



<b>Committee</b>	Strategic Planning Committee
<b>Date</b>	12/01/2026
<b>Subject</b>	Planning Policy and Delivery Update
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Mark Packard Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management
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Key Decision?	No
Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN

Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is <b>NOT</b> 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 Planning Policy and Delivery work programme, including Neighbourhood Plans, Local Plans, and on housing delivery.

## Recommendation(s)

That Strategic Planning Committee notes the contents of the report.

## Strategic plan

### How does this proposal support Our Direction 2028?

<b>Environmental Impact</b>	The work programme relates to a number of the aims under the Environmental Impact theme. Many Neighbourhood Plans contain policies relating to preserving and maintaining local heritage, and local cycling and walking enhancements.
<b>Sustainable Housing</b>	The work programme supports the delivery of the Council's Local Plans which set out a strategy to deliver housing needed, and the preparation of a new East Suffolk Local Plan which will plan for further housing including affordable housing. Neighbourhood Plans also support this aim, in particular where they include policies on housing or allocate sites for housing.
<b>Tackling Inequalities</b>	A number of the work areas below relate to this theme, in particular the delivery of affordable housing as part of new housing developments. The review of the Statement of Community Involvement aims to ensure that all members of our communities can engage in planning.
<b>Thriving Economy</b>	The work programme supports the aim of ensuring Local Plans work for local people, including supporting communities to prepare their own Neighbourhood Plans, and in relation to the preparation of a new Local Plan.
<b>Our Foundations / governance of the organisation</b>	'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. The review of the Statement of Community Involvement will support the aim of asking communities for their views and ensuring interactions with the Council are as straightforward as possible.

## Justification for recommendations

### 1. Background

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the current Planning Policy and Delivery work programme, which continues to include a 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), alongside preparation of the future new East Suffolk Local Plan.
- 1.2. The current work programme includes activities to support the delivery of the Local Plans, including through monitoring the implementation of the plans. The work of the team also includes the provision of support for Neighbourhood Planning, beyond the statutory requirements, such as through preparation of guidance. Information in this report is also provided on housing delivery and on any relevant national updates.

### 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](#):
  - Otley Neighbourhood Plan – Following referendum on 18<sup>th</sup> September, at which 89% of those voting voted in favour of the Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' by full Council on 24<sup>th</sup> September.
  - Lowestoft Neighbourhood Plan – Following referendum on 20<sup>th</sup> November, at which 87% of those voting voted in favour of the Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' by full Council on 26<sup>th</sup> November.
  - Aldringham-cum-Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan - The Examiner's report was published on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2025.
  - Little Bealings Neighbourhood Plan – Following the Regulation 14 consultation on the Draft Neighbourhood Plan which took place between 9<sup>th</sup> May and 27<sup>th</sup> June 2025, work is subsequently progressing towards Submission.
  - Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan review – Following the Regulation 14 consultation which was held between 27<sup>th</sup> June and 15<sup>th</sup> August 2025, work is progressing towards Submission.
  - Melton Neighbourhood Plan review – Melton Parish Council have applied to review their Neighbourhood Plan area, consultation was held between 29<sup>th</sup> October and 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025.

- Martlesham Neighbourhood Plan review – Martlesham Parish Council have applied to review their Neighbourhood Plan area, consultation is being held between 12th December 2025 and 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026.

Updated 'How to Go About It' guidance and guidance on implementing and monitoring neighbourhood plans were subject to six week consultations between 3<sup>rd</sup> September and 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025 with Town and Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Planning consultants. The [guidance documents](#) have subsequently been finalised and published.

Neighbourhood Planning Guidance for Infrastructure and the Community Infrastructure Levy has been drafted and is to be subject to a six week consultation with Town and Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Planning consultants, commencing in January 2026.

### East Suffolk Local Plan

- 2.3. The [Local Development Scheme](#) adopted in March 2025, sets out an interim timetable for preparation of a new East Suffolk Local Plan, beginning in 2025 with adoption in 2029. The timetable set out is subject to review and updating once the new plan-making system is in place. This is expected to be early 2026 (see national update in paragraphs 2.27 – 2.31 below).
- 2.4. In the meantime, preparatory work that can be undertaken is underway, including scoping of evidence and liaising with other authorities in Suffolk with whom we have broadly aligned timetables. An important early step in preparing a Local Plan is undertaking a Call for Sites to understand the availability of land for future development. A [Call for Sites](#) is underway from 20<sup>th</sup> October 2025 to 9<sup>th</sup> January 2026, aligned with neighbouring Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and Ipswich Borough Council (note – Ipswich Call for Sites ends on 15th December). The Call for Sites has been widely publicised including through social media, a press release and posters, as well as notifying those on the planning policy mailing list. Briefings were provided in October to East Suffolk Council Councillors and to Town and Parish Councils.
- 2.5. Officers are actively monitoring and reviewing the changes to the plan-making system as they are being introduced and also taking opportunities to inform these where possible. New guidance was published by the Government on 27<sup>th</sup> November, on its [Create or Update a Local Plan](#) website, providing greater clarity and detail on the activities that will be required in particular in relation to the early stages of the new system. The legislation and formal introduction of the new system is expected in early 2026.
- 2.6. Much of the work of the team is focusing increasingly on the new Local Plan, with a lot of this currently internal-facing, including scoping activities and project planning.

### Housing Delivery and Supply

- 2.7. The annual housing requirement figure for East Suffolk in the two Local Plans is 916 dwellings. In December 2024, the Government published a new standard method for calculating housing need, which results in a need figure of 1,667 dwellings per year for East Suffolk (calculated at June 2025 using up to date housing stock and affordability data).
- 2.8. During the first two Quarters of 2025/26 (1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September) a total of 275 dwellings were completed, of which 100 were affordable. This is similar to Q1 and Q2

last year and is potentially an early indication of similar completions levels this year (completions in 2024/25 were 752 dwellings). As at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025 1,369 dwellings were under construction, which is a slight increase over recent figures which have generally been below 1,300. Of those under construction 265 are affordable homes.

- 2.9. The annual update to the [Housing Land Supply Statement](#) has been undertaken, and this has been published. The Housing Land Supply position is, as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025: Suffolk Coastal Local Plan area 3.09 years; Waveney Local Plan area 2.88 years; East Suffolk 3.07 years. These figures are slightly lower than the updated figures published in September 2025 following the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan becoming five years old; however, the position has not materially changed, and remains as set out in the [Interim Housing Position Statement](#) published in September. In summary, the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) applies in relation to housing proposals (unless particular applications fall within the scope of NPPF-defined exemptions).

#### Statement of Community Involvement Review

- 2.10. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the Council must have a Statement of Community Involvement setting out its approach to consultation in relation to various Planning duties. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) require local planning authorities to complete an update to their Statements of Community Involvement by five years from the date of adoption. The [East Suffolk Statement of Community Involvement](#) was adopted in April 2021 and therefore will be five years old in the Spring. Whilst Statements of Community Involvement are anticipated to be replaced under the reforms to the planning system, a review is underway under the current legislation. A draft review of the Statement of Community Involvement has been undertaken and consultation will be taking place in January and February.

#### Section 106 Affordable Housing Guidance for Developers

- 2.11. As with virtually all other areas of the country, we have been experiencing some considerable difficulties with the willingness of Registered Providers to take on affordable housing as part of residential developments. In order to assist with addressing this, a roundtable with Registered Providers was held in the summer and following this we have prepared draft guidance for developers to assist with securing a Registered Provider for S106 properties. The [draft guidance](#) is currently being consulted on with developers and Registered Providers and following this will be finalised and published. Officers from Planning have worked closely with officers from Housing to prepare the guidance, along with other approaches such as improving the provision of information available on our website.

#### Major Energy Projects Planning Position Statement

- 2.12. The implications of major energy projects (especially Sizewell C) taking place in or coming ashore in East Suffolk are very considerable. One of the most significant matters is ensuring that there is sufficient appropriate accommodation available for the workers whilst minimising the impacts on existing local communities. This is not straightforward and neither is it fully within the direct control of the Council. However, there are already pressures appearing locally, with significant increases in rental prices in places like Leiston and some occupation of caravan pitches in some places likely not in conformity with the relevant planning permission. The Council is also concerned that

the main stock of tourism accommodation is not unduly 'taken up' by energy projects workers, to the detriment of the tourism sector, a vital part of the East Suffolk economy. The preparation of a Planning Position Statement, setting out material considerations that would apply in the consideration of planning applications, together with signposting guidance on various related matters (for example caravan site licensing and sewerage disposal) is considered to be an important part of trying to manage the matter. Consultation on this document is anticipated to take place for five weeks from mid-January to mid-February 2026, with adoption planned for Cabinet in April 2026.

#### Authority Monitoring Report

- 2.13. The 2024/25 Authority Monitoring Report has been drafted and is subject of a separate report presented to the January Strategic Planning Committee meeting for approval.

#### Employment Land Action Plan

- 2.14. The 2025 update to the Employment Land Action Plan, which reviews the delivery of allocated employment sites, has been completed.

#### **Key project milestones over the next three to four months**

#### Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.15. Progress with [Neighbourhood Plans](#) over the next three to four months:
- Aldringham-cum-Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan - following consideration of the Examiner's report, progress will be made by the Council towards issuing a Decision Statement. It is anticipated that subsequently a referendum will take place in February.
  - Little Bealings Neighbourhood Plan – progress will be made towards Submission, following which a Regulation 16 consultation will be carried out.
  - Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan review – progress will be made towards Submission, following which a Regulation 16 consultation will be carried out.
  - Decisions will be taken on the approval of the revised Neighbourhood Plan areas for Martlesham and Melton.
- 2.16. The Neighbourhood Planning guidance on planning for Infrastructure and the Community Infrastructure Levy will be finalised following consultation and will be published.

#### East Suffolk Local Plan

- 2.17. The Call for Sites closes on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2026. It is anticipated that a map of all sites submitted will be published in the early part of the year, following checking of the information submitted. At this stage, no assessment work will have been undertaken on the sites and submission of a site does not provide any form of planning status.
- 2.18. In addition to the Call for Sites, preparation for commencing work on a new Local Plan will continue, having regard to recently published draft guidance. The new plan-making system is now expected to be in place early in 2026 and at the time of writing it is anticipated that a consultation on revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework and proposed national development management policies will be starting before the end of 2025, which will provide further certainty for the scope of a new Local Plan.

2.19. Under the new system it is anticipated that in the early months of next year progress will be made on preparing a Local Plan Timetable and giving formal notice of commencing work on the Local Plan, following which a scoping consultation would take place. Other preparatory work that will continue includes evidence commissioning / gathering, work on the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment scoping and identifying effective ways of engaging with key stakeholders, working with other Suffolk authorities.

#### Housing Delivery

2.20. As stated in paragraph 2.7 above, there were 1,369 dwellings under construction as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025, a slight increase in recent figures. 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.

2.21. It is important that work continues to ensure that the supply of housing sites comes forward. Much of the housing planned for in the Local Plans is contained in the strategic allocated sites, which by their nature take longer to deliver.

2.22. The 'Presumption in favour of sustainable development' now applies across the district, and therefore some sustainable unplanned sites are likely to come forward, to contribute towards housing supply.

2.23. The actions set out in the [Housing Action Plan](#) and in the [Custom and Self-Build Housing Action Plan](#) will continue to be taken forward and implemented.

#### Statement of Community Involvement Review

2.24. Following the consultation on the revised Statement of Community Involvement consideration will be given to comments received and the final Statement of Community Involvement will be taken to Cabinet for adoption. Officers will also continue to monitor changes to the plan-making system in relation to any new requirements related to setting out our approach to consultation. In relation to the Local Plan it is anticipated that a scoping consultation will take place (after the Local Plan Timetable and notice of commencement are agreed and published, see paragraph 2.19 above) which will seek views on how people would like to be engaged in the preparation of the plan.

#### Section 106 Affordable Housing Guidance for Developers

2.25. Following consultation on the draft guidance, consideration will be given to comments received and the guidance will be finalised.

#### Major Energy Projects Planning Position Statement

2.26. Following consultation on the draft position statement, anticipated to be held from mid-January to mid-February, consideration will be given to comments received and the guidance will be finalised. It is anticipated to be adopted by Cabinet in April.

#### Authority Monitoring Report

2.27. Subject to approval by Strategic Planning Committee at this meeting, the 2024/25 Authority Monitoring Report will be published.

## National update

- 2.28. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act received Royal Assent in October 2023. The Act will bring about a number of changes, including changes to the preparation of Local Plans. On 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025 a Ministerial Statement by Matthew Pennycook Minister of State for Housing and Planning entitled '[Reforming Local Plan-Making](#)' was published, announcing the publication of further information related to the new plan-making system and setting out that the new system will come into force 'early next year' (2026). A suite of guidance and information has been published on the Government's [Create or Update a Local Plan](#) webpage, largely relating to the early stages of the new plan-making system, in order that plan-makers and key stakeholders can familiarise themselves with this in advance of the new system being introduced.
- 2.29. It has also recently been announced that consultation on a revised National Planning Policy Framework and on national development management policies will commence before the end of 2025.
- 2.30. Also in November, Steve Reed, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, has announced proposed reforms in a statement titled '[Next phase of planning reform](#)'. This includes proposals for supporting development in close proximity to well-connected train stations, to be proposed through revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework, proposals for local planning authorities to inform the Secretary of State if they are minded to refuse applications for 150 homes or more, and streamlining statutory consultees.
- 2.31. In relation to statutory consultees, a consultation is underway until 13<sup>th</sup> January 2026 on [reforms to the statutory consultee system](#), under which Sports England, the Gardens Trust and the Theatres Trust would no longer be statutory consultees on planning applications. A response is being prepared.
- 2.32. A presentation will be provided at the Strategic Planning Committee meeting on the National Planning Policy Framework and national development management policies consultations and other key national updates.

### **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. Resourcing for the future Local Plan was subject of the Council's budget decisions in February 2025.

### **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. Risks are analysed and monitored in relation to individual projects.

**7. Options**

7.1. This report is for information only.

**8. Recommendations**

8.1. That Strategic Planning Committee notes 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 April 2026.

## Areas of consideration comments

### Section 151 Officer comments:

The Section 151 Officer has no additional 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	
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## Background reference papers:

Date	Type	Available From
2019	Waveney Local Plan	<a href="#">Adopted-Waveney-Local-Plan-including-Erratum.pdf</a>
2020	Suffolk Coastal Local Plan	<a href="#">East-Suffolk-Council-Suffolk-Coastal-Local-Plan.pdf</a>
Various	Neighbourhood Plans	<a href="#">Neighbourhood Plans</a>
2025	'How to go about it' Neighbourhood Planning Guidance	<a href="#">Preparing a Neighbourhood Plan » East Suffolk Council</a>
2025	Guidance on implementing and monitoring neighbourhood plans	<a href="#">Preparing a Neighbourhood Plan » East Suffolk Council</a>
2025	East Suffolk Local Development Scheme	<a href="#">Local Development Scheme</a>
2025	Housing Land Supply Statement	<a href="#">Housing Land Supply » East Suffolk Council</a>
2025	Interim Housing Position Statement	<a href="#">East-Suffolk-Housing-Position-Statement-September-2025-Update.pdf</a>
2024	National Planning policy Framework	<a href="#">National Planning Policy Framework</a>
2021	East Suffolk Statement of Community Involvement	<a href="#">East Suffolk Statement of Community Involvement</a>
2025	Draft S106 Affordable Housing Guidance for Developers	<a href="#">Draft S106 Affordable Housing Guidance for Developers - East Suffolk Council, Strategic Planning Consultations</a>
2025	Housing Action Plan	<a href="#">Housing Action Plan</a>
2025	Custom and Self Build Action Plan	<a href="#">CSB-Action-Plan.pdf</a>
2025	Ministerial Statement 'Reforming Local Plan-Making'	<a href="#">Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament</a>
2025	Create or Update a Local Plan	<a href="#">Create or update a local plan using the new system - GOV.UK</a>
2025	Next Phase of Planning Reform – Statement by Steve Reed Housing Secretary	<a href="#">Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament</a>
2025	Consultation on Reforms to the Statutory Consultees System	<a href="#">Reforms to the statutory consultee system - GOV.UK</a>