



Committee	Strategic Planning Committee
Date	12/01/2026
Subject	Building Control Update 09/09/2025 to 04/12/2025
Cabinet Member	Councillor Mark Packard Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management
Report Author(s)	Mark Harvey Building Control Manager, Registered Building Inspector Mark.harvey@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
Head of Service	Ben Woolnough Head of Planning and Building Control ben.woolnough@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
Director	Nick Khan Strategic Director nick.khan@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

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 contains statistics and summaries of Building Control related work, as a means to monitor the quality of decisions made by the Local Building Control Authority and identify any key learning points to improve future decision making.

Recommendation(s)

That Strategic Planning Committee notes the content of the report recognising the efforts of the team to continue evolution of marketing, using the strength of expertise and trust to retain market share.

The team will undertake events in Spring 2026. Hosting events (Lowestoft, Darsham and Melton) on regulatory matters and team introductions.

The team will continue to provide a service which achieves full cost recovery. Income remains strong and consistent. There are many large project appointments imminent attracting large fees. Forward planning resource for these projects is crucial.

The team will continue to grow Building Control presence in early-stage planning and policy consultations.

Strategic plan

How does this proposal support Our Direction 2028?

Environmental Impact	The statistics presented in this report are not directly applicable to Building Control. However, it is recognised that Building Control must consider the material impacts construction and development have upon the environment.
Sustainable Housing	The statistics presented in this report are not directly applicable to Building Control. However, it is recognised that the Building Control Process and the Building Regulations which are used to determine such applications seeks to ensure the provision of sustainable housing.
Tackling Inequalities	The statistics presented in this report are not directly applicable to Building Control. However, it is recognised that the Building Control process and the Building Regulations which are used to determine such applications, seek to support communities, and the provision of facilities which can be beneficial including community buildings, open space, and facilities for physical and mental health wellbeing.
Thriving Economy	The statistics presented in this report are not directly applicable to Building Control. However, it is recognised that the Building Control application process and the Building Regulations which are used to determine applications, seek to support appropriate economic development throughout the district.
Our Foundations / governance of the organisation	The Building Control Service and the determination of Building Control applications is a statutory function of the Council. It also provides a vital mechanism through which improvements to the

	district can be secured for the benefit of residents, businesses, and visitors.
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Justification for recommendations

1. Background

- 1.1. Building Control enforce the Building Regulations 2012, The Building Act 1984, and The Building Safety Act 2022. Health and safety in and around buildings.
- 1.2. This report outlines current workloads and statistics in line with adopted KPI's/QMS targets and statutory expectations.
- 1.3. The Building Control team employs registered Building Inspectors. Each RBI (Registered Building Inspector) is individually validated/examined for competence by the BSR (Building Safety Regulator).
- 1.4. The Building Control service is a statutory function of the Local Authority.
- 1.5. Building Inspectors are registered for competence against class criteria set out and monitored by the BSR. Class 1-4 Class 1 trainee, Class 2A Domestic (dwellings up to 3 stories, not flats) Class 2B- F all building types except high rise, Class 3 high rise and complex buildings.
- 1.6. At the time of writing the East Suffolk Building Control team employs 16 Registered Building Inspectors. This includes three part time phased retirement roles and there are three vacancies.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. Building Control receives applications in various formats including - Building Notices, Full plans applications and Regularisation applications.
- 2.2. Reversion applications are received when a registered building approver reverts the application to the local authority for enforcement purposes or when the project is deemed in contravention of the contract of appointment.
- 2.3. Initial notice applications are when a Private Building Control Approver notifies a LA (Local Authorities) of their appointment to deliver the building control function.
- 2.4. East Suffolk Building Control received 161 Full plans application for this period, 100% of decisions made within the 5-week statutory period.
- 2.5. East Suffolk Building Control received 262 Building Notice applications for this period, 100% of decisions were made within the 5 days statutory period.
- 2.6. East Suffolk Building Control received 29 regularisation applications within this period, 100% of decisions were made within the 3-week statutory period.
- 2.7. The authority received 0 Reversion application within this period, no time limit or deadline is reported for these applications.

- 2.8. East Suffolk Building Control received 102 Initial Notice notifications within this period, 100% were accepted within 5 Days in line with the statutory requirements.
- 2.9. East Suffolk Market share for this period is 82%.
- 2.10. Completed inspections for this period – 2,928 - average 186 per inspector.
- 2.11. East Suffolk Building Control received 1,821 applications in total last year.
- 2.12. East Suffolk Building Control annual market share – 82%.
- 2.13. Morale remains strong which is reflected by our unrivalled reputation and high market share.
- 2.14. 16 members of the team are now validated to at least domestic level (Class 2A).
- 2.15. Sizewell site demand grows each week. The onsite team appear highly competent, the volume of design work and subsequent amendment is unprecedented. It is anticipated this will not change throughout the entire project.
- 2.16. Two assistants have been appointed to the team. Both were internal applicants from the support team, Maria Walsh and Katie Castleton. It is planned for the assistants to focus on process and promotional activity as a priority due to the pressures on the ever-shrinking pool of registered building inspectors employed.
- 2.17. The vacant central Team leader post has been filled in December. We are pleased to confirm our existing Senior RBI Alexander Deakin has been successful. Alex demonstrated great ambition to join the BC leadership team and spoke of his desire to train more inspectors and support existing team members to achieve their career goals for the benefit of the market leading Building Control service.
- 2.18. The Building Safety Regulator (BSR) are currently conducting a necessary external audit on the service with a report to be received early in 2026. These audits are being carried out nationally and in no specific order across Councils. There are three outcomes, the service is compliant, the service requires improvement, or the service is failing and will be taken over by the regulator. The audit applies scrutiny to every part of the BC service and its running in accordance with the key competencies, operational standards rules and QMS processes. The audit comprises of five two-hour interview sessions with the HSE building safety regulator auditor. The BC team structure was reconfigured in 2023 in preparation for the audit process. The creation of a senior inspector role with added emphasis on standards paved the way for the successful appointment of Colin Dolden into the role "Operational Standards Co-ordinator" alongside his duties as a senior registered building inspector. Colin's process driven training, internal audit and data management has been exemplary, his work and the work of the team is being proven during this time of absolute scrutiny. We will welcome the findings of the audit and will use the process to further improve the service for the benefit of East Suffolk. Initial plan to advertise in the new year for an additional assistant/trainee inspector to continue to grow the team and ensure the resources are available to meet the demand of work.

- 2.19. Selected members of the building control team will visit London in January 2026 after winning regional LABC awards in multiple categories. Paying particular attention to our own Oscar Drane who won the regional award for best newcomer and now seeks to win the national accolade in representation of East Suffolk. Oscar’s parents will be joining us in London.

Name of entry	Category
Oscar Drane, East Suffolk Council	People - Local Authority Building Control Newcomer of the Year
The Copper House, Aldeburgh	Residential - Best Residential Extension
Art Studio, Suffolk	Best Non-Residential New Build
Hoare, Ridge & Morris with East Suffolk Council	People - Best Partnership with a Local Authority Building Control Team
Duncan and Sons	Best residential and small commercial builder
Trefoil Place – Beaully Homes	Best Small Volume Housing Development

3. Proposal

- 3.1. Utilise the new Building Control Assistants to deliver positive marketing/promotion events to advertise the service across contractors, designers and the public.
- 3.2. Train the Building Control assistants to support the operational standards coordinator. It is imperative we have resilience in reporting and standards across the team.
- 3.3. Deliver a full management team structure to support service growth and team resilience.
- 3.4. Ongoing - Commitment to growing future inspectors with time and cost investment.
- 3.5. Ongoing – Innovate and explore recruitment options with awareness of a small and challenging specialist market (7 vacant establishment posts remain unfilled).

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. Loss of experienced registered building inspectors through lack of retention options is of great concern, neighbouring local authorities and private building control bodies are actively approaching qualified East Suffolk RBIs with better terms.
- 4.2. The impact of a smaller team with less experience and expertise heightens the risk of a loss of market share and reputation, which in turn will see poor construction standards across East Suffolk.
- 4.3. Charges are currently under review due to increased workload imposed by BSR legislation and audit process.

4.4. Income for this period - Quarter 3 – 1 July to 30 September

	Budget	Budget	Actuals
Expenditure	1,401,825	1,285,547	979,256
Income	-694,345	-647,370	-671,676
Net	707,480	638,177	307,580

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1. Amendments to the approved documents and the future homes standard have been delayed to spring 2026. The overall Government review of Building Control industry and approved documents continues.
- 5.2. Implementation of the new CIL collection regime has large resource implications of the authority. The new CIL collection process is reliant of Building Control sign off. There are many training events to be attended throughout 2026 in readiness for roll out in the autumn of 2026.

6. Risk Implications

- 6.1. Ongoing - Introduction of the BSR regime has seen a shortage of Registered Building Inspectors nationwide. It is well known and has been well advertised the East Suffolk Building Control team are highly qualified, maintaining this level of expertise is at risk due to market forces.
- 6.2. Ongoing - Ageing workforce and increased retirements are not mirrored by the ability to retain and fill vacant positions. To train and grow our own workforce is dependent on retaining the experienced RBIs.
- 6.3. Extra demand on the team and support services to deliver the new Building Safety Levy regime is unquantifiable at this time. A commitment to an additional post in the Infrastructure Team has been secured for this purpose.

7. Options

- 7.1. Plan future recruitment of another assistant in early 2026. It is very challenging providing such a high level on constant training for outnumbered experienced inspectors, but this is an absolute necessity to ensure the team does not fail.
- 7.2. Retention incentives must remain. This is our strongest form of retention in the face of such strong competition who offer very high salaries and terms during a time where the industry is short of experience.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1. That Strategic Planning Committee notes the content of the report recognising the efforts of the team to continue evolution of marketing, using the strength of expertise and trust to retain market share.

- 8.2. The team will undertake events in Spring 2026. Hosting events (Lowestoft, Darsham and Melton) on regulatory matters and team introductions.
- 8.3. The team will continue to provide a service which achieves full cost recovery. Income remains strong and consistent. There are many large project appointments imminent attracting large fees. Forward planning resource for these projects is crucial.
- 8.4. The team will continue to grow Building Control presence in early-stage planning and policy consultations.
- 9. Reasons for Recommendations**
- 9.1. To aspire, not just to maintain the current level of Building Control service but to improve it for the betterment of all developments across East Suffolk.
- 10. Conclusions/Next Steps**
- 10.1. To explore and evolve recruitment.
- 10.2. Invest in technology and training to evolve the Building Control service offer further. The ability to work remotely and access information any place anywhere is no longer a luxury and should be standard operational practice.
- 10.3. Continue to develop existing and new inspectors' skills.

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:

There are no specific implications arising in terms of this matter from the statistics included within this report.

Safeguarding:

There are no specific implications arising in terms of this matter from the statistics included within this report.

Crime and Disorder:

There are no specific implications arising in terms of this matter from the statistics included within this report.

Corporate Services implications:

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

There are no specific implications arising in terms of this matter from the statistics included within this report.

Residents and Businesses consultation/consideration:
There are no specific implications arising in terms of this matter from the statistics included within this report.

Appendices:	
None	

Background reference papers:		
None		