responses consistent and easier to assess.

You might include some broad criteria for the type of sites you are seeking which may include things like: size; access to services and facilities; the suitability for a type of development to take place on the site (eg. housing, mixed use); and timeframe for availability.

The call for sites should be well publicised and take steps to bring it to the attention of local residents; landowners; businesses; estate agents etc. A range of publicity methods should be used such as Parish magazines; flyers; local newspaper adverts; social media; information hosted on the Parish or Town Council website; targeted notifications to estate agents, land agents or planning agents; posters on local notice boards or at venues such as pubs, GP surgeries, shops etc. There should also be a clear period of time within which sites can be submitted (i.e. set a deadline).

When a Neighbourhood Plan Group initiates a call for sites, they should advise that although these sites have been identified it does not automatically guarantee the site will be allocated for a development, and all sites will be robustly and fairly assessed.

A list of site assessment criteria should be drawn up and ideally checked with the **Local Planning Authority**. The criteria should take into account constraints which may include things

such as flood risk; heritage assets such as Listed Buildings; sensitive habitats; highway access; and landscape sensitivity, amongst others.

The submitted sites should be assessed using the site assessment criteria. It is important to assess all sites in a fair and consistent manner. It is recommended that a draft of the site assessments is shared with East Suffolk Council for comment.

### *Understanding the site:*

Ideally the landowner/promoter should play a part in shaping your policy. They may be able to provide insights on surveys and assessments they have produced, and they may have their own vision for the site and designs to accompany that. This provides a good starting point for consideration.

Attempting to bring a site forward as a blank canvas does offer a lot of freedom and opportunity to a community, but care needs to be taken in ensuring that Neighbourhood Plan expectations for the site are deliverable and viable whilst also being compatible with other **Local Plan** and national policy. In rural locations, Neighbourhood Plan Groups should have regard to the NPPF's objectives to avoid isolated homes in the countryside and aim to locate new sites for housing adjacent to existing settlements.

Neighbourhood Plan Groups are strongly encouraged to instruct suitable consultants to help with appraisal and design considerations of allocations. Such consultants should always engage closely with the **Local Planning Authority** and key consultees such as Highways, the Lead Local Flood Authority and the council's ecologist, landscape officer and environmental protection team, amongst others. This will aid in the likelihood of the proposal resulting in an allocation which has the best chance of following through as a well-considered, well-designed, and policy compliant planning application in the future.

### *Writing the Policy*

Once a suitable site or sites have been identified, their allocation into the plan will require the drafting of a policy. The policy may address amongst other things.

- the area covered by the allocation;
- the number of dwellings proposed (for housing sites) or;
- types of housing proposed eg. open market/affordable housing/custom and self-build;
- Any other uses to be delivered as part of the development eg. Employment land; open space etc.
- Design parameters. These can take into account important local characteristics;
- landscaping requirements;

- highway access;
- Biodiversity Net Gain considerations;
- Public Rights of Way considerations

### *Community Engagement*

Ongoing engagement with the community is strongly recommended, so giving the community good opportunities to comment on the proposed sites along the way is essential. Preferred sites should be consulted on, along with all the other sites identified as part of the site identification process. The community should be given good opportunity to comment on the selected sites and the accompanying policy once written.

Further guidance on finding, assessing and allocating sites can be found at the following websites:

<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/assess-allocate-sites-development/>

## Appendix 1: Glossary

### *Appropriate Assessment*

Evaluates the significance of the impacts of a proposed plan or project (either individually or in combination with other proposals) on sites of EU importance (Natura 2000 sites), in order to inform the decision-making process.

### *Community Engagement*

The process of working collaboratively with and through groups of local people to establish what the community needs or wants to achieve. This is a vital part of the neighbourhood planning process.

### *Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)*

An assessment under the Habitats Regulations, to test if a plan or proposal could significantly harm the designated features of a European site.

### *Local Plan*

The planning document(s) written by the Local Planning Authority which contain the policies against which all planning proposals in the district must accord.

### *Local Planning Authority*

The authority responsible for matters relating to planning. In the majority of cases this will be East Suffolk Council. The Broads Authority are the Local Planning Authority for the part of East Suffolk which falls within the Broads area.



*Referendum*

A required stage, called at the end of the Neighbourhood Plan process, which gives communities the chance to have the final say on whether a neighbourhood development plan or order can come into force (is 'made').

*Registered provider*

A social landlord or housing association registered with the Regulator of Social Housing which manages the statutory register of social housing providers.

*Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)*

Evidence relating to the need for providing the right mix of housing across the whole housing market – both open market and affordable. Also provides evidence as to the level of affordable housing required.

## Useful Links

The Locality website, which provides guidance and support on developing a Neighbourhood Plan:

<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>

Eastern Community Homes:

<https://easterncommunityhomes.com/>

Technical support from Locality:

<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/about/technical-support/>

Design Guidance for Neighbourhood Plans from Locality:

<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/good-design-neighbourhood-planning/>

<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/neighbourhood-planning-design-coding-guidance/>

Guidance for **Community Engagement** from Locality:

<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/engaging-with-your-community-in-a-meaningful-way/>

## Write to us

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

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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.