



Committee	Strategic Planning Committee
Date	08/07/2024
Subject	Planning Policy and Delivery Update
Cabinet Member	Councillor Kay Yule Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management
Report Author(s)	Andrea McMillan Planning Manager (Policy, Delivery and Specialist Services) Andrea.mcmillan@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
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Key Decision?	No
Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN

Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
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Purpose/Summary

This report provides an update on key elements of the current work programme, including the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents and Neighbourhood Plans, and on housing delivery.

Updates, as appropriate, are also included for the Specialist Services team, which comprises Design and Heritage, Ecology, Arboriculture and Landscape, and Rights of Way. An update is also provided on the delivery of infrastructure to support growth through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Recommendation(s)

That Strategic Planning Committee note the content of the report.

Strategic plan

How does this proposal support Our Direction 2028?

Environmental Impact	The work programme relates to a number of the aims under the Environmental Impact theme. The adoption of the Healthy Environments Supplementary Planning Document will support sustainable transport, alongside the implementation of the East Suffolk Cycling and Walking Strategy. Work to prepare for and implement Biodiversity Net Gain will further the aim of restoring ecosystems and biodiversity. The work programme of the Design and Heritage team will directly contribute to preserving and maintaining the district's beauty and heritage.
Sustainable Housing	The work programme supports the delivery of the Council's Local Plans which set out a strategy to deliver housing needed. Neighbourhood Plans also support this aim, in particular where they include policies on housing or allocate sites for housing. The preparation of the Developer Charter provides an opportunity to further promote housing developments which enhance wellbeing and protect the environment.
Tackling Inequalities	The adoption of the Healthy Environments Supplementary Planning Document supports this theme, through providing guidance on supporting health and wellbeing through new development.
Thriving Economy	The work programme supports the aim of ensuring Local Plans work for local people, including through the provision of guidance to support the implementation of the current Local Plans and supporting communities to prepare their own Neighbourhood Plans. The work on the Kirkley Waterfront Planning Position Statement will help to guide decisions on the planning applications for the site, and the redevelopment of the site will help to support the viability and vitality of Lowestoft. The Employment Land Action Plan will also support the Thriving Economy theme.
Our Foundations / governance of the organisation	'Our Foundations' refer to the use of digital technology. Information on many of the items covered in this update report is available on the Council's website. As an example the Planning Delivery Dashboard contains information on housing delivery and other planning data in an interactive format, and the

	Infrastructure Team have recently published a short video on CIL spending.
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Justification for recommendations

1. Background

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the current Planning Policy and Delivery work programme, which continues to focus on the delivery of the Council's adopted Local Plans – the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (September 2020) and the Waveney Local Plan (March 2019).
- 1.2. The current work programme contains a number of projects to support the delivery of the Local Plans, including providing guidance to support the implementation of planning policies through the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and monitoring the implementation of the plans.
- 1.3. The Specialist Services Team, which comprises the Design and Heritage, Ecology, and Landscape and Arboriculture (including Public Rights of Way) services, is continuing to provide ongoing expert input across the Planning Service including in respect of development management, Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and planning policy, as well as on wider Council projects. The Design and Heritage service has a programme of projects including Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan reviews and the review of Article 4 directions in Conservation Areas.
- 1.4. The updates in this report focus on projects and include the progress being made on the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents and Neighbourhood Plans, as well as projects in the Design and Heritage Team and in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain. An update is also provided on housing delivery towards meeting the requirements set out in the adopted Local Plans.
- 1.5. An update on the work of the Infrastructure Team relating to the collection and spend of the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 monies is also provided in this report.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. This report provides an update on key milestones achieved over the past three to four months since the last update report to Strategic Planning Committee and also sets out the key project milestones over the next three months or so.

Key milestones achieved over the past three to four months

Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.2. Recent progress on [Neighbourhood Plans](#):
 - **Carlton Colville** Neighbourhood Plan – Examiner's report received 15th January 2024, with consideration being given to the Examiner's recommendations
 - **Easton** Neighbourhood Plan – Examiner's report received 22nd March 2024, and East Suffolk Council Decision Statement published on 29th April 2024. Referendum

held on 13th June, with 90.7% of those who voted voting in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan.

- **Playford** Neighbourhood Plan - Examiner's report received on 4th March 2024, and East Suffolk Council Decision Statement published on 9th April 2024. Referendum held on 13th June, with 79.2% of those who voted voting in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- **Lowestoft** Neighbourhood Plan - Following the second Regulation 14 consultation undertaken between 30th October and 11th December 2023, progress is being made towards Submission.
- **Westerfield** Neighbourhood Plan – Following the Regulation 14 consultation undertaken between 25th November 2023 and 19th January 2024, progress is being made towards Submission.
- **Otley** Neighbourhood Plan – Regulation 14 consultation concluded on 15th April 2024.
- **Ufford** Neighbourhood Plan – Regulation 14 consultation began on 14th March 2024 and ran until 3rd May 2024.
- **Saxmundham** Town Council applied to review their Neighbourhood Plan area, with a consultation held between 23rd February and 5th April 2024. The revised Neighbourhood Area designation, which reflects the Parish Council boundary as amended in April 2023, was approved by East Suffolk Council on 30th April 2024.
- Preparation of Neighbourhood Planning housing guidance is underway.

Supplementary Planning Documents

2.3. Recent progress on preparation of [Supplementary Planning Documents](#):

- The **Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document** was adopted on 9th April 2024.
- The **Custom and Self Build Housing Supplementary Planning Document**, was adopted on 7th May 2024.
- The **Healthy Environments Supplementary Planning Document** was adopted on 4th June 2024.

A total of 11 Supplementary Planning Documents have now been adopted since the Local Plans were adopted, providing important guidance to support the implementation of the Council's two Local Plans.

Kirkley Waterfront Planning Position Statement

2.4. Work has continued on reviewing guidance for the Kirkley Waterfront and Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood. Under the reforms to the planning system introduced through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, it is unlikely that new Supplementary Planning Documents will be able to be adopted once the relevant parts of the Act are commenced. Therefore, and in order to provide timely guidance, a [Planning Position Statement](#) is being prepared for the site, which will provide updated guidance alongside the existing 2013 Supplementary Planning Document. An Initial Consultation took place

between 6th March and 3rd April 2024, seeking views on what should be included in the Planning Position Statement. Following that, and taking into account the comments received, work has progressed on drafting the Planning Position Statement, which will be published for consultation in the Summer.

Design and Heritage

2.5. Recent progress on [Design and Heritage projects](#):

- Consultants are undertaking fieldwork in relation to the review of the **Halesworth Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan**.
- Proposals relating to the cancellation of the existing Article 4 directions in **North Lowestoft Conservation Area** and **South Lowestoft and Kirkley Conservation Area** and confirmation of new ones were confirmed by Strategic Planning Committee on 8th April, and came into effect on 15th April 2024.
- Consultants' fieldwork in support of the ongoing review of the other existing Article 4 directions in place in the Waveney area, plus a pilot in the Suffolk Coastal area, taking account of changes in the 2021 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on their use, has been completed. The year 1 review covers Southwold, Wangford and Homersfield in the former Waveney area, and a pilot in Marlesford in the former Suffolk Coastal area. A report is being brought to Strategic Planning Committee on 8th July to make the new directions, following which they will be subject to public consultation.
- Nominations are open until 26th July 2024 for the 2024 [Quality of Place Awards](#). The six categories are: Design – New Build; Design – Extensions and Alterations; Building Conservation; Community; Landscape; Nature/Ecology.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 2.6. Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain came into force on 12th February 2024 for major developments, and for smaller developments from 2nd April (some categories of development are exempt). Recruitment of an Ecologist and Assistant Ecologist took place in advance of the requirements coming in, as part of preparation. The Council is also engaging with other authorities in Suffolk on the preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Housing Delivery

- 2.7. Housing growth planned for in the Local Plans has continued to come forward, with many sites either under construction, consented, subject to planning applications or subject to early discussion with the Planning Service. The annual housing requirement figure for East Suffolk is 916 dwellings, based on the figures in the two adopted Local Plans for the District. For the year 2023/24, 860 dwellings were delivered, 275 of which were for affordable housing (provisional figures). Whilst this figure is below the requirement of 916, it is an increase on recent years. As at 31st March 2024 1,229 dwellings were under construction compared to 1,223 at the same point in the previous year, therefore a very similar number. Of those under construction 252 are affordable homes. We saw a decrease in the number of dwellings starting post June 2023, which is understood to coincide with changes to Building Regulations in June 2023, however this has risen in recent months with 249 starts in Q4 of 2023/24.

2.8. The 2023 update to the [Housing Action Plan](#) was published in April 2024, following the publication of the 2022 Housing Delivery Test in December 2023.

CIL collection and spend

2.9. Updates for the past three to four months:

- £7,195,247.89 total CIL was collected by the Infrastructure Team in the last financial year (1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024). This is slightly higher than in previous years in part because of the increased CIL Rates, the New East Suffolk CIL Instalment Policy, and indexation of historic rates (as applicable). The current position of CIL can always be viewed on the Council's developer contributions dashboard: [East Suffolk PFM - Home \(exacom.co.uk\)](#)
- Neighbourhood CIL (NCIL) allocations of £472,654.25 were recently made to the Town and Parish Councils before the deadline of 28 April 2024. Parish Councils receiving NCIL must annually report on their use of the CIL via their webpages and they must also spend the NCIL they receive on delivering local infrastructure priorities within 5 years of the date of receipt of the CIL.
- A number of Councils are still reporting back to us (or on their websites) using either out of date templates or are not reporting the required information. Errors within reports have also been identified. In some instances spend does not correlate well with Neighbourhood Plan priorities. Officers have provided regular training (including bespoke training in evening sessions), downloadable (compliant) report templates, written guidance and a dedicated Parish CIL webpage and are also available for support and questions.
- Recently local authorities were designated as Building Safety Levy (BSL) Collection Authorities, this means that as well as collecting CIL the Infrastructure Team will soon collect and report on BSL. It is still expected that this is to be implemented by year end. From a recent DLUHC Technical Consultation, it is noted that the collection processes are similar to those of CIL, although proposed reporting requirements differ, and it is not currently proposed that BSL Reporting will be part of the Infrastructure Funding Statement (the statutory report on Developer Contributions). Pilot work is currently underway to develop our back office systems in readiness for BS Levy collection, although we await further guidance to be issued by the post-election government.
- Activity in the Infrastructure Team is also focussed on working on CIL Spending, the financial year end reports and the activities required to produce statutory reports for internal verification processes.
- This year, the Infrastructure Team received the highest number of individual bids for District CIL and Local CIL funding – 21 in total.
- A short [video](#) on CIL spending in East Suffolk was published and promoted in April.

Key project milestones over the next three to four months

Neighbourhood Plans

2.10. Progress with [Neighbourhood Plans](#) over the next three to four months:

- **Carlton Colville** Neighbourhood Plan – Progress to be made towards issuing the Decision Statement, and subsequently toward referendum.
- **Playford** Neighbourhood Plan – The referendum was held on 13th June, and following a positive outcome the plan will be taken to full Council in July to be ‘made’.
- **Easton** Neighbourhood Plan – The referendum was held on 13th June, and following a positive outcome the plan will be taken to full Council in July to be ‘made’.
- **Lowestoft** Neighbourhood Plan – Progress to be made towards Submission
- **Westerfield** Neighbourhood Plan – Progress to be made towards Submission
- **Otley** Neighbourhood Plan – Progress to be made towards Submission
- **Ufford** Neighbourhood Plan – Progress to be made towards Submission

2.11. Guidance for Neighbourhood Plan groups on delivering new housing through their plans will be progressed with consultation anticipated later in the Summer.

Kirkley Waterfront Planning Position Statement

2.12. The draft Planning Position Statement will be prepared in advance of public consultation taking place in Summer 2024.

Authority Monitoring Report

2.13. Monitoring and survey work will continue, to inform the 2023/24 Authority Monitoring Report which will subsequently be prepared in the Autumn for publication in January 2025. Work will also progress on the annual update of the Housing Land Supply Statement.

Design and Heritage

2.14. Progress with [Design and Heritage projects](#) over the next three to four months:

- Work on the **Halesworth Conservation Area** draft appraisal and boundary review will continue. It is expected that the review will take place during 2024 with consultation in early 2025.
- The Article 4 review being rolled out across other Conservation Areas in the former Waveney area will continue (Southwold, Wangford and Homersfield), along with the pilot in Marlesford in the former Suffolk Coastal area. Subject to a decision by Strategic Planning Committee at their meeting on 8th July, consultation will take place on the proposed review. Year 2 of the review will include the Conservation Areas in Beccles, Holton, Wissett, Thorpeness and Walberswick and fieldwork will be commencing in the summer of 2024.
- Nominations for the [2024 Quality of Place Awards](#) will close on 26th July 2024. Shortlisting will then take place, with an Awards Ceremony to take place later in the year.
- An internal review of the Historic Building Grants scheme is underway.

- Proposals for the review and re-appraisal of three existing Conservation Areas are being prepared as part of a rolling programme. Conservation Areas with the oldest appraisals will be considered as a priority.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 2.15. Ongoing implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain will continue and guidance will be made available as needed. The Council will also continue to engage with other authorities across Suffolk on the preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Developer Charter

- 2.16. Preparation of a Developer Charter is underway. Whilst not policy or a part of the development plan, this will act as a tool to promote and recognise developments that are more ambitious in terms of factors such as environmental performance, as well as setting out the Council's expectations in relation to engagement and consultation, complementing the Statement of Community Involvement. We will engage with Town and Parish Councils and with major developers to inform the Charter. It is anticipated that the Charter will be adopted by Cabinet in the Autumn.

Employment Land Action Plan

- 2.17. Similar to the Housing Action Plan prepared every year, work is underway on an Employment Land Action Plan, which will investigate the current position on employment allocations in the district and identify any suitable actions where feasible.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

- 2.18. Work is progressing on the provision of guidance on 'exceptional circumstances' (Waveney Local Plan policy WLP8.4) in relation to the granting of consent for conversion to Houses in Multiple Occupation, which is anticipated to be adopted in the Autumn following consultation. This will act alongside the Supplementary Housing Statement, prepared by the Housing service, approved by Cabinet in June. Work is also progressing on reviewing the current Article 4 Direction for Houses in Multiple Occupation that exists across the former Waveney district.

Future Local Plan

- 2.19. The [Local Development Scheme](#), adopted in March 2024, sets out an indicative timescale for a future East Suffolk Local Plan, subject to review pending further legislation and details of the reforms to plan-making. However in the meantime Local Plan Working Group will provide a forum to give early consideration to Members' aspirations and considerations for a future Local Plan. This will take place over the Autumn and Winter, with an opportunity also to be provided for all Councillors to input their views, prior to beginning any formal stages of Local Plan preparation.

Cycling, Walking and Wheeling

- 2.20. The Council has established a Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Working Group, to take forward the implementation of the [East Suffolk Cycling and Walking Strategy](#) which was adopted in October 2022. The Working Group is identifying a small number of trial projects initially, to build up an approach to taking enhancements forward, alongside securing improvements through the determination of planning applications for development.

Housing Delivery

- 2.21. As stated in paragraph 2.7 above, there were 1,229 dwellings under construction as at 31st March 2024, around the same number as at the same time in the previous year. Over the coming months, the Planning Service will continue to support the delivery of housing set out in the Local Plans, including through the determination of planning applications and through ongoing support for bringing forward strategic sites such as supporting master-planning and through the preparation of the Planning Position Statement for the Kirkley Waterfront.

CIL Collection and Spend

- 2.22. Progress over the next three to four months:
- The CIL Spending Working Group have begun their programme of meetings to review the CIL bids received and to make relevant recommendations in advance of Cabinet decisions on the bids.
 - As we move forwards, with a large number of high value critical and essential infrastructure projects in the pipeline, the CIL Spending Working Group are considering the ways in which affordability from the District CIL pot can be managed in order to avoid the need to delay capital funding for projects or borrow, where these projects are planned for in the short term.
 - Updates to the Infrastructure List, part of the Infrastructure Funding Statement, are in progress.
 - The CIL Spending Strategy and updated Infrastructure Funding Statement will be taken to Cabinet in September, alongside the CIL bids.

National update

- 2.23. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act received Royal Assent in October 2023. The Act introduces a number of changes, including changes to the preparation of Local Plans; a requirement on authorities to prepare a design code; the introduction of National Development Management Policies; new Supplementary Plans; provision for Neighbourhood Priorities Statements to be prepared by communities; the introduction of Environmental Outcomes Reports and the introduction of Infrastructure Levy. Secondary legislation to take forward the provisions of the Act is anticipated during 2024.
- 2.24. Some consultation on areas of detail has already taken place by the Government, including a consultation on [plan-making reforms](#) held between July and October 2023, consultations on [Environmental Outcomes Reports](#) and [Infrastructure Levy](#) earlier in 2023, and consultation on [Street Vote development orders](#) between December 2023 and February 2024. Consultation was also recently held on the [Accelerated planning system](#) between March and May 2024.

3. Proposal

- 3.1. Areas of work underway are outlined above and it is proposed that Strategic Planning Committee note the contents of the report.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. The work of the Team is undertaken within existing budgets, with grant income generated through support provided on Neighbourhood Planning. Grant funding is also provided from Defra in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1. All work outlined above is undertaken in accordance with relevant legal requirements where they exist. There are no legal impacts arising from this update report.

6. Risk Implications

- 6.1. The work programme of the Team is significant and crucial to the delivery of many aspects of the Strategic Plan. Staff capacity is an ongoing risk.

7. Options

- 7.1. This report is for information only.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1. That Strategic Planning Committee note the contents of the report.

9. Reasons for Recommendations

- 9.1. This report is for information only.

10. Conclusions/Next Steps

- 10.1. The areas of work outlined above will take place over the next three to four months, and a further update will be brought to the next scheduled Strategic Planning Committee meeting, in October.

Areas of consideration comments

Section 151 Officer comments:

The Section 151 Officer has received a copy of the report and has no further comments

Monitoring Officer comments:

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted on this report and has no additional comments.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion/EQIA:

The report is for information only

Safeguarding:

The report is for information only

Crime and Disorder:

The report is for information only

Corporate Services implications:

(i.e., Legal, Finance, Procurement, Human Resources, Digital, Customer Services, Asset Management)

The report is for information only

Residents and Businesses consultation/consideration:

The report is for information only

Appendices:

None.

Background reference papers:

Date	Type	Available From
2019	East Suffolk Council – Waveney Local Plan	Adopted-Waveney-Local-Plan-including-Erratum.pdf (eastssuffolk.gov.uk)
2020	East Suffolk Council – Suffolk Coastal Local Plan	East-Suffolk-Council-Suffolk-Coastal-Local-Plan.pdf (eastssuffolk.gov.uk)
Various	Neighbourhood Plans	Neighbourhood Plans in the area » East Suffolk Council
Various	Supplementary Planning Documents	Supplementary Planning Documents and other guidance » East Suffolk Council
2024	East Suffolk Local Development Scheme	Local-Development-Scheme-March-2024.pdf (eastssuffolk.gov.uk)
2024	Authority Monitoring Report	Open data, monitoring and housing supply » East Suffolk Council
Various	Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans	Conservation area appraisals » East Suffolk Council
2023	East Suffolk Housing Land Supply Statements	Housing Land Supply » East Suffolk Council
Various	East Suffolk Housing Action Plans	Housing Action Plan » East Suffolk Council