

Unconfirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Strategic Planning Committee** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, on **Monday, 12 January 2026 at 10:30am**

Members of the Committee present:

Councillor Paul Ashdown, Councillor Seamus Bennett, Councillor Tom Daly, Councillor John Fisher, Councillor Andree Gee, Councillor Colin Hedgley, Councillor Mike Ninnmey, Councillor Mark Packard, Councillor Graham Parker, Councillor Malcolm Pitchers, Councillor Sarah Plummer, Councillor Lee Reeves, Councillor Rosie Smithson

Officers present: Pip Alder (Democratic Services Officer), Joe Blackmore (Planning Manager (Development Management)), Katy Cassidy (Democratic Services Officer), Nick Khan (Strategic Director) Chris King (Design & Specialist Services Manager), Elizabeth Martin (Senior Design and Heritage Officer), Andrea McMillan (Planning Manager (Policy and Delivery)), Adam Nicholls (Principal Planner (Policy and Delivery)), Kathryn Oelman (Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager), Nicola Parrish (Infrastructure Delivery Manager), Clara Peirson (Assistant Planner), Katherine Scott (Principal Planner (Development Management)), Karolien Yperman (Senior Design and Heritage Officer)

1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ashton, Hammond, Wakeling, Beavan and Deacon. Councillor Folley substituted for Councillor Deacon.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

3 Minutes of meeting

On the proposal of Councillor Plummer, seconded by Councillor Ashdown it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Minutes of extraordinary meeting

On the proposal of Councillor Plummer, seconded by Councillor Pitchers it was

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (Energy Projects) Update

Councillor Daly introduced report **ES/2637** and ran through a presentation giving an overview of the energy projects. He explained that the offshore wind projects are all in post decision stage. LionLink is at pre-application stage and meetings are beginning as part of the consultation. Sea Link is at examination stage and the team is engaging exhaustively and there have been various meetings and communications. They were trying to influence as much as possible. He was sure that everyone was well aware about the work going on for Sizewell C (SZC) with all the construction and the roadworks taking place. He reminded Members about the Works Tracker.

He mentioned the Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESPs) which are whole energy strategic plans to create a consistent and aligned energy plan for the whole of Great Britain. East Suffolk Council will submit a response to the Methodology Consultation which is running from the 17 November - 16 January.

He explained that we are in the midst of an energy revolution. The last one was the carbon revolution and now we are in the decarbonisation revolution. He said it was exciting in many ways and important that we make it work for our communities and environment. He advised Members to read the accompanying report.

Councillor Bennett asked if the Yoxford roundabout would be opening Spring 2026 or 2027. It was confirmed it would be Spring 2026. Councillor Bennett asked if the surcharge on energy bills would apply to ESC residents and if it could not be applied, due to residents being hugely affected by the development. Councillor Daly said they looked at local alleviation, so it was a very interesting thought and said to leave it with him. He explained that he had hand delivered a copy of the letter to Lord Vallance, that was sent to him two months previously, and hoped he would accept the invitation to meet. The letter included a map showing the cumulative impact of all the energy projects in the district.

The Chair said the team was doing a very good job and wanted to thank the team, noting that they didn't get a long winter break.

Councillor Bennett asked if there could be a summary for residents as part of this report. The Chair said this was given at the Forums but perhaps something could be done. Councillor Daly explained that they did an update for parish councils monthly which could be shared with Ward Members. Councillor Daly agreed to take this as an action.

On the proposal of Councillor Daly seconded by Councillor Packard it was unanimously

RESOLVED

- That the Strategic Planning Committee notes the content of this report and work of the ESC Energy Projects team.
- That the Strategic Planning Committee provides any recommendations as to the content of future updates (if required).

6 Coastal Management and Adaptation Update

Councillor Packard introduced report **ES/2638**. Councillor Packard explained that the officers were unable to attend today's meeting due to the crisis at Thorpeness. He pointed out that it wasn't just Thorpeness facing problems with erosion but the whole coastline. He offered to take questions away for the officers.

Councillor Bennett asked how the Thorpeness survey was carried out and if it was a letterbox drop or online survey. Councillor Packard said there was a public meeting where people could sign up for emails and an external company sent out the survey.

Councillor Smithson noted that 82% were second home owners. Councillor Packard said the Council has problems getting homeowners involved. However Thorpeness has just been allocated some CIL money for the Pavilion as there are people living there permanently, but in general there were a lot of second homes. Some of the properties being demolished were second homes and eight more people were being spoken to today about having to move out.

Councillor Ninmeyer asked where the advice came from that predicted the rate of erosion would reduce, as it has actually increased. Councillor Packard said drones travelled along the coast every week taking footage. The Coastal Management and Adaptation Manager felt that the erosion would settle and a beach would form but this hasn't happened, which is unexpected. He pointed out that we have been in emergency mode for 6 months.

Councillor Ninmeyer said the harbourmaster at Felixstowe says there is an 11-year cycle. They were now waiting for a big storm to bring the materials back rather than taking away.

Councillor Packard said the drone footage showed what had happened in the last three days. However he stressed that the team was on top of this and it is the Council's responsibility to make sure people are safe. We have no money for sea defences but we pay £3m a year protecting the coast but he noted that money doesn't go far.

Councillor Fisher asked if the hard protection around SZC impacted the rest of the coast. Councillor Packard said he knew that some Thorpeness residents feel SZC is impacting them but this is something for the SZC team. Councillor Daly said it was a deep and complex thing. At pre-application SZC said exactly where the hard defence would be and people asked for it to be moved inland or else they would need to put in

sacrificial sand. However, they put it where they put it and data says it is not affecting coastal dynamics. One campaign group said SZC were taking large amounts of shingle offshore. This was done for Sizewell B but not for C. He pointed out that he lives near Shingle Street and the opposite was happening there. The sea used to be lapping at the houses and now the beach is growing but at Friday Street the same thing is happening as at Thorpeness.

Councillor Bennett asked if it was independent voices saying the data shows that SZC doesn't impact the coast. Councillor Daly said there were lots of organisations involved who fed into the DCO that was signed off by Kwasi Kwarteng.

On the proposal of Councillor Packard, seconded by Councillor Ninnmey it was unanimously

RESOLVED

- That the Strategic Planning Committee notes the work undertaken by the Coastal Management and Adaptation team at ESC.
- That the Strategic Planning Committee provides any recommendations as to the content of future updates (if required).

7 Building Control Update

Councillor Packard introduced report **ES/2636**. Members were advised that the officer was not able to attend in person as he was supervising the demolition taking place at Thorpeness.

Councillor Packard explained that Building Control was almost a private enterprise. They tender competitively and had picked up a lot of work from SZC and they produce a surplus for the Council each year. It was a great team and they are doing a great job.

Councillor Ashdown agreed that the team does a marvellous job and they should be congratulated.

The Chair explained they had recently had a Building Safety Regulator audit. The Building Control Partnership Manager hoped the report would be received later this month and would share the findings with Members.

Councillor Bennett asked about the Local Authority Building Control award ceremony this month. Councillor Packard explained that East Suffolk has been put forward for certain awards which were detailed in the report.

Councillor Reeves asked about staff retention and how they had lost staff to retirement and can't offer such a competitive package as private companies. Councillor Packard explained that the Building Control Partnership Manager likes to get people in at a junior level and train them up. It was a struggle at the moment but they were recruiting.

On the proposal of Councillor Packard, seconded by Councillor Ashdown it was unanimously

RESOLVED

- 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

8 Development Management Planning Performance Report – 1 July to 30 September 2025

Councillor Packard introduced report **ES/2651**. The Principal Planner stated that they were exceeding government thresholds for determining planning applications and four out of five of the appeals were upheld in the Council's favour. She explained there were significant changes in circumstances for the fifth appeal. Councillor Packard said the appeals was a measure of our success and showed that generally our decisions are upheld.

Councillor Ninnmey asked how many applications that are rejected at planning meetings go to appeal and how many are modified and resubmitted. The Principal planner was not sure that those statistics could be pulled off but could look at how many applications came through twice.

Councillor Ninnmey said that often members feel intimidated about the possibility of going to appeal. Councillor Packard pointed out that they shouldn't make decisions based on the fear of the cost of an appeal.

The Planning Manager said it was far more common for people to reapply rather than go to appeal. He pointed out that our good performance at appeals shows we have a good track record. He said it was important to protect the council's reputation. If a Council is repeatedly unsuccessful it could mean the Council loses the power of designation and all planning applications go to central government for determination and there are examples of this happening. He said that Members should feel empowered to make a decision. It can be a challenge for the officers and they don't want to come across heavy handed. The cost of a planning appeal is not a material consideration and never should be.

The Principal Planner said there was no easy way to pull off the statistics and it would have to be done manually. The Chair thought committee members would know how many applications came to planning twice.

Councillor Bennett felt this was an interesting idea and asked if it could be done as a one-off exercise for one year eg 2025.

Councillor Ninmeyer wanted evidence to prove to his residents that planning committees weren't just a rubber-stamping exercise.

The Chair said it would be better to talk about examples rather than give statistics. Councillor Packard said it was better to look at the appeals record as we are doing well on appeals.

Councillor Gee said sometimes Members felt under pressure about the cost of appeals and it would be a healthy exercise to do it as a one-off.

Councillor Packard agreed to speak to the Principal Planner to see what can be done. The Chair concluded that the team was doing a brilliant job.

On the proposal of Councillor Packard, seconded by Councillor Pitchers it was unanimously

RESOLVED

- That Strategic Planning Committee notes the report concerning the performance of the Development Management Team in terms of the speed of determining planning applications, outcomes of appeal decisions and enforcement activity.

9 Major Sites and Infrastructure Update

Councillor Packard introduced report **ES/2652** and said that lots of the sites would be coming to Strategic Planning Committee for determination soon and so it was important to note what was being presented today.

The Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager gave a presentation to Members. A submission for North Felixstowe Garden Neighbourhood was expected this year. An application for reserved matters for W4a of Brightwell Lakes was being made and pre-application discussions for phase 2 were taking place. They were expecting a variation of consent in relation to the education site, the major road network and Affordable Housing tenure distribution. Community engagement continues.

A lot of feedback had been received on the South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood and a new programme of meetings has been agreed for the Design Code/Parameters.

The Jeld Wen application has been approved and the s106 was being drafted. For the remainder of the Kirkley Waterfront, the Sanyo and Suitvec development platform pre application is progressing and they are awaiting the outcome from January Cabinet but expect an application this coming summer.

Applications for the North Lowestoft Garden Village were expected imminently and there are some fundamental concerns in a number of areas.

With regards to Land South of the Street Carlton Colville there was a meeting about the Local Plan but there is no specific pre application for this site at the moment.

Land South of Foxhall Road is not an allocated site. Bloor Homes are holding a public consultation. Very detailed discussions are going on to ensure that interests are properly considered.

An application for the eastern parcel of the Beccles and Worlingham Garden Neighbourhood has been submitted. It is currently in consultation and being evaluated and will need some revisions. The western parcel was progressing at a slower speed.

The Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager showed a slide of the Infrastructure Team structure as it was previously and currently. The team is currently under resourced and will be recruiting shortly.

The Infrastructure Delivery Manager gave some facts about CIL including that they had collected over £55m in 13 years. The track record for spending is excellent and only £3.6m is unallocated. There are 42 completed projects, 18 in progress and 18 about to start. They have a statutory requirement to produce an Infrastructure Spending Statement each year. They are being internally audited so will update Members at the next SPC meeting. There will be a review in Feb/March and will invite CIL applications in April.

Councillor Folley asked about the land ownership for Felixstowe and if it was completed. The Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager said she was not involved directly but the landowners have been asked to join together to endorse the documentation that is part of the application.

Councillor Folley asked about Deben Fields. The Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager said from a planning perspective we have tried to be joined up with teams across East Suffolk such as Building Control, Leisure etc as there are concerns that are East Suffolk Council wide. There is a variation of consent application in, which was originally submitted as a discharge. Councillor Folley was advised to contact the case officer directly.

Councillor Pitchers asked if houses are being built to the west of Kirkley. The Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager said there were no plans for housing on the Sanyo section at the moment. Councillor Pitchers clarified that he meant further west on the paint site. The Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager confirmed that a small site was approved but it was being progressed independently of the Kirkley Waterfront. The Principal Planner (Policy and Delivery) said it was not part of the bigger scheme but had not raised any real concerns. Councillor Pitchers asked if there was any movement on the Brook Marina. The Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager said there wasn't and it was very quiet.

Councillor Ninmey asked if the Heads of Agreement with landowners for the Northern

Felixstowe site had been signed. The Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager advised him to direct that question to the Regeneration Team. From a planning perspective, landowners have been invited to meet for the s106 agreement and it is felt there should be a greater input and collaborative working from the landowners to get the best out of the site. It will be up to Cabinet on how they want to proceed.

Councillor Ninnmey asked if there would be a reduction in social housing at Brightwell Lakes. Parishes around were assured it would be developed later so would this still be delivered. The Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager said there was not a change to the delivery across the whole site. They had overprovided on one site and so reduced it back to what was expected. Some tweaks will be coming as part of the VOC but she expected it to be in line with what was agreed though.

Councillor Ninnmey asked if Bloor Homes at Foxhall Road was a sample of what we will be facing because the Local Plan isn't compliant. The Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager explained they were seeing more interest due to the call for sites. She stressed it was critical to get things joined up if it isn't part of the local plan process. The Planning Manager (Policy and Delivery) said the call for sites ended last Friday. She expected this site to have been submitted but couldn't confirm at this point.

Councillor Ashdown asked where things stood with Corton Garden and the odour situation. They don't have a Neighbourhood Plan but want to move things forward. He asked what the cut off was so they could receive the higher rate of CIL and how long do they need it to be in place.

The Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager explained that Anglian Water have stopped processing the waste that was the main source of the odour. Suffolk County Council have been collecting data but the two parties are not willing to meet in the middle. This will need to be considered as part of the application, however it can only be applied to the impact on the site and not the wider area. She explained that the management of the drainage system falls to County so East Suffolk has a limited remit.

The Infrastructure Delivery Manager explained that a Neighbourhood Plan needs to be made before any application is submitted to benefit from the higher rate of CIL.

Councillor Pitchers asked about Woods Meadow pointing out that the new road was completed but when will it be opened. He also asked about the £1m put to one side as part of the S106 agreement in 2017. He wanted to know where it was, what it would be used for and where the doctor's surgery is. The Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager agreed to find out the details from the case officer and would respond separately.

Councillor Gee said there was a rumour that there is meant to be a community hub on the 'Fat and Bone' site. She hoped not as this was a highly toxic site and it should never be built on. The Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager was not aware of anything and understood that the land will be part of the open space area. There is no requirement for a community hub but she would check with the case officer and Head of Planning and Building Control.

On the proposal of Councillor Packard, seconded by Councillor Pitchers it was

unanimously

RESOLVED

- That Strategic Planning Committee notes the contents of the report.

The Committee then took a short break and reconvened at 12:40pm.

10 Planning Policy and Delivery Update

Councillor Packard introduced report **ES/2653**. The Planning Manager (Policy and Delivery) advised Members to take the report as read but there were a couple of updates to note. The decision statement for the Aldringham Neighbourhood Plan has been issued and the referendum is taking place on 12 February 2026. The Melton Neighbourhood Plan area review has been approved, to reflect the parish boundary change.

She said there was a Statement of Community Involvement consultation running from 13 January to 24 February.

The Planning Manager explained that the NPPF consultation has been published and she would be giving a presentation once this report had been considered.

Councillor Ninnmey asked if it was possible to utilise how Neighbourhood Plans were presented for Parishes that have development coming at them, to speed up the creation of Neighbourhood Plans and how will Local Government Review (LGR) impact on those.

The Planning Manager said the quickest they saw a Neighbourhood Plan made was around the 3 year mark but some take much longer. It depends on the commitment and resources in the community. There are statutory stages in the process that set the timescales too. If it was too rushed there could be problems at referendum as consultation is important. They take 3-4 years on average. With regards to LGR, Neighbourhood Plans are still part of the planning system. A parish preparing one would continue using the Local Plan that was in existence for the area that the Neighbourhood Plan relates to.

Councillor Ninnmey said many of his parishes were reluctant to do Neighbourhood Plans but were looking to update their Parish Plans. He asked if they had any value in the planning system. The Planning Manager confirmed that they weren't part of the planning system but parishes can contribute to the Local Plan without having a Neighbourhood Plan.

Councillor Bennett asked about the Lowestoft and Otley referenda turnout figures and if the referendum requirement was going to be dropped. It was confirmed that Lowestoft was 8.2% which was low but turnouts are usually between 15-20 %. Otley was 27.9% but smaller Neighbourhood Plan areas typically have a higher turnout. The Planning Manager said that data would be provided. The Planning Manager was not

aware that the referendum requirement was going to be dropped. She explained that some reviews don't require referendums if the changes aren't substantial.

On the proposal of Councillor Packard, seconded by Councillor Smithson it was unanimously

RESOLVED

- That Strategic Planning Committee notes the contents of the report. The Planning Manager then gave a presentation on the new NPPF, a copy of which is on CMIS. She read out the new NPPF objectives and explained officers will be preparing their response. ESC's new Local Plan will need to give regard to the draft new NPPF.

She explained that the NPPF will have a new structure. MHCLG has summarised the 12 most significant changes:

Permanent presumption in favour of sustainable development, default yes to building homes around stations, higher density development in sustainable locations, diverse mix of homes (include expectations for accessible housing), support of small and medium sites, streamlining local standards, boosting local and regional economies (considering removal of town centre sequential test), supporting critical and growth minerals, embedding a vision led approach to transport, better addressing climate change, conserving and enhancing the natural environment and taking a more positive approach to the use of heritage assets. She advised Members to look at the documentation.

She then ran through the significant changes by chapter.

Councillor Parker left the meeting at 1:22pm. Councillor Fisher left at 1:25pm.

The Planning Manager concluded that officers are reviewing the proposals and they will be drafting a response. There will be more information at the Local Plan Working Group in February and they would finalise the response before 10 March. The new version of the NPPF should be published in the summer.

Councillor Smithson left at 1:28pm

Councillor Daly hoped we will challenge the no energy efficiency standards. The Planning Manager said the key point is that Local Plans won't set those standards but they will be set in Building Regulations and it will make Local Plans quicker to produce.

Councillor Pitchers asked what swift bricks were, if higher density meant building in back gardens and if removing the town centre sequential test will remove vitality from town centres. The Planning Manager explained that swift bricks are bricks with holes in that swifts can nest in. She suggested doing a Google search. She believed that densification proposals will relate to brownfield sites so not really back gardens but they would need to check the details to see what the implications are. The consultation asks a question about the sequential test. There is a balance with town centres and it was important to note that the role of town centre has changed over the years.

Councillor Daly left at 1:31 and Councillor Gee left at 1:32pm.

The Chair advised Members to direct questions to the Planning Manager directly outside of the meeting.

11 Authority Monitoring Report 2024-25

Councillor Packard introduced report ES/2654. On the proposal of Councillor Packard, seconded by Councillor Folley it was unanimously

RESOLVED

- That Strategic Planning Committee notes the content of the report.
- That the Council publishes the East Suffolk Authority Monitoring Report covering the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.
- That the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management, be given delegated authority to make any necessary minor typographical, factual or presentational changes to the documents prior to formally publishing them.

12 Specialist Services Update

Councillor Packard introduced report **ES/2655**. The Chair said it was great that we have such a strong team that offer their services to other councils.

On the proposal of Councillor Packard, seconded by Councillor Ashdown it was by majority

RESOLVED

- That Strategic Planning Committee notes the contents of the report.

Councillor Ninmey abstained from voting on this and subsequent items as the agenda was too long and not enough time was given to consider the items.

13 Making of new Article 4 directions in Bungay and Wrentham

Councillor Packard introduced report **ES/2656**. The Senior Design and Heritage Officer said the important thing to note was this was the third year of the review process. This was the first step in the statutory process. Nothing comes into effect as yet but she was happy to take questions.

Councillor Bennett noticed that there is consideration of Article 4 directions in the old Suffolk Coastal area and he was interested in that as in Felixstowe there are issues with Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs). He would like to discuss this at some point with officers. The Senior Design and Heritage Officer said HMOs are more for the Planning Policy team. She explained that the former Waveney area does have that in place so it could be brought up for consideration.

Councillor Folley asked how the public consultation will happen and if it was online or through delivered leaflets. The Senior Design and Heritage Officer explained that letters are sent to all properties affected by the changes and included maps and guidance information. Specific letters are sent to properties being removed from the area and those being retained. They contain a phone number and postal address and links to the online consultation pages. In Bungay they will be doing a public drop in session. Councillor Folley asked if the session will be suitable for those who do and don't work. The Senior Design and Heritage Officer said it will run 3-6pm on a weekday.

On the proposal of Councillor Packard, seconded by Councillor Pitchers it was by majority

RESOLVED

That Strategic Planning Committee:

- Agrees the making of new Article 4 directions in the Bungay and Wrentham Conservation Areas, covering amended areas shown on the maps attached and including those properties and land included in the schedule attached at Appendices A and B.
- Agrees that the statutory public consultation period is to start on 23 January 2026 and conclude on 6 March 2026 to collect public representations from members of the public affected by the proposed changes.
- Agrees that, following the statutory public consultation period, the new Article 4 directions will be presented to the Strategic Planning Committee at its meeting on 13 April 2026 to consider their confirmation on 22 April 2026.
- Agrees that the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Cabinet member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management, is authorised to make any presentational or typographical amendments to the Article 4 directions and accompanying maps, prior to the public consultation period.

14 Halesworth Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan Adoption

Councillor Packard introduced report **ES/2657**. There were no questions. On the proposal of Councillor Packard, seconded by Councillor Folley it was by majority

RESOLVED

That Strategic Planning Committee

- Agrees the extensions to the Halesworth Conservation Area boundary, as shown on the map attached at Appendix B which includes the properties listed in the schedule attached at Appendix F.
- Agrees the omissions to the Halesworth Conservation Area boundary as shown on the map attached at Appendix B and excludes the properties listed in the schedule attached at Appendix F.
- Adopts the Halesworth Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan as attached at Appendix A.
- That the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management, be authorised to

make any presentational or typographical amendments to the Halesworth Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan prior to it being published.

The meeting concluded at 1:48pm

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Chair