



STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Monday, 08 January 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 & Specialist Services) Andrea.McMillan@eastsoffolk.gov.uk 01394 444567
Head of Service	Philip Ridley Head of Planning and Coastal Management Philip.ridley@eastsoffolk.gov.uk 01394 444434
Director	Nick Khan Strategic Director Nick.khan@eastsoffolk.gov.uk 01394 444434

Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
Wards Affected:	All Wards

Purpose and high-level overview

Purpose of Report:

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 Specialist Services (Design and Heritage, Arboriculture and Landscape (including Rights of Way) and Ecology) that form part of the Planning Policy and Delivery Team. An update is also provided on the delivery of infrastructure to support growth through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Options:

This report is for information only.

Recommendation/s:

That the content of the report is noted.

Corporate Impact Assessment

Governance:

The Local Plan Working Group oversee the preparation of many of the documents referred to in this report.

ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:

A range of Local Plan policies for East Suffolk.

Environmental:

No impact.

Equalities and Diversity:

This report is for information only, so no equality impact assessment is required. However, undertaking an assessment is an integral element for most of the projects in the work programme.

Financial:

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.

Human Resources:

No impact.

ICT:

No impact.

Legal:

No impact.

Risk:

The work programme of the Team is significant and crucial to the delivery of many aspects of the East Suffolk Strategic Plan. Staff capacity is an ongoing risk although the majority of posts within the Team are currently filled.

External Consultees:	None
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Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the Strategic Plan which are supported by this proposal: (Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)		Primary priority	Secondary priorities
T01	Growing our Economy		
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P04	Business partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T02	Enabling our Communities		
P06	Community Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P09	Community Pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T03	Maintaining Financial Sustainability		
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P12	Being commercially astute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P14	Review service delivery with partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T04	Delivering Digital Transformation		
P15	Digital by default	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P17	Effective use of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P18	Skills and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T05	Caring for our Environment		
P20	Lead by example	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P22	Renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P23	Protection, education and influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
XXX	Governance		
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How does this proposal support the priorities selected?			
It is acknowledged that the Council adopted a new Strategic Plan in November 2023, and the report template will be updated in due course.			

The Planning Policy and Delivery work programme makes a significant contribution to the delivery of the Strategic Plan themes identified above, cutting across all of the themes. The primary priority and 11 secondary priorities identified above reflect the wide range of projects in the work programme.

Background and Justification for Recommendation

1 Background facts	
1.1	This report provides an update on the current Planning Policy and Delivery work programme. The Council's two Local Plans (Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, September 2020 and Waveney Local Plan, March 2019) provide up to date Local Plan coverage for the District, and the work of the Planning Policy and Delivery Team continues to focus on the delivery of these Plans.
1.2	The current Planning Policy and Delivery work programme contains a number of projects to support the delivery of the Local Plans. These include providing guidance to support the implementation of planning policies through the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). 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. 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.
1.3	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.
1.4	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 Current position	
2.1	Key milestones achieved over the past three to four months, since the last report to Strategic Planning Committee, are set out below.
2.2	<p><u>Neighbourhood Plans:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan – Referendum held on 12th October 2023 and the Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' on 22nd November 2023. • Carlton Colville Neighbourhood Plan –Examination underway. • Easton Neighbourhood Plan – Regulation 16 consultation underway between 10th November and 22nd December 2023 • Playford Neighbourhood Plan - Regulation 16 consultation underway between 10th November and 22nd December 2023

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowestoft Neighbourhood Plan – second round of Regulation 14 consultation held between 30th October and 11th December 2023 • Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan – Regulation 14 consultation underway between 25th November 2023 and 19th January 2024 • Preparation of Neighbourhood Planning housing guidance is underway. • Following feedback from the Town and Parish Forum in the summer, a forum session on Neighbourhood Planning was held for Town and Parish Councils on 23rd November.
2.3	Public consultation on the Draft Custom and Self Build Supplementary Planning Document was held between Wednesday 6 th September and Wednesday 18 th October 2023.
2.4	Public consultation on the Draft Healthy Environments Supplementary Planning Document is underway between 15 th November 2023 and 10 th January 2024.
2.5	Public consultation on the Draft Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document is underway between 15 th November 2023 and 10 th January 2024.
2.6	Work has continued on a review of the Supplementary Planning Document for the Kirkley Waterfront and Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood which was adopted in 2013. The review will update the SPD in relation to policies contained in the 2019 Waveney Local Plan. A site visit for Councillors was held on 17 th November 2023 and the initial scoping consultation on the SPD is anticipated to take place in March-April 2024.
2.7	<p>Design and Heritage:</p> <p>Recent progress in relation to the review of Conservation Areas and their Appraisals and Management Plans is set out below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appraisals for a proposed new Conservation Area at Aldeburgh Park and three proposed extensions to the existing Aldeburgh Conservation Area were presented to Strategic Planning Committee on 2nd October 2023 for approval, and came into effect from Friday 6th October. A subsequent report was presented to Strategic Planning Committee on 2nd November to vary the Aldeburgh Conservation Area designation to exclude five properties, this came into effect on 3rd November. • A six week public consultation concluded on 16th March 2023 on the proposal to amalgamate and extend the existing Southwold Conservation Area and Southwold Harbour Conservation Area and the draft new Southwold Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. Consultation responses have been considered and the proposals are presented to Strategic Planning Committee on 8th January 2024. • Proposals to incorporate the Walberswick Quay Conservation Area as an extension to the Walberswick Conservation Area were publicly consulted on from 16th October to 27th November 2023 alongside a draft Supplement to append to the existing Walberswick Conservation Area Appraisal. Consultation responses have been considered and the proposals are presented to Strategic Planning Committee on 8th January 2024. • Consultants are due to be commissioned imminently in relation to the review of the Halesworth Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. <p>Progress on other Design and Heritage projects includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultants' fieldwork in support of a pilot review of the existing Article 4 directions in place in both Lowestoft Conservation Areas, taking account of changes in the 2021 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on their use, is complete. Proposals relating to the cancellation of the existing Article 4 directions and confirmation of new ones are presented to

	<p>Strategic Planning Committee on 8th January 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 (Marlesford Conservation Area), taking account of changes in the 2021 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on their use, is underway and ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The awards ceremony for the 2023 Quality of Place Awards took place on Wednesday 29th November, with winning projects in the categories of design, building conservation and community.
2.8	<p>Biodiversity Net Gain:</p> <p>The mandatory requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain, as introduced through the 2021 Environment Act, is set to come into force in January 2024. An Interim Planning Guidance Note was prepared by Suffolk Local Planning Authorities in May 2023 to provide advice on how biodiversity net gain should be demonstrated and considered through planning applications in a consistent manner under current planning policies. Preparations for the introduction of the mandatory requirement are underway, including through the creation of two new posts in the Ecology team which have been recruited to. Guidance and Regulations were published by the Government at the end of November 2023. Training is taking place for officers and Councillors.</p>
2.9	<p>Housing Delivery:</p> <p>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 2022/23, 812 dwellings were delivered, 155 of which were for affordable housing. During the first two quarters of 2023/24 (April to September) 351 net additional dwellings were reported as completed (of which 122 were affordable) (provisional figures), compared to 399 completed in the same period of the previous year. A comparison of dwellings under construction shows that as at 30th September 2023 1,254 dwellings were under construction compared to 1,271 at the same point in the previous year, showing that supply is continuing to come forward. Of those under construction 252 are affordable homes. We have seen a decrease in the number of dwellings started in the past quarter, which is understood to coincide with changes to Building Regulations in June 2023.</p> <p>The annual update of the Housing Land Supply Statement was published in November 2023, and sets out the following position as at 31st March 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Suffolk Coastal Local Plan area has a housing land supply of 6.34 years; The Waveney Local Plan area has a housing land supply of 5.62 years. <p>Work is underway on an update to the Housing Action Plan, with a focus being taken on analysing specific sites that appear to be slow in coming forward.</p>
2.10	<p>CIL Collection and Spend and Exacom:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £4,868,094.78 total CIL has now been received since the start of the financial year (1 April 2023). This means we are on target to receive approx. £6m by the financial year end, which is in line with previous years, although is likely to be a lower annual figure than in 2022/23. Neighbourhood CIL (NCIL) allocations were made by the Statutory Deadline of 28 October 2023. Including the April NCIL payments, a total of

	<p>£865,244.57 has been allocated to all relevant Town and Parish Councils this year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's been quiet period with CIL spending currently with the majority of activity being focussed on supporting the work of infrastructure providers to ensure timely and accurate bids are submitted for the April 2024 District CIL Bid Round. • The Infrastructure Funding Statement for 2022-23 has now been published in line with statutory requirements. This latest Statement includes an update on the progress of all of the District CIL funded projects, together with photographs. We have also been working closely with Communications Teams to promote these projects further. • Promotions and events have been scheduled and delivered for many of the recently completed infrastructure projects that have previously been funded by East Suffolk CIL. • The Sizewell C Legal Agreement is now recorded on the Exacom PFM system which means the clauses relating to financial contributions can all be seen via the Developer Contributions Dashboard on the Planning webpages – all Sizewell C obligations have the pre-fix SZC to clearly differentiate them from S106 contributions. • CIL Training was provided to Members in October 2023 and this was recorded with the slides being also available to those that were unable to attend. The training was well received by those able to attend. • Training on spending and reporting on Neighbourhood CIL was provided at the recent Neighbourhood Plans event. • The new Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) has recently received Royal Assent with the impacts of this now being discussed in terms of delivery of the required changes. This affects planning permissions, developer contributions, affordable housing, infrastructure delivery and statutory reporting. • Members of the Team recently attended the national conference on Infrastructure Levy, CIL and s106 and we await further announcements in the new year.
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3 How to address current situation	
3.1	During the next 3 to 4 months, some of the key project milestones will include:
3.2	<p>With respect to Neighbourhood Plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carlton Colville Neighbourhood Plan - Examination will be completed. • Easton Neighbourhood Plan – Regulation 16 consultation to be concluded and Examination to be underway • Playford Neighbourhood Plan – Regulation 16 consultation to be concluded and Examination to be underway • Lowestoft Neighbourhood Plan – second round of Regulation 14 consultation to be concluded

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Westerfield Neighbourhood Plan – Regulation 14 consultation to be concluded • A Regulation 14 consultation for the Otley Neighbourhood Plan is expected shortly. • Guidance for Neighbourhood Plan groups on delivering new housing through their plans will be progressed with consultation anticipated in the new year.
3.3	Comments received to the draft Custom and Self Build Supplementary Planning Document will be considered in finalising the SPD which is anticipated to be adopted in early 2024.
3.4	The consultation on the Draft Healthy Environments Supplementary Planning Document will have been completed. Comments will be considered in finalising the SPD which is anticipated to be adopted in Spring 2024.
3.5	The consultation on the Draft Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document will have been completed. Comments will be considered in finalising the SPD which is anticipated to be adopted in Spring 2024.
3.6	Progress will be made with the review of the Supplementary Planning Document for the Kirkley Waterfront and Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood .
3.7	<p>The Authority Monitoring Report, subject to consideration by Strategic Planning Committee, will be published.</p> <p>As noted in the report to Strategic Planning Committee on the Authority Monitoring Report, there is a requirement to undertake an assessment of a local plan prior to the fifth anniversary of adoption to consider whether it needs to be updated, and this assessment will therefore need to be undertaken in relation to the Waveney Local Plan by 20th March 2024.</p>
3.8	<p>Design and Heritage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to approval by Strategic Planning Committee the proposed extensions to the Southwold Conservation Area will come into effect from Friday 12th January 2024. • Subject to approval by Strategic Planning Committee the proposed extension to the Walberswick Conservation Area will come into effect from Friday 12th January 2024. • Subject to approval by Strategic Planning Committee, the cancellation of the Article 4 direction and Confirmation of a new Article 4 direction for the North Lowestoft Conservation Area and for the South Lowestoft and Kirkley Conservation Area will be subject to consultation between 22nd January and 1st March 2024. • Work on the Halesworth Conservation Area draft appraisal and boundary review will continue. • Following the Article 4 pilots, the review is being rolled out across other Conservation Areas in the former Waveney area. Consultants have been appointed to initiate a 3-year phased project to undertake a review of the remaining Article 4 directions in Conservation Areas in the Waveney area and to consider pilots in the Suffolk Coastal area.
3.9	<p>Biodiversity Net Gain:</p> <p>Preparation for the mandatory requirements will continue to take place, with the requirements due to come into force in January 2024. The requirements will apply to applications submitted from the point it comes into force, and will initially apply to major development with smaller development to follow from April 2024. The Council is also engaging with other authorities in Suffolk on the preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.</p>

3.10	<p>Housing Delivery:</p> <p>As stated in paragraph 2.9 above, there were 1,254 dwellings under construction at the end of March 2023, similar to the same time 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.</p> <p>Whilst the Council is not currently required to prepare a Housing Action Plan due to having ‘passed’ the most recent Housing Delivery Test (2022 results published in December 2023), the Housing Action Plan is reviewed annually and the latest review is anticipated to be published in early 2024.</p>
3.11	<p>CIL Collection/Spend and Exacom:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The end of the financial year marks the start of the busiest period for the Infrastructure Team with the finalisation of CIL income, Neighbourhood CIL Payments to be made, the 2024 District CIL bid round to manage and potentially new CIL Spending Working Group Members to train. In addition there are other new elements of work taking off such as First Homes and Biodiversity Net Gain all of which are touched on as part of the Team’s roles. • It is expected that new Infrastructure Levy Draft Regulations are to be consulted on in early 2024, and this was confirmed at the recent Infrastructure Levy national conference.
3.12	<p>National update:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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, and consultations on Environmental Outcomes Reports and Infrastructure Levy earlier in 2023. It is anticipated that there will be further consultations during 2024, in particular on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and on National Development Management Policies.</p> <p>Under the current planning system, revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework were published on 19th December 2023 following consultation undertaken between December 2022 and March 2023. An overview of the revisions will be provided at the Strategic Planning Committee meeting.</p>

<p>4 Reason/s for recommendation</p>	
4.1	This report is for information only.

Appendices

Appendices:

None.

Background reference papers:

None.