



**East Suffolk Council
Town & Parish Planning Forum
February 2026**



Town & Parish Planning Forum

Agenda – Feb 2026

9:30 - 9:50

Open with Councillor Mark Packard

Cabinet Member for Planning,
Coastal & Building Control.

& Ben Woolnough

Head of Planning & Building
Control.

10:30 – 10:50

Design Code Project

Chris King, Design &
Specialist Services Manager

9:50 - 10:30

Planning Policy Update

Covering The Local Plan, Call for sites, NPPF,
Neighbourhood Plans, & SCI consultations.

Andrea McMillan, Planning Policy Manager

10:50 – 11:15

Developers Charter & QPA (Quality of Place Awards)

Ruth Bishop, Senior Planner
Policy & Delivery
Chris King, Design &
Specialist Services Manager

11:15 - 12:15

Q&A followed by Coffee & Networking with our Planners

An opportunity to ask questions,
meet & greet our Planners.



Planning Policy update

Town and Parish Council Forum
2nd and 9th February 2026

National Planning Policy Framework

- Consultation on new National Planning Policy Framework 16th December 2025 – 10th March 2026
- Ministerial Statement 16th December 2025 from Matthew Pennycook, Minister of State for Housing and Planning - sets the context for the proposals as being the housing crisis and target for 1.5 million new homes, essential infrastructure and unlocking sustained economic growth.
- Followed announcements in late November and earlier changes put in place by the Government
- Described as the most significant re-write of the NPPF since it was introduced in 2012
- Objectives:
 - Ensure national planning policy is accessible and understandable
 - Establish a comprehensive suite of national policies on general planning matters which will apply across the country
 - Make the policy which it contains more ‘rules-based’ and certain

National Planning Policy Framework

National Decision-Making Policies

- Levelling Up and Regeneration Act contains provisions for National Development Management Policies, however the Government has decided not to proceed with these at this stage.
- Instead, the NPPF contains ‘national decision-making policies’ – to be applied as a material consideration.
- National decision-making policies should not be duplicated, substantively restated or modified in plans (including Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans).
- These will have immediate effect when the final NPPF is published and inconsistent local policies are to be given very limited weight.

National Planning Policy Framework

Plan-making policies

- Policies set out in relation to the role of:
 - Spatial Development Strategies
 - Local Plans
 - Minerals and Waste Plans
 - Supplementary Plans
 - Neighbourhood Plans

PM5: Neighbourhood plans

1. Neighbourhood plans allow local communities to plan positively for their areas by identifying and addressing community priorities that can be met or supported through the planning system. They should do this by:
 - a. Allocating land to meet the development needs of their designated area, where it is appropriate to do so; and
 - b. Setting out policies which address particular local issues, these should relate to site-specific matters or, where appropriate, may cover wider issues such as the provision of infrastructure and community facilities, regeneration opportunities, design requirements (including design codes), local environmental improvements and the conservation of local heritage assets.
2. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than provided for in other parts of the development plan for the area.

National Planning Policy Framework

Plan-making policies

General principles for plan-making

All plan-makers should:

- Only address matters necessary and relevant to the plan being prepared.
- Only include policies beyond site / location specific policies where necessary and justified.
- Not duplicate, substantively restate or modify the content of national decision-making policies.
- Engage positively with communities and other key stakeholders – relevant issues to be identified and addressed as early as possible
- Use environmental assessment to inform plans where required.
- Publish plans in a searchable digital format.

Quantitative standards should be limited to infrastructure provision, affordable housing, parking and design and place-making.

National Planning Policy Framework

MHCLG have summarised the 12 ‘most significant’ changes as:

1. A permanent presumption in favour of sustainable development – development of suitable land in urban areas will be acceptable by default and there will be a presumption in favour of suitably located development.
2. Building homes around stations – Described as a ‘default yes’ for proposals that develop land around rail stations in existing settlements or well-connected rail stations elsewhere. Minimum densities are proposed around rail stations.
3. Driving urban and suburban densification - Supporting higher density development in sustainable locations, for example redevelopment of low density plots, upwards extensions and infill. Minimum densities should be set in well-connected locations.

National Planning Policy Framework

4. Securing a diverse mix of homes – Including stronger support for rural social and affordable housing and expectations for accessible housing.
5. Supporting small and medium sites – Policies to make it easier to bring forward small sites and the introduction of a category of ‘medium’ development to provide a more proportionate approach.
6. Streamlining local standards – Limiting quantitative standards in development plans to only specified issues and limiting duplication of matters covered by Building Regulations other than where there are ‘optional technical standards’ (water efficiency and accessible dwellings).

National Planning Policy Framework

7. Boosting local and regional economies – Substantial weight to be given to the benefits of supporting business growth and to particular sectors such as those included in the Industrial Strategy, AI growth zones, logistics, town centres and agricultural and rural development. Also considering the removal of the town centre sequential test, which currently directs town centre uses to town centres first.
8. Supporting critical and growth minerals – Ensuring adequate provision for their extraction.
9. Embedding a vision led approach to transport – Moving away from a ‘predict and provide’ approach.

National Planning Policy Framework

10. Better addressing climate change – Aims to set out how decisions can take a proactive approach to mitigation and adaptation. Can assess baseline carbon emissions and the potential effect of development options and their mitigation.
11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment – Proposals include reflecting Local Nature Recovery Strategies, incorporation of swift bricks and providing guidance on sites of importance for nature.
12. Taking a more positive approach to the use of heritage assets – Aims for a clearer and more positive approach to better support heritage-related development.

Local Plan

Interim timetable for preparation of East Suffolk Local Plan set out in the March 2025 [Local Development Scheme](#)

Local Plan will be prepared under the new plan-making system

Legislation for the new plan-making system expected very soon

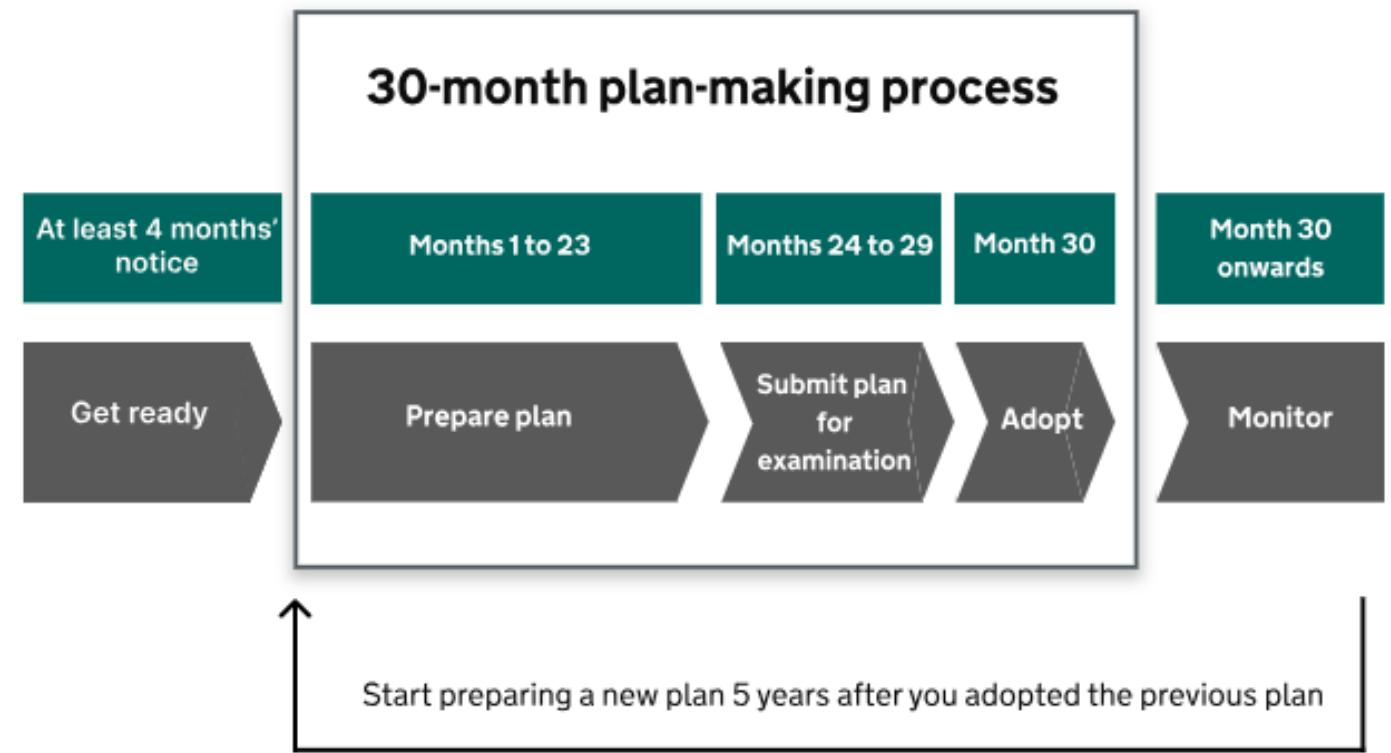
Some [guidance](#) was published at the end of November, and authorities preparing plans under the new system are asked to have regard to the consultation NPPF prior to the final NPPF being published

In addition to new system, challenges include significant increase in housing number (increase around 80% to 1,667 dwellings per year)

Local Plan

New plan-making system

Process overview



Source [30-month local plan process: an overview - GOV.UK](#)

New plan-making system

Local Plan

Publish Local Plan timetable	The timetable must be kept up-to-date and set out the anticipated and actual dates for key plan-making stages
Publish notice of intention to commence local plan preparation	Publication of notice which commences a minimum 4-month notice period so that stakeholders are aware plan-making is beginning
Scoping consultation	Inviting feedback from stakeholders on how to engage with them and what the plan should contain
Gateway 1: self-assessment of readiness	Publication of a document setting out details of how you have got ready for plan-making, marking formal commencement of the 30-month timetable
Consultation: proposed local plan content and evidence	Minimum 6-week consultation on the proposed local plan content and evidence, including a draft vision
Gateway 2	Seeking observations and advice from PINS to support the early resolution of potential soundness issues and progress towards the 'prescribed requirements'
Consultation: proposed local plan	Minimum 8-week consultation on the proposed local plan and its supporting documents
Gateway 3	Testing if the proposed local plan has met the 'prescribed requirements' and can proceed to examination
Examination	Examination of the local plan against the tests of soundness
Adoption	Publication of the local plan and adoption statement

Local Plan

New plan-making system

Before the 30-month process starts



Source [30-month local plan process: an overview - GOV.UK](#)

Local Plan

Current activity

- Call for Sites – 20 October 2025 – 9 January 2026
- Aligned working with other Suffolk Councils
- Preparing evidence base, such as housing types, employment needs and water supply
- Preparing Strategic Environmental Assessment scoping report

Activities over the next few months

- Legislation / guidance to be introduced (anticipated very soon)
- Local Plan Timetable and notice of commencement to be approved and published
- Scoping consultation (anticipated summer – will include engagement with Town and Parish Councils). This will invite feedback on matters including how to engage on the Local Plan and what the plan should contain.
- Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report
- Evidence gathering

About the call for sites

Monday 20 October to Friday 9 January

- The Call for Sites is an exercise the Council performs where any person or group can submit land to be considered for development in the next Local Plan. These might be for housing, employment, community, or a mix of uses.
- The consultation was promoted through direct contact with organisations such as Town and Parish Councils and Statutory Consultees. Material was published on the Council website, through a press release, social media posts, posters, mailouts and through the Residents Magazine.
- The Call for Sites form includes a range of questions to develop an understanding about the sites the constraints.
- The sites are assessed and are then used to inform the spatial development strategy in the new local plan.
- Alongside this ‘traditional’ Call for Sites process, the new Local Plan making system requires authorities to undertake a proactive Call for Sites. This involves the Council proactively searching for sites, which then also pass through the same assessment stages.

What happens next?

- Over 500 sites have come forward from across the East Suffolk area, and these will be made public at a later date.
- The sites will be published in due course, and Town and Parish Councils will be made aware when this is available.
- After the final assessment stage the sites will be considered for inclusion in the Local Plan. This process also considers the emerging Local Plan Vision, consultation responses, evidence and stakeholder engagement (including own internal teams)

Statement of Community Involvement

- Current Statement of Community Involvement adopted in April 2021
- Requirement under current legislation to prepare an SCI and update it every five years
- Survey undertaken in Summer 2025 seeking views on how to involve people in planning policy
– [How to involve you in planning policy - results](#)
- Consultation on [draft SCI 13](#)
January – 24 February 2026
- Publicised via our mailing list, social media and press release. Posters provided to all Town and Parish Councils.



How we will involve you in planning the future of your area

We are reviewing our Statement of Community Involvement, which explains when and how people can be involved in **local planning**, including planning applications and neighbourhood plans.

It also sets out principles we will follow in engaging on a new local plan, which will set out where **homes, jobs and infrastructure** will go.

Read our draft Statement of Community Involvement and **make a comment**. Join our **mailing list** to be kept up-to-date.

Visit www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning

 Please respond by 5pm 24 February

 EASTSUFFOLK COUNCIL

Statement of Community Involvement

Content

- Planning policy –
 - Consultation principles – clear, concise and focused
 - Engagement methods
 - Guidance on making comments and how the Council will provide feedback
- Local Plan – SCIs will not form a part of the new planning system. A scoping consultation will inform the approach to consultation and engagement. SCI sets out some principles for consultation.
- Planning guidance documents, such as previous Supplementary Planning Documents
- Community Infrastructure Levy Changing Schedule
- Neighbourhood Planning – approach to East Suffolk Council's responsibilities for consultation
- Housing Land Supply
- Design Code

Statement of Community Involvement

Content

- Planning applications – expands on content of the current SCI
 - Reference to the Council's Developers Charter
 - Guidance on how to comment on planning applications
 - Explanation / diagram explaining notification to neighbouring properties
- Major development and masterplans – expanded guidance includes expectations on developers / promoters undertaking consultation with the community and reference to the Developers Charter.
- New guidance covering Conservation Area Appraisals, Article 4 Directions and Tree Preservation Orders.

Neighbourhood Plans

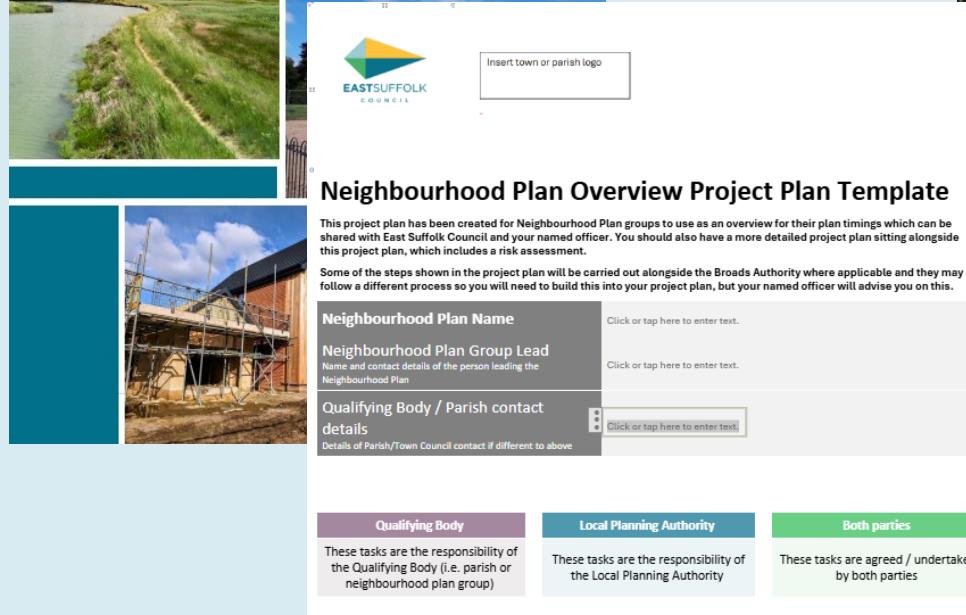


Guidance Recently published:

Neighbourhood Planning
'How to go about it': A step-by-step guide for producing a Neighbourhood Plan

For Town/Parish Councils or other groups who want to produce a Neighbourhood Plan

December 2025



Neighbourhood Plan Overview Project Plan Template

This project plan has been created for Neighbourhood Plan groups to use as an overview for their plan timings which can be shared with East Suffolk Council and your named officer. You should also have a more detailed project plan sitting alongside this project plan, which includes a risk assessment.

Some of the steps shown in the project plan will be carried out alongside the Broads Authority where applicable and they may follow a different process so you will need to build this into your project plan, but your named officer will advise you on this.

Neighbourhood Plan Name

Neighbourhood Plan Group Lead

Qualifying Body / Parish contact details

Qualifying Body

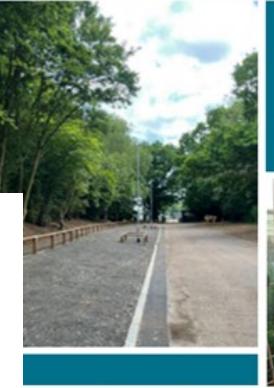
Local Planning Authority

Both parties

Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Implementation and Monitoring

What to do once your plan is made and how to put your plan into action

December 2025

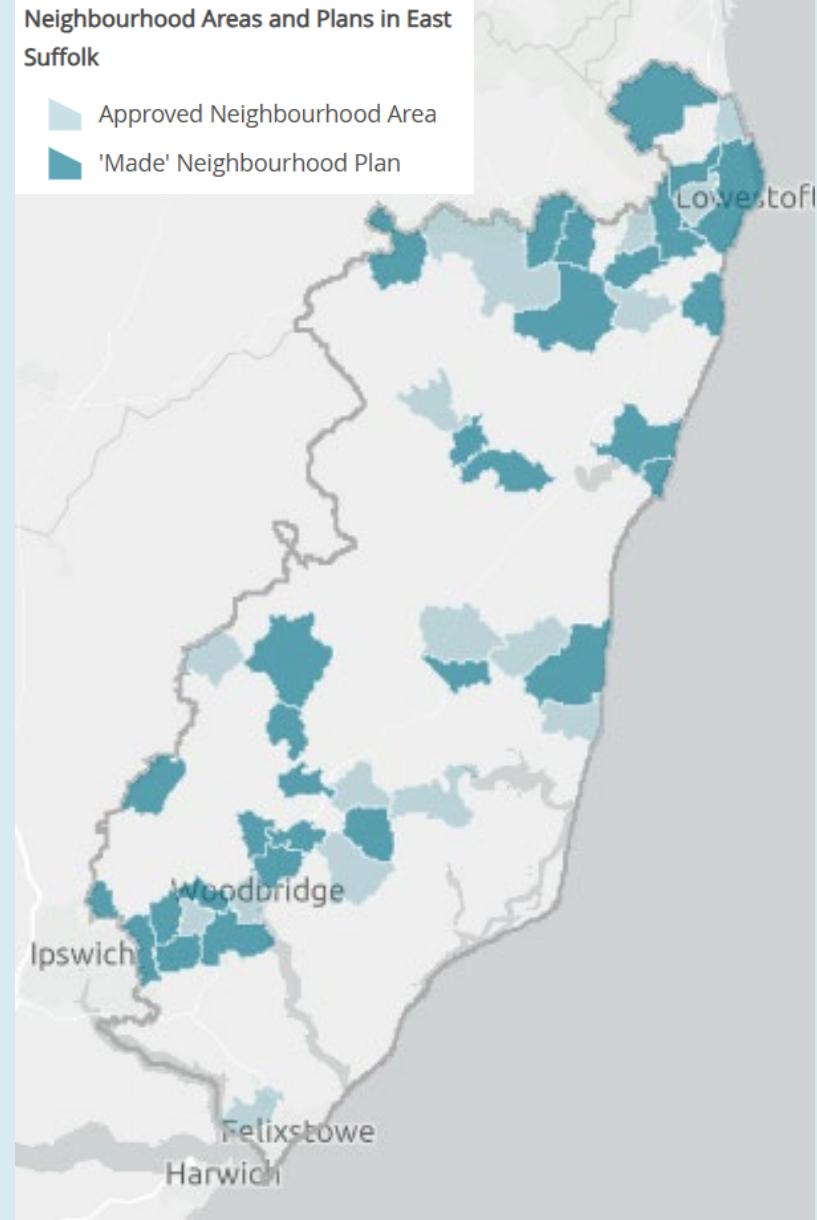


Available at [Preparing a Neighbourhood Plan | East Suffolk Council](#)

Shortly consulting on Neighbourhood Planning Guidance for Infrastructure and Community Infrastructure Levy

Neighbourhood Plans

- 30 'made' Neighbourhood Plans
- Lowestoft Neighbourhood Plan 'made' in November 2025
- Otley Neighbourhood Plan 'made' in September 2025
- Aldringham-cum-Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan – referendum taking place on 12 February 2026





Design Code Project

Chris King – Design and Specialist Services Manager





Design Code Project







“East Suffolk Council’s Quality of Place Awards recognise efforts to conserve historic buildings and enhance the built and natural environment through high-quality design.”

What does this mean for you?

- ✓ Celebrate
- ✓ Civic pride
- ✓ Champion communities

1. Design – New Build
2. Design – Extensions and Alterations
3. Building Conservation
4. Community
5. Landscape
6. Nature/Ecology

DESIGN 2023



DESIGN 2022





BUILDING CONSERVATION 2023



COMMUNITY 2023



COMMUNITY 2022



ITS FREE TO NOMINATE!!!

- Owner's permission
- Planning application not necessary
- Awards evening to celebrate



Quality of place awards nomination

Nomination details

Project details 1

Project details 2

Supporting documents

Declaration

Publicity and promotion

Required fields are marked with *

Nominator

Name *

Telephone number *

Email address *

Do you represent a company/organisation? *

Yes

No



[Quality of Place awards » East Suffolk Council](#)

qualityofplaceawards@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Town &
Parish Forum
February 2026



THE EAST SUFFOLK DEVELOPERS CHARTER:

A BEST PRACTICE GUIDE FOR DEVELOPERS OF
MAJOR RESIDENTIAL SCHEMES

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

What is the purpose of the East Suffolk Developers Charter?

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



Engagement

Presented the idea of a Charter at the Town and Parish Forum on 11th & 25th July 2024 for comment and workshop session on Community Engagement.

Consulted developers in one-to-one meeting in July/August 2024.

Presented to the Major Housebuilders Forum in October 2024.

Final document published online and presented to Town and Parish Forum in January 2025.



Status of the Charter:

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

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

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



The Developers Charter is organised around 5 themes

1. Participation & Engagement
2. Landscape & Biodiversity
3. Homes
4. Sustainable Design
5. Considerate Construction & Community Ownership



Participation & Engagement

Developers can add value by:

- Pre-app consultation with the community
- Using ESC's pre-app service.
- Asking communities about their preferred means of communication.
- Having different engagement activities.
- Researching the local area.
- Use feedback from communities to inform the design.
- Keeping communities updated on progress on design and planning applications.
- Keeping communities informed during construction and providing a community liaison contact.
- Deliver within a reasonable timeframe.
- Collaborate with other developers (if applicable).



Participation & Engagement

The role of Communities and Town and Parish Councils

- Provide important local knowledge.
- Give constructive feedback.
- Work with developers to address false information and misunderstanding.
- Acknowledge in planning consultations where feedback has been taken on board in designs.
- Keep a record of correspondence which can be passed to new developers.
- Raise awareness of proposals and engagement opportunities.
- Provide opportunities for discussion.
- Coordinate responses.



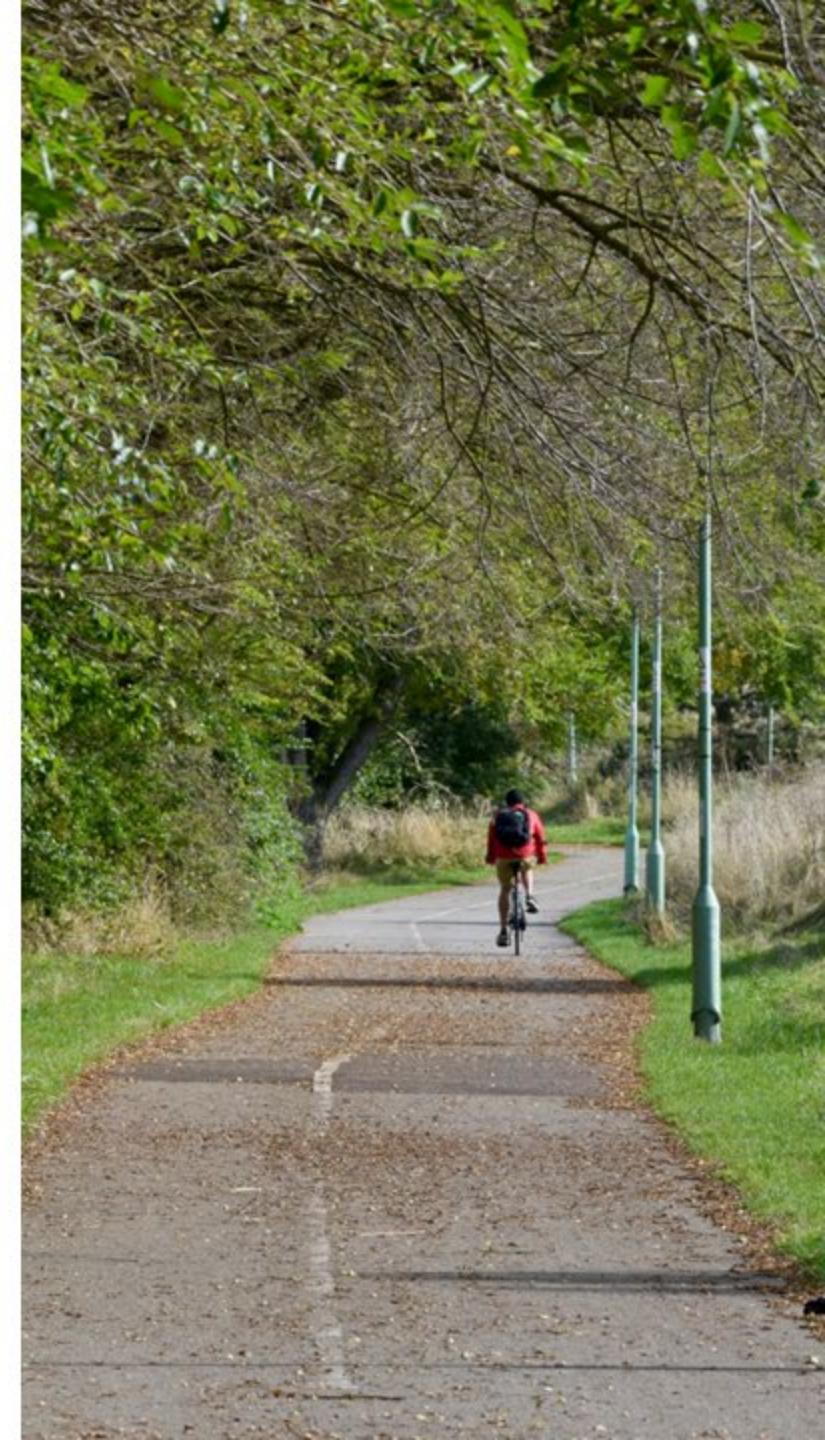
Landscape & Biodiversity

Developers can add value by:

- Using the Healthy Environments SPD.
- Using a landscape-led approach.
- Go beyond BNG minimums.
- Carry out a Health Impact Assessment.
- Provide 'welcome packs'.
- Incorporate wildlife-friendly features.
- Have robust maintenance plans.

The role of Town and Parish Councils

- Contribute information for 'welcome packs'.
- Notify developers & Council if plants and trees die so they can be replaced in accordance with planning conditions.
- Positive pre-app engagement on design.
- Support good quality landscape schemes in planning responses.



Homes

Developers can add value by:

- Appropriate housing mix.
- Engage with disability forums.
- Good quality layouts.
- Deliver accessible and adaptable homes.
- Provide visual variety.
- Exceed minimum self-build requirements.

The role of Town and Parish Councils:

- Provide local knowledge of local need.
- Raise awareness of self-build plots available.
- Positive pre-app engagement on design.
- Support good quality design in planning responses.



Sustainable Design

Developers can add value by:

- Use the Sustainable Construction SPD.
- Exceed Building Regulation requirements.
- Provide warm homes through design, location and orientation.
- Provide airtight and well-ventilated homes.
- Incorporate renewables.
- Provide technical information for new residents.
- Incorporate water efficiency.
- Have developments that aren't car-centric.

The role of Town and Parish Councils:

- Positive pre-app engagement on sustainable design.
- Support good quality design in planning responses.



Considerate Construction and Community Ownership

Developers can add value by:

- Community engagement.
- Construction management.
- Environmental quality.
- Corporate environmental and social responsibility.
- Post-planning communications with the Council.

The role of Town and Parish Councils:

- Work with a community liaison contact, if provided.
- Attend regular check-ins with developers, where available.
- Engage with developers on street naming, etc.
- Checking public information.

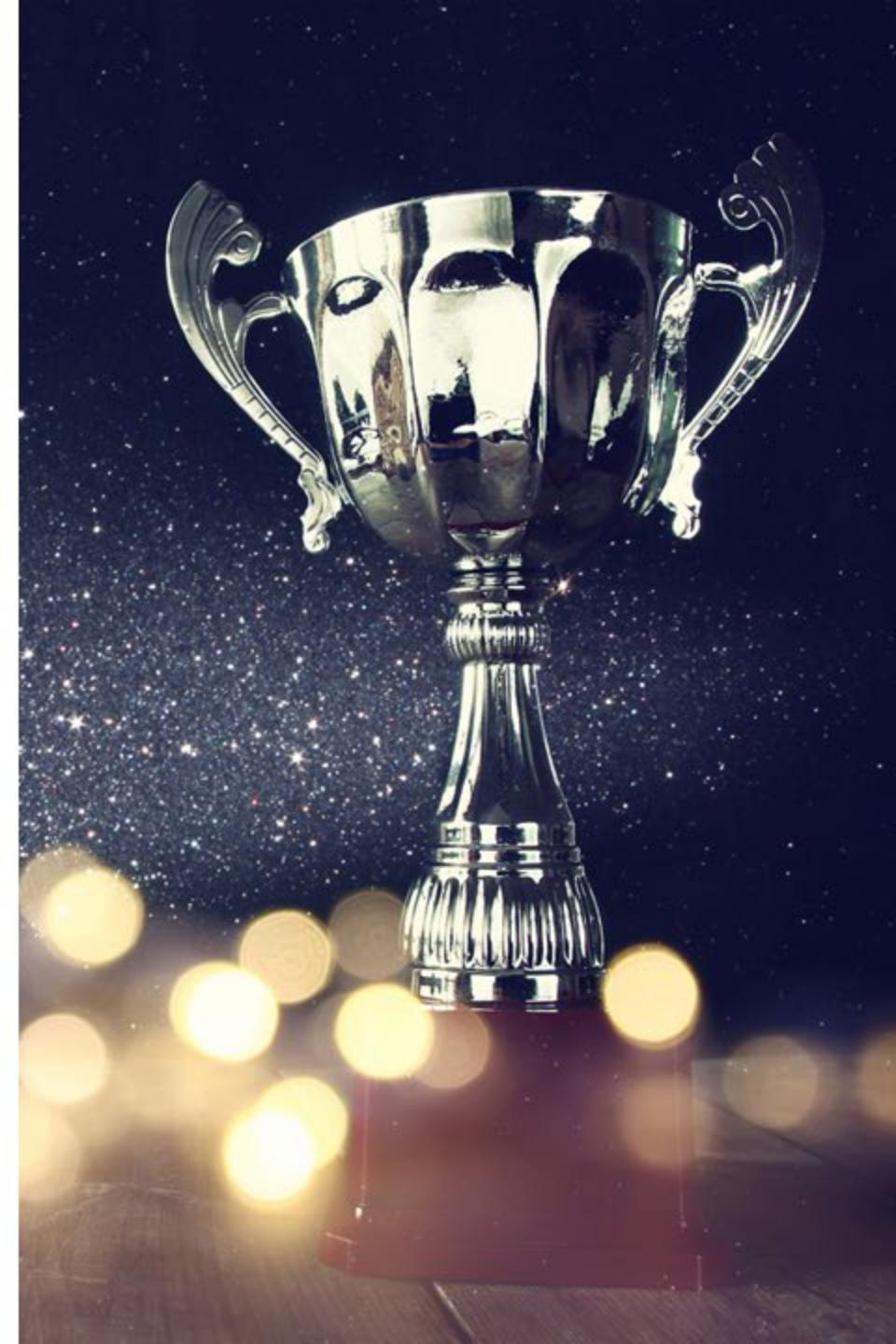


Why would developers engage with the Charter?

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

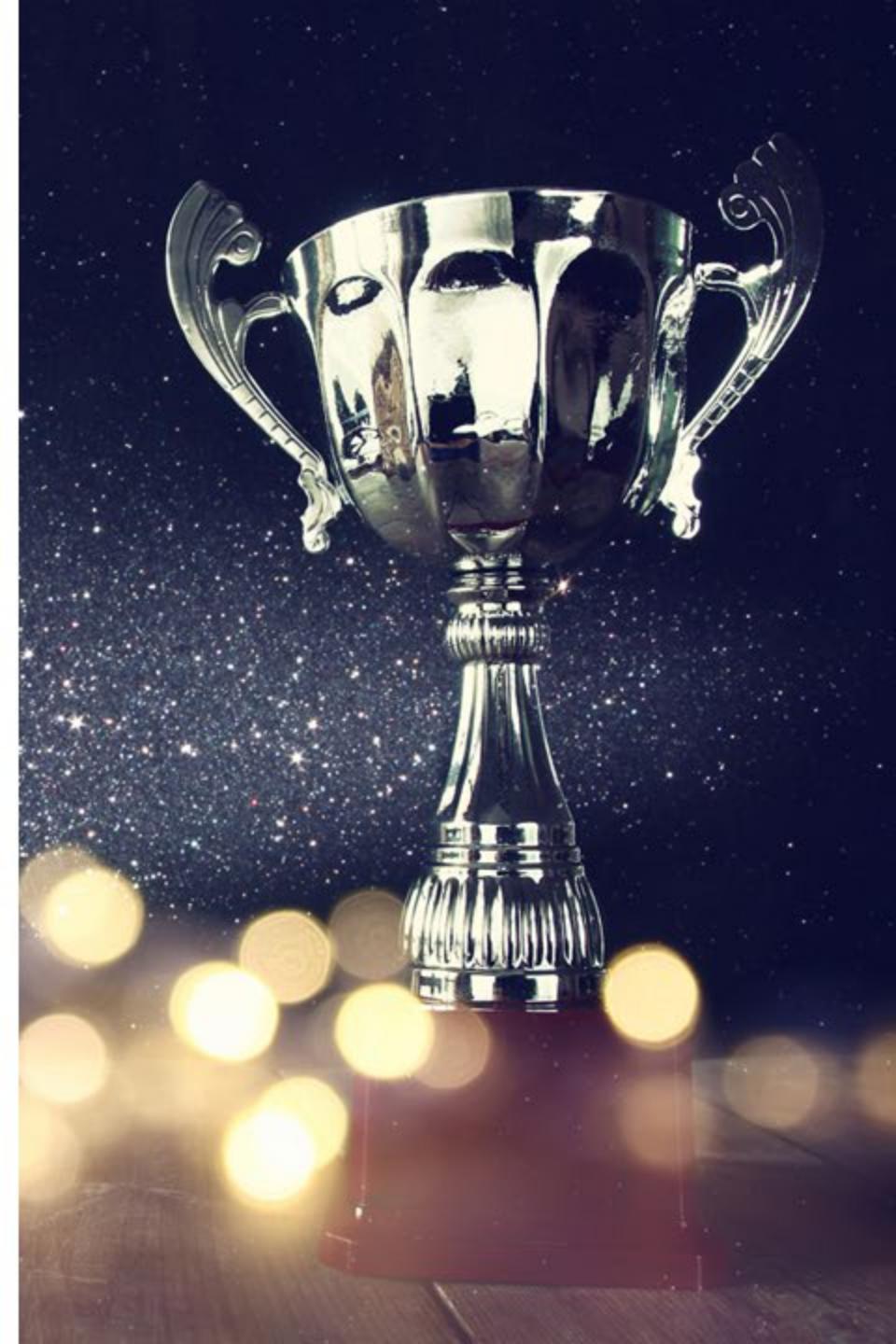
Developers can use the awards for marketing/reputational purposes; a system that's similar to the existing East Suffolk Quality of Place Awards.

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

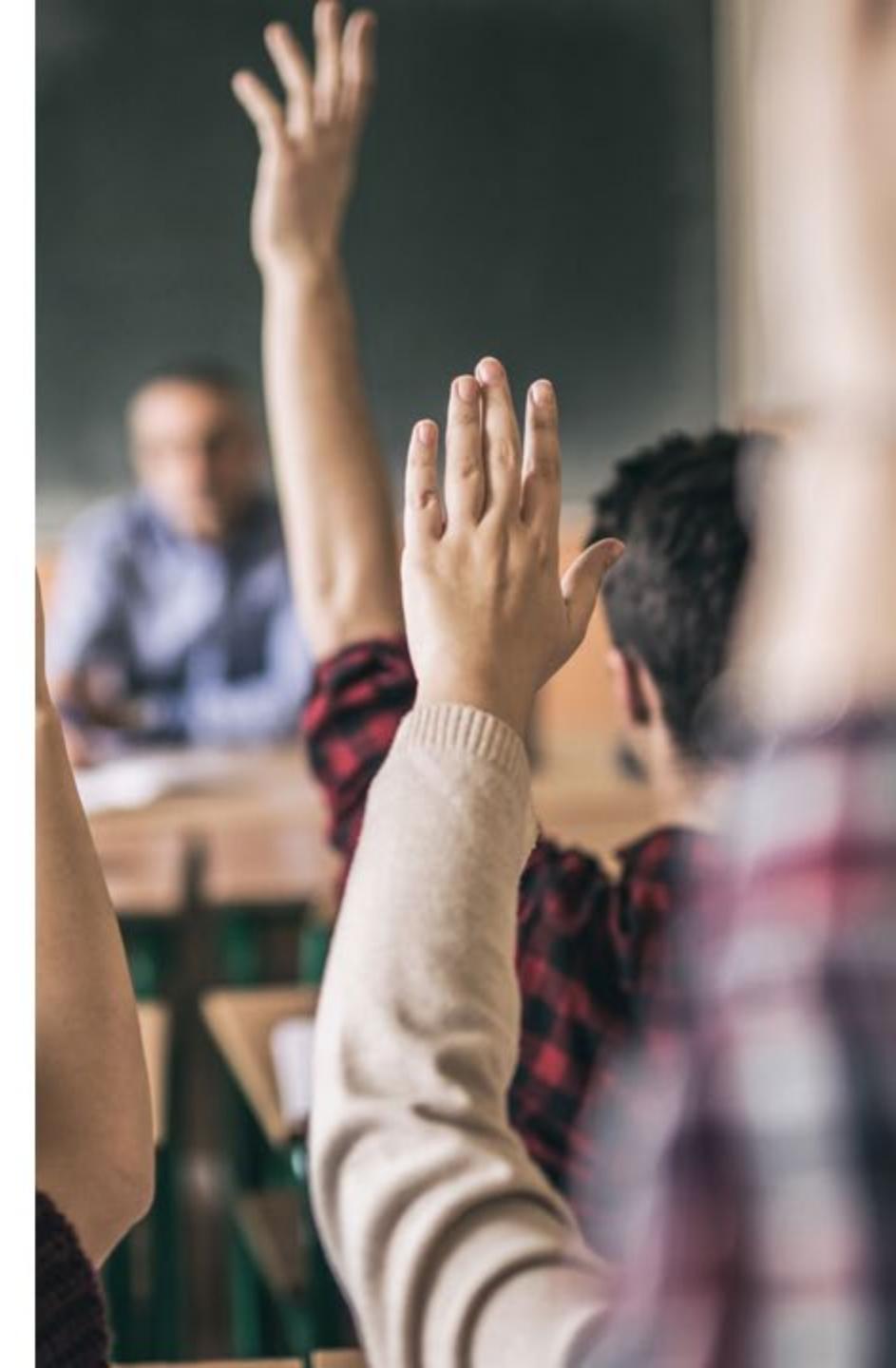


What next?

- We hope Town and Parish Councils will consider nominating any developments which did good consultation with them.
- **Nominations:** Open in April.
- **Site visits and assessment:** August/ September.
- **Awards:** October/November.



Any questions?



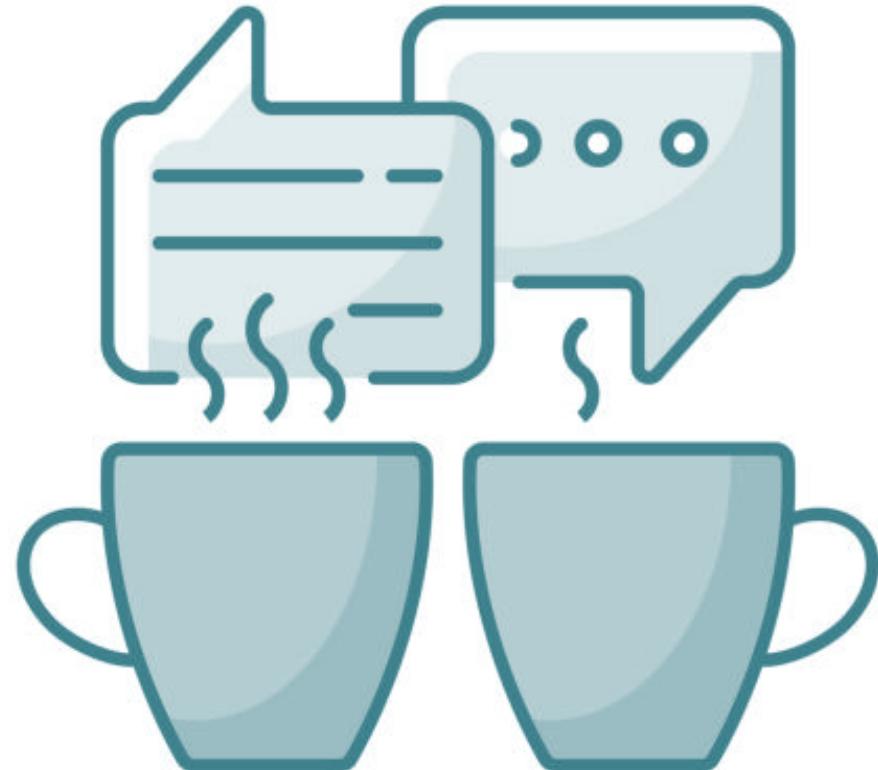


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www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Developers-Charter.pdf



**Coffee & Networking
with our Planners**