

# Neighbourhood Planning Guide

July 2025

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The Guide

This Neighbourhood Planning Guide explains the main County Council services that may need to be considered when carrying out neighbourhood planning and it provides information on the wide range of Essex County Council (ECC) policy and guidance documents which can assist in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Guide is set out by different themes so that community and neighbourhood planning groups preparing neighbourhood plans can easily identify what information, help, and support can be obtained from ECC for specific subjects.

This Guide provides the following information on each theme:

- Relevance to neighbourhood planning
- ECC's role and interest
- The key documents and guidance produced by ECC to be considered when a Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared, and weblinks to those documents

The ECC Spatial Planning Team can provide relevant best practice policies and position statements on these themes, which will also be relevant to preparing a Neighbourhood Plan (policy formation and site allocation). For further information please contact [mail.spatialplanning@essex.gov.uk](mailto:mail.spatialplanning@essex.gov.uk)

## 1.2 Context

Neighbourhood Plans can shape, direct and help deliver sustainable growth in a local area. Once adopted a Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the statutory development plan for an area and is used in the determination of planning applications. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any development plan that covers their area, and that the policies in the NPPF will apply for the purposes of preparing neighbourhood plans.

In Essex (excluding the unitary authorities of Southend-on Sea City Council and Thurrock Council) we operate under a two-tier system of local government. In the first instance, you should always approach your local borough, city, or district council for their help and guidance about how to go about neighbourhood planning in your area, and their documents that need to be considered when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

However, ECC is a key infrastructure and service provider for Essex communities, responsible for delivering and commissioning a wide range of strategic and local infrastructure requirements and public services which are needed to support new and existing development. ECC's role covers a wide range of statutory services including (but not limited to) highways and transportation, education, early years and childcare, minerals, waste, surface water management, adult social care, and Public Health. ECC also advises on, and

have a material interest in, a number of other related place making and place keeping matters such as skills, sector development, climate change and net zero, climate resilience, and sustainable forms of energy production and supply.

Infrastructure is needed to support development and ensure that a neighbourhood can grow in a sustainable way. New housing, employment, and other forms of development can place pressure on existing infrastructure and services. Therefore the impacts, of proposed site allocation options or policies in neighbourhood plans, on physical infrastructure and on the capacity of existing services will need to be assessed, including any mitigation required, and how they will be funded and delivered.

The documents produced by ECC therefore play an important role in helping to decide whether proposals should be included in a Neighbourhood Plan and should be given careful consideration when a Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared. These documents are already in use to assist in the production of Local Plans at the borough, city, and district council level, and in some cases have been adopted as policy by such councils as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPD).

### 1.3 Land Ownership

During the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans an understanding of land ownership, and landowners aspirations is essential. This can provide valuable information on the availability of land, as well as information regarding constraints and opportunities on land, to inform the process of site selection and policy formation.

Agreements with the landowners are then made more easily in regard to appropriate development that meets the need of both groups. The risk of objections and opposition from landowners at the examination and referendum stages would also be reduced following such discussions.

Neighbourhood Plans may express an interest in allocating sites for development, or including land-use policies, that may affect land or property owned by ECC. Liaison with the County Council would therefore be required to establish the availability and/or suitability of such site allocations and/or policies.

ECC's property portfolio is spread throughout Essex and includes libraries, children's services, adult care, waste, travellers' sites, highway depots, country parks, heritage sites, adult education centres, outdoor education, and park and ride sites.

Initial enquires in relation to ECC land ownership should be made through ECC's property advisors Lambert Smith Hampton. They can be contacted by [essexenquiries@lsh.co.uk](mailto:essexenquiries@lsh.co.uk)

All the property ECC own or have an interest in can be found on the [Essex Property Asset Map \(EPAM\)](#) [Essex Property Asset Map \(EPAM\)](#) or in ECC's [council property list](#).

The [ECC Property Strategy](#) (2022-2025) sets the vision for ECC's property portfolio to:

- enable wellbeing, growth and prosperity for the residents of Essex

- lead by example in contributing to the County Council's Zero Carbon Essex 2050 outcomes
- maximise commercial opportunities for the County Council
- Relevance to neighbourhood planning
- hold the right assets in the right place and condition to facilitate excellent service delivery by the County Council and its partners

## **1.4 Further support for Neighbourhood Planning in Essex**

Further information and sources of guidance and support for parish and town councils in Essex can be accessed through the following organisations:

[Essex Association of Local Councils](#)

[National Association of Local Councils](#)

[Rural Community Council of Essex](#)

[Planning Aid](#)

[Locality](#)

## 2. Climate Change and Net Zero

### 2.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

Adapting to climate consequences will be required everywhere to protect people, homes, businesses, livelihoods, infrastructure and natural ecosystems. Many climate change solutions deliver economic benefits while improving lives and protecting the environment. Changing the way we generate energy and power, and how we ultimately use that power in our homes and buildings brings with it opportunities for local people and communities to play a role in the development and ownership of their local energy and power systems.

Neighbourhood Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long term impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risk, coastal change, and future energy systems. This can be achieved through providing land / space for physical protection measures such as those to address flood risk; identifying local opportunities for renewable energy projects that can power homes and businesses in a neighbourhood, while also exploring community ownership models that can provide income to be reinvested; siting development in sustainable locations thus reducing the need to travel, congestion and emissions, and improving air quality and public health, as well as formulating policies that support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change; and ensure any development built reduces greenhouse emissions, including through their location, orientation, design and construction.

Neighbourhood Plans can outline the priorities of the community and identify suitable and place-sensitive opportunities for local and community-owned energy generation, which can also support other local concerns such as reducing energy bills of households and businesses or investing in green areas. Neighbourhood Plans can also seek any future large-scale commercial developments to commit to providing community benefit funds and/or shared ownership opportunities so that at least some of the benefits from the proceeds of the development are kept local. Neighbourhood groups could use Community-led energy planning (CLEP) to identify interest in shared solar panel projects, community wind turbines, and identify buildings that need upgrading to reduce energy bills. This will ensure new developments align with environmental objectives, the energy systems of the future, and the aspirations of the local community.

### 2.2 ECC Role and interest

A high-quality environment is one of the four core strategic aims in [ECC Everyone's Essex](#) (2021 – 2025), which includes the five commitments for the environment of net zero; transport and the built environment; minimise waste; green communities; and levelling the environment. These are incorporated into the [‘Our Environmental Statement’](#) to ensure a better quality of life by conserving, developing and promoting a healthy, safe, diverse, clean and attractive environment (see below).

The [Essex Climate Action Commission](#) (ECAC) was set up to advise ECC about tackling climate change. It was launched in May 2020 for an initial term of two years and has since been extended for a further three years to 2025. It is an independent, voluntary, and cross-party body bring together groups from the public and private sector, as well as individuals from other organisations.

It sets out recommendations on tackling the climate crisis including a roadmap to get Essex to net zero by 2050. Many of the measures to be taken will be well underway by 2030 and by 2031, ECC is seeking to be a net zero county where:

- Everyone can enjoy multifunctional green spaces. We all value and get the best out of our incredible landscape and our public spaces
- We buy local and support our local businesses
- We avoid waste and recycle, reuse, repair and refurbish as much as we can. Our universities, colleges, and schools inspire and equip future generations with the skills we need to tackle the climate crisis
- Essex is a key centre of innovation in the UK where green economy is booming. Skilled workers want to come and live here, and green industries want to invest here. Our existing businesses are transforming into low carbon, and environmentally responsible organisations. We operate a Circular Economy where we no longer throw anything away but instead our industries are set up to re-use our materials carefully
- Our local businesses and organisations, and all the people who live, work, and play in Essex – understand the climate challenge. We are all doing the right thing and helping to move us towards our net zero target

## 2.3 Key Documents and Guidance

ECAC's report [Essex Climate Action Commission Report Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral](#) was published in 2021, and its recommendations are relevant to ECC, local authorities, parish and town councils, as well as Essex businesses, residents, and community groups. The report sets out a comprehensive plan for Essex to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 in line with UK statutory commitments; and to make Essex more resilient to climate impacts such as flooding, water shortages and overheating. The report covers a wide range of topic areas including land use, energy, waste, transport, plus the built and natural environments, and relevant matters are highlighted in the individual chapters of this Guide. Specific recommendations are also identified in each chapter.

The report's recommendations were endorsed by ECC in November 2021 and form the basis of the ECC Climate Action Plan. The [Essex Climate Action Annual Report](#) follows the publication of the [Climate Action Plan](#) (November 2022) and outlines the immediate actions ECC is taking directly and with partners to drive effective progress against the ECAC recommendations.

The [ECC Environmental Statement](#) is consistent with the four core strategic aims in Everyone's Essex and the ECAC recommendations, and covers land use and green infrastructure; transport; built environment; energy; waste minimisation; community engagement; green economy; and governance.

The Essex Design Guide (EDG) includes a [series of sections](#) which make reference to climate change either as part of a specific intervention or as recommended best practice. Such themes include SUDS; layout; influences upon sustainability; renewable energy for developments; electric vehicles; densities for sustainable developments; housing layout & design (plots & internal spaces); movement; mixed uses; landscape and green spaces; solar orientation. The EDG also contains [solar farm guiding principles](#).

ECC is also working with local authorities, through the Climate and Planning Unit funded by ECAC, to prepare a suite of model policies and evidence on net zero development and climate change mitigation and adaptation for inclusion in future local and neighbourhood plans. The work to date forms part of the Essex Design Guide (EDG) and includes the [Planning Policy Position for Net Zero Carbon Homes and Buildings in Greater Essex](#) (November 2023), which is supported by [evidence](#) in the form of Net Zero Carbon Viability and Toolkit Study (August 2022); Essex Net Zero Policy Study (Reports 1 & 2) July 2023; Essex Open Legal Advice – Energy policy and Building Regulations (February 2024); Essex Embodied Carbon Policy Study (June 2024); Essex Net Zero Specifications (July 2024); and Essex Net Zero Energy Offsetting Tarriff (July 2025). A draft [Planning Policy Position for Lower Embodied Carbon Homes and Buildings in Greater Essex](#) (July 2025) has also been prepared and will supersede the interim ‘placeholder’ policy for embodied carbon in the [November 2023 document](#). The EDG website also provides advice and guidance to support the [implementation](#) of the net zero policies.

To complement this evidence, practical design advice is provided (and being added to) on the EDG focusing on how to design developments (of all scales and types) to meet the net zero carbon and energy standards, mitigate potential overheating risk and to address other inter-related sustainability issues. The aim is to ensure new development mitigates, adapts and is resilient to a changing climate.

The [EDG](#) also provides guidance on how local communities can realise the benefits of developer-led renewable energy infrastructure, such as the opportunity for part community ownership or an ongoing community benefit fund.

The [Draft Essex Air Quality Strategy](#) sets out the current understanding of air quality in Greater Essex and outlines the actions to take to improve air quality. Public consultation on the strategy, supporting information, and action plans took place in early 2025, and approval and publication is expected in autumn 2025.



## 3. Sustainable Travel and Transportation

### 3.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

A resilient, reliable, efficient and safe transport network that provides for the movement of people and goods is necessary to support development, improve productivity, enable economic growth, and allow everyday activity.

The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth by focusing on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes to deliver well-designed, sustainable places. Neighbourhood Plans, from the earliest stages of preparation, should address the potential impacts on the highway and transportation network from the allocation of sites, the proposal of different types of development, and the formation of policy.

Neighbourhood Plans can seek to realise the opportunities provided by existing and proposed infrastructure to improve connectivity for their communities; promote walking, cycling, and public transport use; and ensure the design of places incorporates patterns of movement, streets and parking and other transport considerations. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. They can also consider the requirements for the movement of goods to and from and within the neighbourhood, such as deliveries to and from local businesses and the home, in addition to the movement of people.

It should be noted that different approaches between neighbourhood areas could result in unintended consequences and/or disjointed provision. The consideration of existing and future transportation and highway needs within neighbourhood plans should therefore be based on the highway and transportation strategies and policies of ECC, to ensure continuity across the county.

### 3.2 ECC Role and interest

ECC is the Transportation and Highway Authority for the administrative area of Essex and is responsible for transport strategy, policy, the management, maintenance and operation of local transport infrastructure, and the implementation of necessary improvements. ECC can also decide to support the delivery of transport services which are in the main delivered commercially. It is important that ECC's transport policies and proposals are implemented at the local level, and the ECC's approach considers neighbouring authorities and is consistent with national policy.

ECC is responsible for providing and working with partners to deliver a wide range of local transport strategies, policies and services. Our roles and responsibilities include:

- planning for the future through the preparation of the Essex Local Transport Plan;
- working collaboratively with Essex authorities in the preparation of Local Plans;
- maintaining and managing the County's roads (excluding motorways and trunk roads which are managed by National Highways);

- supporting local bus services and community transport services;
- providing public transport infrastructure (including bus stations and waiting facilities);
- improving safety on our roads;
- investing in facilities to support and encourage the greater use of low carbon forms of travel (including walking and cycling);
- providing up-to-date travel information;
- maintaining footpaths, bridleways, byways and cycle routes.
- a partner in Transport East, and
- liaison with national network providers; National Highways and Network Rail to ensure the provision of strategic connectivity.

### 3.3 Key Documents and Guidance

#### Highways and Transportation - Overarching

ECC has a statutory requirement to develop a Local Transport Plan (LTP) that *“includes policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities and services to, from and within their area, that are required to meet the needs of persons living or working in the authority’s area, or visiting or travelling through that area, including those required for the transportation of freight.”*

The current [LTP3](#) is the Essex Transport Strategy and development within Essex is required to comply with the policies contained within it and to support the delivery of its wider strategic aims. The policies seek to ensure transport and land-use planning will be used together to secure new development at the most appropriate locations; support and encourage the use of lower carbon travel; and encourage the use of more active and sustainable forms of travel.

Given the timescales and policy evolution since the adoption of LTP3, as the current ECC transport policy is comprised of the [LTP3](#), and the following which place greater emphasis upon the provision and use of active and sustainable transport and the decarbonisation of the transport network:

[Transport East](#) is the sub-national Transport Body for Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Southend and Thurrock. The [Transport East: Transport Strategy](#) which sets a single regional voice for transport investment and supports the acceleration of regional transport priorities.

The [Essex Climate Action Commission Report ‘Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral’](#) includes a number of recommendations relating to transport. It seeks to achieve net zero carbon transport emissions in Essex by 2050 with transport strategy that will comprise an Avoid (or reduce unnecessary private car journeys), Shift (in use of active and sustainable modes of transport) and Improve (essential road journeys using alternatively fuelled options) approach.

ECC is developing a [LTP4](#) which will be subject to [public consultation in 2025](#). It will cover three strategic themes - Supporting People, Health, Wellbeing, and Independence; Creating Sustainable Places and Communities; and Connecting People, Places and Businesses, and will

incorporate a suite of place-based Implementation Plans that include transport ambitions in the area and outcomes to achieve, and an initial list of potential projects.

The LTP is supported by documents specific to different modes of transport including rail. Bus, walking or cycling and which should also be considered when preparing Neighbourhood Plans the suite of documents are outlined in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

ECC has established Local Highways Panels for each borough, city and district which are responsible for making recommendations and setting priorities for highways schemes in their areas at the local level. Further information can be found on the [Essex Highways website](#).

## **Active and Sustainable Travel**

The ECC [Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy](#) outlines the steps being taken to enable accessibility to places of employment and education for all, including other neighbourhood services such as retail and leisure; with the associated health, social and economic benefits of using alternative modes of transport.

ECC works alongside developers, businesses, and transport consultants on the creation, implementation and delivery of Travel Plans ([Residential](#) and [Businesses](#)), as well as the supply and distribution of Travel Information Packs for new development sites. Travel Plans contain information on practical travel initiatives, and the range of transport options available, in order to encourage occupiers, employers, and employees to think about the way they travel to and from home and work, to encourage sustainable travel.

The [Essex Cycling Strategy](#) and [Cycling Action Plans](#) (CAP) for individual borough, city and districts accompany the LTP. It outlines how areas in Essex can enable, provide, and promote cycling as an important part of local transport infrastructure.

The [Essex Walking Strategy](#) (2021) provides guidance on creating an environment which encourages walking and putting the needs of the pedestrian first. It introduces nine objectives from increasing walking for everyday journeys such as getting to school, to better design and enhanced accessibility.

[Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans](#) (LCWIP), as well as a countywide LCWIP are being prepared and build upon the CAP's to develop network plans for walking and cycling across Essex.

ECC's [Safer Greener Healthier campaign](#) seeks to make it as easy as possible for Essex residents to travel more sustainably, especially for shorter journeys by walking, cycling, e-scootering or taking the bus or train for longer journeys. Its vision seeks to create a road environment that is safer, especially for shorter journeys; deliver sustainable transport solutions to support the reduction in carbon emissions and deliver long-term greener benefits, including long term public health benefits. The SGH campaign also seeks to support the creation of School Streets and Liveable Neighbourhoods.

The [Essex Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy](#) focuses on how EV charging infrastructure can be delivered in the county. Its vision is to deliver the right charger in the right place, with an accessible, reliable, easy-to-use, safe and fairly priced charging network in Essex by 2030.

## **Passenger Transport**

As the strategic authority responsible for the management of passenger transport services (bus, community transport, and demand responsive transport), ECC produces a number of passenger transport strategies.

As a response to the national bus strategy Bus Back Better, ECC made the Enhanced Partnership (EP) with bus operators which includes a set of commitments to provide a new, high quality and reliable bus network. The [Bus Service Improvement Plan](#) (BSIP) sets out local issues relating to bus networks and how local authorities can tackle them. There are [periodic reviews](#) of the ECC BSIP (2021-2026), and [Bus Network Reviews](#) have been undertaken for all local authority areas in Essex.

ECC works with several partners including DfT, Network Rail, Transport East and both passenger and freight service providers to develop plans for rail investment in Essex. ECC is also part of the [Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership](#) which promotes rail travel on the five branch lines within Essex.

Information is available on [community and accessible based transport schemes](#) in operation throughout Essex.

The ECC [Education Transport Policy](#) sets out the criteria for a child to qualify for school transport. Where development is proposed in locations that may require ECC to provide school transport, developer contributions will be sought to fund provision, details of which are set out in the [ECC Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions](#). An updated version of the Guide will be published in September 2025.

## **Public Rights of Way**

There are over six thousand miles of Public Rights of Way ([PROW](#)) in Essex, comprising footpaths, bridleways and byways. The '[Definitive Map](#)' and 'Definitive Statement' record the location of PROW across Essex. The [digital interactive map](#) is available online. ECC maintains and updates the Definitive Map and Definitive Statement, to provide conclusive evidence of the existence of a PROW.

The [Essex Rights of Way Improvement Plan](#) (ROWIP) is a statutory document that sets out ECC's ambitions for improving the provision of access to the countryside through Rights of Way over a 10 year period. An [Advice Note](#) is available about new development which may affect PROW.

## Development Management and Maintenance

Development management provides the framework position on highway design and transport matters relating to new development within which to assess whether planning applications are acceptable or not. This is relevant to Neighbourhood Planning because the local level policies within the county development management documents provide a steer on acceptable and unacceptable development and are applicable to planning at a neighbourhood level.

The Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA) [Essex Parking Guidance 2024, Part 1 \(Design and Good Practice\)](#) and [Essex Parking Guidance 2004, Part 2 \(Garden Communities and Large Scale Development\)](#) looks at solutions to accommodate parking for a range of vehicles (powered and unpowered), and proposes a level of provision which balance demand / provisions with the need to create quality public / private spaces. Details also cover electric vehicle charging requirements for both residential and non-residential uses, as well as residential and commercial cycle parking.

The [Essex Parking Policy](#) sets out the County Council's policy regarding on-street parking which is used by police enforcement and local authority enforcement.

ECC, within the [Essex Design Guide](#), produces [Developer Documentation](#) (Highways Technical Manual) to provide advice to developers on infrastructure contributions, public rights of way, transport assessments, use of street materials, and technical approval of third party structures. In relation to pavements, pedestrian areas, and highways the [Street Materials Guide](#) provides helpful advice and examples of good practice to guide new development on the best use of street materials. ECC also produces transport [Development Management Policies](#) to deal with development pressures across the County.

When the Highway Authority takes on assets from developers it incurs maintenance costs for the life of the assets, and replacement costs at the end of their useful life. Commuted sums to cover these costs are required from the developer. The types of assets include street lighting; traffic signals and illuminated signs; pedestrian crossings; highway structures such as retaining walls, bridges and gantries; landscaping and adopted land; fencing and noise bunds; bus shelters and other public transport infrastructure; street furniture and bollards; soak-aways; drainage infrastructure; tree planting in soft and hard landscaping, hedges; culverts; traffic management features; interceptors; pavements.

The 'Highways and transportation', 'Sustainable Travel Planning', 'Passenger Transport', and 'Public Rights of Way' sections, and Appendix H, of the [ECC Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions](#) provides ECC's requirements in relation to scope and range of highways and transportation contributions. These include transport assessments / statements; works versus contributions; traffic regulation orders; commuted sums; sustainable travel (travel plans); passenger transport; and public rights of way. An updated version of the Guide will be published in September 2025.

ECC has a statutory duty to maintain the public highway to a reasonably safe standard. In order to comply with this duty ECC has developed the [Highways Maintenance Policy and General Principles](#), which sets out how the highway will be maintained. This is supported by

a suite of documents that set out and describe ECC's highway maintenance, inspection, and asset management strategies. Details are contained on the ECC [website](#).

Responsibility for the maintenance of highway trees in Essex falls to different authorities, depending on the borough, city, or district, in which the tree is located. ECC is responsible for the maintenance of trees on road verges in Braintree, Brentwood, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Maldon, Rochford, and Uttlesford. The Councils of Basildon, Colchester, Epping, Harlow, and Tendring deliver tree management on behalf of ECC. Details of ECC tree management is set out in its [Tree Management Plan and Tree Management Statements](#).

ECC is a member of the Safer Essex Roads Partnership (SERP) and further information about road safety can be found on their [website](#).

ECC manages a number of improvement schemes on roads and other public areas for which it is responsible and further information can be obtained on the Essex Highways [website](#).

The Essex Traffic Management Strategy contains ECC's traffic management strategy for Essex roads for the next 20 years. The Essex Speed Management Strategy is designed for use by all those involved in speed management to offer clear and consistent parameters for the setting of speed limits in Essex. These can be found on the Essex Highways [website](#).

## 4. Education Provision

### 4.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

It is important that a sufficient choice of early years and childcare (EYCC), school and post-16 places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Pupil places are planned across geographic areas or school groups agreed with the Department for Education (DfE). EYCC is planned by city, borough, and district council ward. It is beyond the scope of most Neighbourhood Plans to plan holistically for education and childcare places in the area. They should, however, consider the proximity and capacity of educational facilities where new housing is proposed, as the scale and type of such development in a Neighbourhood Plan may lead to a need to provide more places in existing or new facilities. Neighbourhood Plans should consider these matters as part of the site selection process, and during policy formation, taking account of the size and type of development. Neighbourhood Plans can also play a positive role in improving the environment around schools and the walking and cycling routes to them.

### 4.2 ECC Role and interest

ECC has a statutory duty under the 1996 Education Act and 2006 Childcare Act to secure sufficient school places to serve their area and sufficient childcare for working parents (inclusive of free provision). The available schools must be sufficient in number, character and equipment to provide all pupils with the opportunity of an appropriate education, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). New provision may take the form of a new school, expansion of existing schools or land for future provision. EYCC provision comprises of a range of private, voluntary and independent providers which includes full day care nurseries, pre-schools, childminders, school run provision, and wrap around care (breakfast, afterschool and holiday clubs).

Section 2 of the 2006 Education and Inspections Act further places ECC, as the appropriate local authority, under a duty to secure diversity in the provision of schools and increase opportunities for parental choice, in particular Academy Trusts and Free Schools. To meet these duties, ECC acts as a commissioner rather than a provider of new schools and, in order that potential providers may express their interest in running a school, will set out the requirements for the provisions needed to serve a new community.

Regardless of whether schools have Academy status, are Free Schools, or are Maintained Schools, ECC is the appropriate authority to assess the requirements for additional school places to serve any new housing developments proposed by a Local Plan or supported by a Neighbourhood Plan. Where a Section 106 legal agreement (developer contribution) delivers the land and funding for a new school or EYCC facility, ECC will usually procure the buildings and then transfer it to the successful provider to occupy.

The DfE Raising the Participation Policy requires all young people in England to continue in education or training beyond the age of 16. Young people have a choice about how they continue in education or training post-16, which could be through full time study; full time



work or volunteering (20 hours or more) combined with part time education or training; or apprenticeship or traineeship.

ECC also has a duty to secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people in their area who are over compulsory school age but under 19 or aged 19 to 25 and for whom an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is maintained. ECC determines 'sufficient' as having enough post 16 provisions to meet need and choice, and 'suitable' as offering a range of academic, technical, and vocational provisions against demand.

ECC sets out the formula for estimating the number of children that new homes will generate. This considers the number, types, and sizes of dwellings that are suitable to accommodate children, as well as those dwellings that are excluded.

ECC also identifies, where appropriate, the required financial contributions, and/or site/land requirements, for education facilities, to ensure that they are safe and fit for purpose. Such criteria include consideration of ground conditions, topography, sources of contamination, noise levels, air quality, flood risks, and the proximity of incompatible land uses. Consideration also needs to be given to the surrounding environment, which should be traffic free public realm, well connected to walking and cycling routes and public transport, and not abutted by roads and/or parking.

School transport provision is dealt with in the Sustainable Travel & Transportation section of this Guide.

### 4.3 Key Documents and Guidance

[The Schools and Learning](#) section of the ECC website provides information on the types of schools in Essex, school admissions, EYCC, post-16 options and adult learning.

The ECC [Ten Year Plan for Essex School Places](#) sets out the demand for mainstream school places in the next 10 years for each of the pupil place planning areas, and the context the Essex School Organisation Service operates to ensure the delivery of sufficient school places. It also provides an appreciation of school capacity, and whether there are plans or opportunities to accommodate future growth.

All Local Authorities are required by DfE to publish an annual report on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare. The [Essex Childcare Sufficiency Assessment](#) provides an overall Essex position, accompanied by a summary for each local authority administrative area within Essex, which is used to assess the sufficiency of childcare places in Essex.

ECC acknowledge that some of the children generated by the development of new dwellings will have SEND. Forecasting requirements for school provision for children with SEND is more complex than projecting mainstream places, the additional needs presented are varied and some children have more than one need to be met. ECC therefore seeks to ensure that provision is available to meet a range of needs in each geographic area of the County. SEND needs may be met in a mainstream school, a specially resourced or enhanced provisions



within a mainstream school, or in a special school depending upon the level of need. The [Essex Local Area SEND Strategy](#) is a joint strategy setting out improvements across education, health, and social care. ECC is also in the process of developing a SEND Sufficiency Plan.

The [ECC Local and Neighbourhood Planners' Guide to School Organisation](#) explains how ECC can assist in the preparation of Local and Neighbourhood Plans to ensure sufficient school places are provided, arising from new development. Emerging Plans must consider the availability of school places and, in the absence of sufficient capacity, the feasibility and viability of expanding provision or building new schools, EYCC facilities, and other education provision.

The [ECC Garden Communities and Planning School Places Guide](#) sets out the ECC approach to delivering new schools and ensuring there are sufficient pupil places to serve large new settlements that may be planned for the county.

The [ECC Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions](#) contains the details of how pupil places are calculated, sets out the size requirements for land, and the specific criteria that any school land must meet, including an Education Site Suitability Checklist which must form part of a Land Compliance Study. It also sets out how developers / landowners are expected to contribute towards new education facilities and the expectations for land transfer and site works, as well as the needs of post 16 education. An updated version will be published in September 2025.

The [Essex Design Guide Schools Design Principles](#) provides details in relation to the design of school buildings and their surrounding environment, and the [Essex Climate Action Commission Report Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral](#) includes recommendations on the timescales for when all new schools commissioned should be carbon zero and carbon positive.

## 5. Infrastructure Delivery and Impact Mitigation

### 5.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

All new development has the potential to impact on existing infrastructure and services, including those that ECC have a statutory duty to provide (see section 5.2 below). The provision of appropriate and timely local and strategic infrastructure funded through developer contributions (where appropriate and necessary) is necessary to ensure the needs of current and future communities are met. Infrastructure is central to the delivery of new development and the planning process, including neighbourhood planning, provides the opportunity to address infrastructure needs, maximise the efficient use of existing infrastructure capacities and where required, explore opportunities for new sustainable infrastructure.

It is important that growth and infrastructure are aligned, and as a result the proposal of development in a Neighbourhood Plan may need to be supported by improvements to existing infrastructure or the provision of new infrastructure. Neighbourhood Plans therefore need to consider the impact any new development will have on infrastructure from an early stage, both as part of the site selection process, and during policy formation.

The district, borough or city councils may also require developer contributions towards certain matters such as the provision of affordable housing, new open spaces, sports facilities, etc.

### 5.2 ECC Role and interest

ECC has a statutory duty to provide / enable necessary infrastructure across the administrative area it covers. This means ECC may request financial contributions and/or land towards:

- Early Years and Childcare (EYCC)
- Primary and Secondary Education (including school transport)
- Special Education and Disability Needs (SEND)
- Post 16 Provision
- Employment and Skills Plans
- Highways and Transportation (including passenger transport)
- Sustainable Travel Planning
- Waste management
- Flood and water management / Sustainable Drainage Systems
- Libraries
- Monitoring costs

### 5.3 Key Documents and Guidance

The [ECC Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions](#) details the scope and range of contributions towards infrastructure ECC may request from developers and landowners to mitigate against the impact of development, and assists plan makers in producing Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans and the supporting evidence they require. ECC seeks to ensure that infrastructure is delivered in a timely manner, minimising any adverse impact on existing communities and ensuring new developments fairly addresses their own infrastructure needs.

The document covers the ECC statutory duties listed in section 5.2 above, as well as providing further advice on key matters such as Adult Social Care, Biodiversity, employment sites, Public Health, and public art.

The document does not cover services provided by borough, city and district councils, such as affordable housing or open space, nor contributions that may be sought by other infrastructure providers, such as the NHS or the emergency services. The relevant authorities or organisations will need to be contacted separately.

An updated version of the Guide will be published in September 2025.

ECC is required to prepare and publish an [Infrastructure Funding Statement](#) on an annual basis, outlining what contributions have been collected, how they have been spent, and providing an understanding of what future funds will be spent on. Key contributions received by ECC relate to community infrastructure (education including early years, libraries); highways and transportation (including PROW's); minerals and waste; strategic development and monitoring requirements.

## 6. Flood and Water Management

### 6.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

Flood and water management is an essential part of how we plan for existing and future growth to meet the needs of Essex residents and businesses, and conserve the natural environment and watercourses. We are in a climate emergency and the risks from flooding are projected to double across Essex over the next 30 years, with increasingly severe and frequent rainstorms and droughts; Essex is also classified as a serious water stress area; and Essex is susceptible to rising sea levels impacting 350 miles of coastline.

The consequences of flood risk (too much water at the wrong time), too little water, and coastal change can have devastating effects on wellbeing, property, infrastructure, planning for economic growth, and on the environment. A collaborative approach to planning for flood and water management is needed including communities and stakeholders, and Neighbourhood Planning can play a role in this.

The allocation of sites, and the proposal of different types of development, can have flooding implications, as the location, type and size of development can be affected by the level of flood risk that applies. In some cases this may result in a site or type of development being considered unsuitable as a result of potential flood risk. The formation of policies in Neighbourhood Plans should also consider flood mitigation measures and management schemes, including making as much use as possible of natural flood management techniques as part of an integrated approach to flood risk management, to ensure that any development is suitable in terms of flood risk, and how development can reduce demand, and improve, water capture.

### 6.2 ECC Role and interest

ECC is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) responsible for the management of “Local” flood risk, which is defined as surface water flooding, ordinary watercourse flooding and groundwater flooding, meaning the risk of water from small water courses and rainfall off the land.

The Environment Agency deal with main river and coastal flooding. Water companies and Essex Highways will be involved in flooding from other piped drainage systems under their jurisdiction.

The LLFA is a statutory consultee to Local Planning Authorities in determining major planning applications and supporting the preparation of Local Plans and is responsible for providing and working with partners to deliver a range of flood and water management services.

The main functions of LLFA are:

- As a statutory consultee, providing consultation responses on surface water drainage perspective and implement Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) through the planning

process as planning conditions for LLFA sign off in accordance with national and local standards and enforcement policy;

- Maintaining a register of flood assets and managing assets which have an impact on flood risk from ordinary watercourses and surface water; including mapping the development of flood risk management plans and strategies, including surface water management plans and Critical Drainage Areas (CDAs);
- Managing assets and features which have an impact on flood risk and has the ability to designate features so they cannot be removed or replaced without permission, by ordinary watercourse consents and enforcement, in accordance with national and local standards and enforcement policy;
- Flood investigations including for significant flooding incidents (typically defined as five or more properties); and
- Managing the planning and installation of flood alleviation schemes; to commissioning works to plan and prioritise flood risk management activities in relation to surface runoff or groundwater

The LLFA prepares and maintains [Surface Water Management Plans](#) (SWMP's), and is responsible for preparing and maintaining the [Essex Local Flood Risk Management Strategy](#).

ECC as the LLFA is the lead partner of the Essex Flood Partnership Board, covering Greater Essex, which brings together all key stakeholders, to provide a strategic overview of flood risk management, key projects, strategies and funding across Essex to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach is implemented.

### 6.3 Key Documents and Guidance

The [Water Strategy for Essex \(2024\)](#) brings together the literacy, shares data and challenges from a range of partners on natural flood management and water conservation, and water scarcity and quality issues for the next 30 years at the county level. It focuses on 30 recommendations linked to reducing demand water; changing land use for water; and future water supply options.

The [Essex Local Flood Risk Management Strategy](#) sets out the ambitions, strategic objectives and measures to reduce the impact of local flooding in Essex, from man-made drainage systems, small watercourses and rainfall off land. The flood risk management measures include investigating flooding; planning for future floods; influencing new development and drainage; and building new flood defences.

[Surface Water Management Plans](#) are key strategic documents to enable the LLFA to plan for future flooding and to better understand the local surface flood risk within parts of the county. There are 10 SWMP's, comprising [Braintree and Witham](#), [Brentwood](#), [Chelmsford](#), [Clacton on Sea](#), [Colchester](#), [Harlow](#), [Loughton](#), [Lower Sheering](#), [Maldon](#), and [South Essex](#) (including Rochford, Castle Point and Basildon). The SWMPs define the CDA's within the SWMP study areas, providing evidence to inform plan preparation and are accompanied by 2020 SWMP Action Plans on the potential mitigation measures for each CDA's. The latest SWMP and CDA interactive mapping outline the hydraulic modelling areas, and CDA flood

data is set out in the [SuDS Guide for Essex](#) “SWMP” section. Further information is also available on the Essex [flood risk and asset register map](#).

The [Sustainable Drainage Systems \(SuDS\) Design Guide for Essex](#) sets the local standards for sustainable surface water drainage that the LLFA require to be applied in the preparation of Local Plans and planning applications for new developments. The SuDS Guide, together with the National Standards, strongly prioritise local needs and the use of nature-based green infrastructure SuDS solutions covering the four key pillars of water quantity, quality, biodiversity and amenity in SuDS design. These seek to ensure any development / projects do not increase the risk of flooding and promote water re-use and the latest SWMP information.

Further details on the provisions and requirements on the application of SUDS is set out in the [Essex Design Guide](#), including specific SUDS related sections [SuDS and Climate Change](#), [Health and Wellbeing](#), [Garden Communities](#); [Green Infrastructure](#); the [Solar Farms Flood Risk and SuDS](#) and [Flood Management Design Details: Landscape and Green Spaces](#); [Essex Green Infrastructure Standards](#) with links to the technical and nontechnical guidance, the [Highway Technical-Manuals \(and SuDS Manual\)](#).

The ‘Flood and Water Management and SuDS’ section of the [ECC Developers’ Guide to Infrastructure Contributions](#) provides the LLFA’s requirements on infrastructure contributions. An updated version of the Guide will be published in September 2025.

The [Essex Climate Action Commission Report ‘Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral’](#) includes a number of recommendations relating to flood and water management, and ECC’s response is set out in its [Essex Climate Action Plan](#).

# 7. Minerals and Waste Planning

## 7.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

It is essential that there is sufficient supply of minerals to provide the infrastructure, buildings, energy and goods that the country needs. Since minerals are a finite natural resource, and can only be worked where they are found, best use needs to be made of them to secure their long-term conservation.

Mineral resources and minerals and waste operations must serve the county as a whole and are planned at a strategic level; therefore Neighbourhood Plans must be in accordance with policies in the Minerals and Waste Local Plans.

Although Neighbourhood Plans cannot include policies that cover minerals and waste development, a neighbourhood may contain an existing or planned minerals or waste site or safeguarded minerals deposits. In these cases ECC, as the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority for Essex, need to make sure that any proposed neighbourhood plan policies, and/or new development takes place in a way that, does not negatively affect mineral resources or minerals or waste operations.

## 7.2 ECC Role and interest

ECC has two statutory duties, as the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority (MWPA) for Essex; and the Waste Disposal Authority (WDA).

ECC as the MWPA is responsible for all minerals and waste-related development and planning issues. It is a statutory consultee and responsible for:

- planning the future minerals supply;
- preparing and adopting the Minerals Local Plan and Waste Local Plan;
- creating, reviewing, monitoring and updating the minerals and waste planning policy documents;
- the determination of planning applications for minerals and waste related developments; monitoring of minerals and waste sites; and enforcement; and
- engaging with LPA's, as a statutory consultee; responding to non-materials and waste related proposals in emerging Local Plans (and planning applications) or, compliance with the Minerals and Waste Local Plans, to safeguard mineral resources and permitted and planned minerals and waste sites and infrastructure

ECC as the WDA has a statutory obligation to arrange:

- for the disposal of controlled waste collected by the waste collection authorities (i.e. the borough, City and District Councils within Essex); and
- for places to be provided where the residents of Essex may deposit their household waste, and to arrange for the disposal of this waste

Fulfilling this statutory function requires ECC to secure, maintain and operate a range of waste management infrastructure, including Waste Transfer Stations, operational depots,

recycling centres for household waste, and waste treatment and disposal facilities, through a mix of local authority owned infrastructure and contracted arrangements with the private sector.

In addition to its WDA function ECC is also responsible for the long-term management and monitoring of 13 closed and restored former landfill sites.

### 7.3 Key Documents and Guidance

The [Essex Minerals Local Plan \(2014\)](#) and [Minerals policies map \(MLP\)](#) forms part of the statutory Local Development Plan for Essex. It outlines the minerals strategy and policies for Essex up to 2029, for the future supply and provision of minerals through extraction sites, and the approach to mineral infrastructure. It also includes Minerals Safeguarding Areas (to ensure the protection of mineral resources from the risk of sterilisation) and Mineral Consultation Areas (to ensure that, should mineral extraction have to take place within or up to the site boundary, that development proposed on adjacent land beyond the site boundary would not prevent or compromise possible mineral resources being extracted in the future). Details on whether a MSA or MCA applies to a neighbourhood plan area can be viewed on the MLP Policies Map and information can be obtained from the Minerals and Waste Policy team.

The MLP is supported by the [Minerals Site Restoration Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance](#) to promote and enhance biodiversity and habitat creation on mineral sites.

A [Replacement Essex Minerals Local Plan Review](#) (2025 to 2040) is being prepared. It was subject to public consultation in 2024, which will inform and shape the next steps in preparing the new MLP, including further public engagement and independent examination.

The MWPA also prepare the [Greater Essex Local Aggregates Assessment](#) which provides the annual monitoring report for minerals and recycled aggregates sites, including the status of mineral sites and planning permissions to help determine the amount required in the future.

The [Essex and Southend on Sea Waste Local Plan \(2017\)](#) (WLP) including the [Waste policies map](#) forms part of the statutory Local Development Plan for Essex. It WLP outlines the strategy and policies for Essex (and Southend on Sea) to meet all the future waste management requirements up to 2031. The waste planning strategy sets the long-term direction for waste development and a plan to deliver this; including the strategic site allocations, waste safeguarding areas and waste consultation areas to protect existing (and planned) waste infrastructure and Areas of Search for Waste Management facilities to be located within designated employment area and industrial estates.

The [Waste Strategy for Essex \(2024 – 2054\)](#) was adopted by ECC in July 2024 and replaces the previous Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (2007 – 2023) for Essex. It sets the shared vision and principles of the Essex Waste Partnership (made up of ECC and the 12 Waste Collection Authorities) and provides a framework detailing how the waste produced by homes and businesses in Essex will be managed for the next 30 years. It sets an approach to reducing the impact waste has on climate change including moving to a circular economy



(design, retail, consumption, collection, recycling), and applying the waste hierarchy (prevention, reuse, recycling, recovery, disposal).

The 'Waste Management' section of the [ECC Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions](#) provides the WPA's and WDA's requirements on infrastructure contributions. An updated version of the Guide will be published in September 2025.

The [Essex Climate Action Commission Report 'Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral'](#) includes a number of recommendations relating to waste, and ECC's response is set out in its [Essex Climate Action Plan](#).

## 8. Housing

### 8.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

Well-designed housing and places can make a positive contribution to existing and new communities. The provision of the right amount, type and quality of housing is important to creating and supporting a strong, inclusive and sustainable economy; supporting older people and people with disabilities, with care needs, and other vulnerable groups to live independently throughout their life; reducing health inequalities; and creating high quality, safe and healthy places to grow up, live and work. Neighbourhood Plans have a role to play in planning for the right accommodation to meet the needs of their communities.

### 8.2 ECC Role and interest

ECC works with local planning authorities to ensure new housing growth is supported by appropriate infrastructure and land uses. ECC supports housing development that provides infrastructure in the right locations and at the right times. Whilst ECC is not a housing authority, it plays an important role in promoting a housing system in Essex that meets a diverse range of need and demand from Essex residents through activities including:

- A statutory duty to provide accommodation and support to certain categories of Looked After Children and Care Leavers aged 16-17. (The Children Act 1989 sets out these duties in more detail).
- In its capacity as the Adult Social Care authority ensuring that the needs of vulnerable people are reflected in line with duties under the Care Act 2014 and the wider prevention and maximising independence agendas. This includes reviewing both general needs housing and any specialist housing provision that are proposed for development in the county.
- Provision of supported housing - coordinating, commissioning and market shaping activity to ensure housing is available for older people, vulnerable people and those with disabilities (Adult Social Care).
- Providing support to people at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping via Housing Related Support funding.
- Strategic coordination on crosscutting issues e.g. homelessness prevention, improving health and wellbeing, and commission integration support for resettled refugees.
- Planning, funding and delivering infrastructure to support housing delivery.
- Working with borough, city and district partners and government on new garden communities, urban extensions and locally led regeneration projects.
- Essex Housing (a commercial arm of ECC) works with public sector partners across Essex to develop land for the benefit of Essex communities, to help address open market, specialist and affordable housing need. Essex Housing designs schemes to secure positive outcomes for residents, generate capital receipts, and reduce revenue expenditure across wider council and public sector budgets.

Ensuring the right homes are provided across Essex relies on the cooperation of partners. The twelve borough, city and district authorities have statutory responsibilities for housing and local plan making. ECC works in partnership with Essex Housing Officer Groups, the

South Essex and Essex Developers Groups, and EPOA to increase housing growth to planned and evidence levels of need and to influence and improve housing and related services, particularly in the affordable sector.

### 8.3 Key Documents and Guidance

[ECC Housing Strategy 2021-2025](#) outlines the actions ECC will take to achieve its strategic priorities on housing and how it will work with its partners in the wider housing system. Its three strategic goals seek to grow Essex while protecting the best of the county, enable people to live independently throughout life, and support people facing homelessness or rough sleeping, and are supported by a series of outcomes set out in an Action Plan.

ECC produces regular information on the market position for [Extra Care Housing](#) (previously known as Independent Living), as well as other support housing for [adults with learning disabilities and/or autism, and physical and/or sensory impairments](#), adults with [mental health issues](#), and [children's services](#).

The [Adult Market Position Statement](#) reflects a summary of ECC's Social Care Market, and the [Essex Adult Social Care Market Shaping Strategy 2023 - 2030](#) provides an overview of the Essex care market and how it is changing, a future vision for social care in Essex, and what this means for how the market needs to change. It also sets out the key strategic challenges and market gaps, and the associated actions to address them.

ECC has also produced a '[Supported and Specialist Housing and Accommodation Needs Assessment \(SSHANA\)](#)' to improve forward projections for housing need for all care cohorts and provide evidence on up to date local information on demand and needs. This work supplements the work undertaken by local authorities for their Strategic Housing Market Assessments / Housing Needs Assessments, which have been unable to determine the tenure or type of housing required for older people and people with disabilities.

The evidence base will include data on Essex residents who need different types of specialist, supported and accessible accommodation to meet their needs due to their age, health, disability, mental health, cognitive ability or living with Learning Disability or Autism in the next 5, 10, 15 and 20 years. It can inform the preparation of Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans, and ensure the necessary provision and/or developer contributions are secured.

ECC has produced design guides specific to different care cohorts. Each guide describes the characteristics of the residents and the design considerations for the different types of accommodation. They are intended for those commissioning, designing, reviewing, and assessing the accommodation for the different care cohorts. The documents include an [Extra Care Design Guide](#) (previously Independent Living), a document on [Supported Living Accommodation Standards](#) (adults with disabilities), a [Design Guide on Supported Accommodation for Adults with Complex Needs](#), and [Design Guidance for Mental Health Recovery Accommodation](#). The [ECC Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions](#) includes a link to these guides (Section 6.2 and Appendix J), as well as details on the characteristics of suitable sites / buildings and locational requirements for housing for the

different care cohorts. An updated version of the Guide will be published in September 2025.

The Essex Design Guide provides extensive guidance on the design of housing developments and has key principles for the [ageing population](#) embedded throughout. It seeks to identify principles for consideration from the outset of the design process which can support and meet the needs of the ageing population, allowing them to remain independent and in their own homes.

The [Essex Climate Action Commission Report 'Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral'](#) includes a number of recommendations relating to new homes, and ECC's response is set out in its [Essex Climate Action Plan](#).

Reference should also be made to the key documents and guidance set out in the Climate Change and Net Zero chapter of this Guide which have relevance to the construction and provision of homes.

## 9. Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

### 9.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

Sites can be allocated within Neighbourhood Plans for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites. Liaising with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) would be necessary to identify the Local Plan approach to planning for such sites and ensuring the alignment with the Neighbourhood Plan.

### 9.2 ECC Role and interest

The [Essex Countrywide Traveller Unit](#) (ECTU) is a partnership of ECC, local councils, Essex Fire and Rescue and Essex Police. Together it supports Gypsies and Travellers to access services including supporting children into school and further education, health services, and site and home fire safety visits. ECC manage unauthorised encampments on ECTU partner land, and the twelve local authority sites for Gypsies and Travellers.

### 9.3 Key Documents and Guidance

[Planning Policy for Traveller Sites](#) is a Government planning policy document which should be read in conjunction with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The policy must be taken into account in the preparation of development plans, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. It sets out the framework within which Local Planning Authorities can prepare their plans and policies in order to make provisions for Gypsy and Traveller, and Travelling Show people.

The [Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment](#) (2018) was conducted to provide an evidence base to enable all Essex LPAs to assess and meet the needs of the Travelling Community, as well as comply with requirements under the Housing Act, NPPF and Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, and the revised Government definition of a traveller for planning purposes. It outlined the up-to-date accommodation needs for the entire Gypsy and Traveller community within Essex and allowed for relevant provisions to be implemented by the LPA. Basildon Borough Council conducted their own study of this nature, but some of their information was included in the document to contribute to the county-wide statistics. The assessments are being reviewed to provide an updated position, including a further revision to the Government definition of a traveller, for all Essex LPAs.

[Mechanism for the consideration of Unmet Gypsy and Traveller Need](#) is a guidance note approved by the Essex Planning Officers' Association (EPOA) which sets out the agreed process to be followed by all Essex LPAs in the consideration and application of unmet gypsy and traveller need.

The EPOA agreed a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\) – Gypsy and Travellers Transit Pitch Provisions Evidence Base Study](#) in 2020 for a Transit Sites Needs Assessment to be

produced that identifies the need, or otherwise, for transit sites, temporary/emergency stopping places, temporary (seasonal) sites, and negotiated stopping arrangements, as well as the broad geographic areas/corridors where site provision is needed.

The Essex Design Guide provides [Gypsy, Traveller and Showpeople Guidance](#). Its aim is to provide an overarching guide on the core design principles for such sites to ensure consideration of quality, sustainability, wellbeing, community, and design. The four core principles cover site and pitch layout, site services and facilities, health and wellbeing, and landscape and boundaries.

# 10. Health and Wellbeing

## 10.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

Good physical and mental health is important at both individual level with regards to improved quality and length of life, and at a community level as health is a vital component of local community cohesion, social mobility, and prosperity. It is recognised that there is a complex link between health and wellbeing and the wider environment. Planning provides an important means to prevent ill-health, improve health and wellbeing, and to reduce health inequalities that are influenced by socio-economic factors and the built and natural environment, and through appropriate planning policies and decisions can achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places.

Neighbourhood Planning can play a role in improving the health of communities by considering the specific needs of their residents and businesses. The allocation of development sites in Neighbourhood Plans in sustainable locations can increase the use of more active modes of travel such as walking and cycling, for both business and pleasure, and decrease air pollution through the reduction of the use of the private vehicle. The allocation of mixed use development can encourage social inclusion and reduce social isolation. Neighbourhood Plans can also formulate policies that require development and buildings to be constructed as carbon neutral and/or positive, and are healthy for occupiers to live and work in.

## 10.2 ECC Role and interest

ECC is the lead advisor authority within the administrative area of Essex for public health (PH), focusing on proactive, preventative measures to promote healthier lives as well as physical and mental wellbeing for the people of Essex and thereby to enjoy better health and wellbeing. This role is approached working in close partnership with all other organisations with a role in health or care (such as NHS, social care) as part of a whole systems, integrated care system (ICS) approach.

In addition, ECC has enabled the placing of local Public Health practitioners within the individual local authorities across Essex. These play the lead role in PH and associated planning activity for their respective local authorities, although ECC provides support and training where necessary. These PH practitioners have the benefit of greater local knowledge than that available to ECC, so are well placed as the first and key point of contact for PH activity for their own respective local authorities.

## 10.3 Key Documents and Guidance

The [Essex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) (JSNA) 2022 sets out an evidence base to inform decisions on health and wellbeing priorities across the county. It is an ongoing, iterative process presented as a suite of resources (interactive reports, briefings, downloadable reports, and datasets) that will be updated regularly as new analysis and insight are available. It informs the Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, as well as more local health and wellbeing strategies for the Essex borough, city, and districts.

The [Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) (2022 – 2026) identifies five overarching priority areas - improving mental health and wellbeing; physical activity and healthy weight; supporting long term independence; alcohol and substance misuse; and health inequalities and the wider determinants of health. It should be noted that every borough, city and district is also required to have its own Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The [Essex Healthy Weight Strategy](#) (2024 – 2034) sets out how to support Essex residents to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, including by creating an environment and culture where making a healthy choice is the easy choice. It makes clear that the physical, social, and economic environments in which people live must be a focus.

The Essex Design Guide provides extensive explanatory information and guidance in relation to health and wellbeing matters, including [Health and Wellbeing](#) context; [Active Design Principles](#); [Health Impact Assessments](#); and [Livewell Development Accreditation](#).

The ‘Public Health’; NHS healthcare; and Emergency Services’ sections of the [ECC Developers’ Guide to Infrastructure Contributions](#) include advice on healthy place-making, and sets out that ECC Public Health works closely across the broader health and care system with partners from Communities, Social Care, the NHS, the Emergency Services, and Sport England, who will also have their own requirements in relation to contributions. An updated version of the Guide will be published in September 2025.



# 11. Green and Blue Infrastructure and Environmental Management

## 11.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

Green and Blue Infrastructure (GI) is a network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity. For example GI can contribute to biodiversity, and/or provide for outdoor recreation. GI is also tied closely with managing flood risk and sustainable drainage features (SUDS), which can be important for other wider purposes such as biodiversity, recreation and visual amenity.

The multifunctional nature and location of GI means that its importance and benefits to communities equally apply at a local level as they do at a county level, and therefore Neighbourhood Plans have an important role to play in enhancing, protecting, and contributing to the GI network at a local level. Planning for GI should be incorporated from an early stage of plan preparation in both the site selection and policy formation processes, in order to establish the GI baseline, and opportunities, as well as the consequences of potential development sites and policy wording.

## 11.2 ECC Role and interest

ECC does not have a statutory role in GI but our role as LLFA brings into play ‘blue infrastructure’ through its promotion of SUDS, which can take the form of features such as attenuation ponds or swales to hold or disperse surface water and can often be integrated with GI requirements and objectives.

ECC has taken a leading role in developing good practice guidance on GI and to help deliver key policy objectives such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and responding to climate change. This has resulted in the development of the Essex-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy, and the Essex GI Standards and Principles.

A [Local Nature Partnership](#) (LNP) has been established (2022) covering Essex, Southend and Thurrock to deliver the outputs of the [DEFRA 25-Year Environment Plan](#) and [Environment Act \(2021\)](#) including the production and adoption of a Greater Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy (GELNRS), the delivery of biodiversity net gain, multifunctional green infrastructure, and sustainable land management through Environment Land Management Schemes; and contributing to the national tree planting target. ECC is the Responsible Authority for delivering the GELNRS.

Country parks form part of the wider GI network across Essex. The ECC Country Parks service is responsible for managing eight Country Parks, along with a number of former railway lines trails (Blackwater Rail Trail – Maldon; Colne Valley Rail Trail – Braintree; and Flitch Way – Braintree). ECC owns five of the Country Parks (Cudmore Grove Country Park – Colchester; Danbury Country Park – Chelmsford; Marsh Farm Country Park – Chelmsford;

Thorndon Country Park – Brentwood; and Weald Country Park – Brentwood) and has management agreements in place for the remaining three (Belhus Woods Country Park – Thurrock / LB Havering; Great Notley Country Park – Braintree; and Hadleigh Country Park – Castle Point).

The Country Parks in Essex are multifunctional and multifaceted providing health and wellbeing, and recreational and access benefits. They are not just ‘amenity grass’, they are complex places and spaces with a variety of important statutory designations (SSSI’s, SPA’s, a SAC, Ramsar sites, a National Nature Reserve, Local Nature Reserves, SAM’s, Grade II Registered Park and Garden’s, LoWS’s, Priority Habitats, Conservation Areas, Ancient Woodlands, a Regionally Important Geological & Geomorphological Site, a Grade II Listed Building, a Site of Metropolitan Importance, a local Geological Site).

As a result, these are managed to give residents access to open spaces, woodland trails and historic parklands, and to protect and encourage rare and important plants, animals, and heritage assets and their setting. All ECC’s Country Parks are enrolled in Countryside Stewardship Schemes, and Parkland Management Plans are in place for the Registered Parks and Gardens at Country Parks Belhus Woods, Danbury, Thorndon, and Weald.

ECC as the commons registration authority maintains the register of common land and village greens.

ECC has a statutory role for the Public Rights of Way (PROW) network. More information can be found in the Sustainable Travel and Transportation section of this Guide.

ECC is committed to managing, improving, and extending its tree stock and has a Tree Management Plan. The borough, city and district authorities in Essex are responsible for tree preservation orders (TPO), and all requests for information about TPO’s should be made to your local council.

### 11.3 Key Documents and Guidance

The [Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy \(2020\)](#) is a framework covering all of Essex that provides and promotes a good practice approach towards GI, for the benefit of local authorities; developers / planning applicants and designers; landowners; and many other partners involved in land use and the natural environment. The Strategy seeks the enhancement, protection, and creation of an inclusive and integrated network of green spaces.

The [Essex Green Story Map \(2022\)](#) is a valuable element of the evidence base to inform GI policies, strategies, and projects, and sets out a spatial analysis of GI provision across Essex.

The [Essex Green Infrastructure Standards and Principles \(2022\)](#) provide a set of nine principles / standards created to demonstrate what ‘good looks like’ in designing and delivering GI.

The [Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) identifies where new habitats, such as woodlands, grasslands, freshwater areas, river buffers, coastal and marine zones, and urban habitats, can be created, and suggests actions for nature recovery within them. The actions for each habitat type are categorised under three habitat priority statements which are aimed at connecting, enhancing and expanding existing natural spaces. It also identifies the top ten biodiversity aims for Essex.

The LNP for Greater Essex intends to work towards developing a joint approach and response to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) across the area in the interests of sharing good practice and potentially achieving more beneficial overall outcomes. An [Essex BNG Guidance Pack](#) (2023) has been produced which provides an overview of the facts and guidance on BNG to date.

The [ECC Tree Management Plan \(2023\)](#) sets out ECC's aim and objectives in relation to future tree management and tree planting in all parts of the ECC estate.

Information regarding common land and village greens can be found on the Council's [website](#). The register lists information on each unit of common land or village green (including description and boundaries, rights and who has them, and ownership), and is given a unique registry number, which enables identification within the register.

Information regarding Public Rights of Way can be found under the Sustainable Travel and Transportation section of this Guide.

The importance of GI and environmental considerations is embedded throughout the [Essex Design Guide](#), as well as a specific sections on '[Landscapes and Greenspaces](#)', '[Flood Management / SuDS](#)', and '[Building with Nature](#)'.

The [ECC Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions](#) does not cover GBI specifically, however the sections on 'Flood and Water Management and SUDS'; 'Protecting Biodiversity' cover GBI more widely. An updated version of the Guide will be published in September 2025.

The [Essex Climate Action Commission Report 'Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral'](#) includes a number of recommendations relating to land use and green infrastructure, and ECC's response is set out in its [Essex Climate Action Plan](#).

The Essex Wildlife Trust Biological Records Centre holds information regarding [Local Wildlife Sites](#) in Essex. These are non-statutory areas of land with 'substantive nature conservation value', and are identified and selected at a county level, based on important, distinctive and threatened habitats and species that have a national, regional and importantly, a local context. They can include ancient woodlands, flower meadows, and coastal grazing marshes.

## 12. Economy and Skills

### 12.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

There are gaps in how and where prosperity is experienced within Essex, with disparities in opportunity across the county. It is therefore important to understand the underlying reasons for these differences, to ensure that the latent economic opportunity, as well as being realised in areas that are already thriving, helps 'level up' all parts of the county and outcomes for all residents.

Planning for a wide range of employment uses and providing sustainable connectivity between employment locations and residents homes enables Essex residents to have access to a range of employment opportunities across a variety of sectors. Neighbourhood Plans can play an important role in achieving this at a local level, building on the strengths of their area, countering any weaknesses and addressing the challenges of the future.

The safeguarding of existing employment sites and uses within Neighbourhood Plans enables residents to access employment opportunities within their existing communities, and the identification and allocation of new employment sites may also be required to address a shortage, and/or to serve additional residents from any new housing development. Appropriate policies in Neighbourhood Plans can ensure the right type of employment is provided for, is suitable for its occupiers and surroundings, is flexible to adaptions to accommodate changes in economic circumstances, and is supported by appropriate active and sustainable travels modes.

### 12.2 ECC Role and interest

ECC seeks to provide leadership on the economy across Essex and bring together a series of economic growth strategies across employability and skills; digital connectivity; inward investment; regeneration; infrastructure; and sector development, to support residents into good jobs, level up the economy, secure investment in vital infrastructure, delivering future growth, and facilitating the transition to a greener economy. Elements of these can be reflected spatially in development plans and included within appropriate policy to deliver the required outcomes.

### 12.3 Key Documents and Guidance

The [Essex Sector Development Strategy](#) (2022) sets out the approach to creating high quality jobs within the priority economic sectors. It identifies five economic sectors with significant growth potential that could be realised in Essex. These are construction (including retrofit); clean energy; advanced manufacturing and engineering; digi-tech; life sciences (including med-tech and care-tech).

The [Essex Green Skills Infrastructure Review for Essex](#) (2022) sought to identify skills gaps and business needs; review the capacity of existing providers and growth plans; collate evidence of good practice; document potential development opportunities; and to create a

joint stakeholder action plan identifying resources and next steps. It identified gaps and challenges in relation to policy; data; awareness; education; communication; and resources.

The Department for Education introduced Local Skills Improvements Plans which provide an agreed set of actionable priorities for employers, providers and other stakeholders in a local area to drive change. They are approved by the Secretary of State for Education. The [Local Skills Improvement Plan](#) (LSIP) for Essex, Southend and Thurrock provides further detail on local economy requirements for skills and how to deliver the priorities.

The [Commercial, Industrial and Larger Footprint building guidance](#) in the Essex Design Guide establishes a range of high level principles and more specific and detailed guidance, covering layout; access and parking; materials, character and architecture; mixed use / town and local centres; and sustainability and health, and [Garden Communities – Local Economic Offer](#) guidance seeks to ensure that local job opportunities are accessible by walking, cycling or public transport, flexible space for home working, community hubs, mix of uses to create a range of jobs, and the need for delivery bodies to attract economic activity and job opportunities into the communities.

The ‘Employment and Skills Plans’ section of the [ECC Developers’ Guide to Infrastructure Contributions](#) sets out the requirements for, and when, developers need to provide an Employment and Skills Strategy or Plan including the provision of financial contributions. An updated version of the Guide will be published in September 2025.

The [Essex Climate Action Commission Report ‘Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral’](#) includes a number of recommendations relating to matters that can impact employment and skills, and ECC’s response is set out in its [Essex Climate Action Plan](#).

# 13. Digital Connectivity

## 13.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

High quality digital infrastructure and connectivity to provide fast and reliable technology has a vital role in promoting sustainable development (e.g. reducing the need to travel and minimising transport delay, congestion etc); enabling business and commerce; for health and wellbeing; social inclusion, and many other day to day purposes. Digital connectivity and access should therefore be an integral part of neighbourhood planning and neighbourhood plans.

Ensuring that all new residential developments are fully enabled and connected with the necessary, future-proofed digital connectivity can support residents to live independently at home and to access digital healthcare facilities and services, as well as enabling them to work from home and access employment and skills opportunities remotely which can reduce the need to travel particularly by private car.

In order to ensure that local businesses can remain competitive and economic growth can thrive they need to be supported by high quality future-proofed digital connectivity, and the ability for commercial, leisure and community properties to adapt to changing technologies is important to their longevity.

Integrated digital technology can also enable environmental monitoring of matters such as pollution and flood risk, and can assist in managing the consumption and generation of energy.

## 13.2 ECC Role and interest

The ECC role in digital connectivity is not statutory, and ECC has no formal responsibilities to promote digital connectivity. Instead, ECC has taken a voluntary but very proactive stance to enable much fuller coverage and better mobile and fixed technology across Essex working primarily through its ongoing Superfast Essex initiative. This has been updated and rebranded to the newer [Digital Essex](#) brand.

## 13.3 Key Documents and Guidance

The [Digital Essex](#) website provides information and guidance such as:

- Future ECC plans on what it plans to achieve around digital connectivity
- The Digital Strategy for Essex
- Broadband deals for households on low incomes
- Future digital connectivity rollout plans
- Digital inclusion

The [Digital Strategy for Essex](#) is a focal / reference point for how digital connectivity is to be promoted and improved across Essex. It makes clear the importance of co-ordinated work

across the public sector with a set of shared strategic principles to guide this work. It sets out the following specific infrastructure delivery targets:

- Superfast speeds available at all premises in Essex
- Gigabit-capable services available at more than 85% of premises in Essex
- 4G services available at over 99% of the Essex geography
- 5G services available at all key employment locations and in identified priority areas

The Essex Design Guide includes an overarching theme of [Digital and Smart Technology](#), and also provides supplementary guidance on [Planning for 5G](#), which has been produced in collaboration with Mobile Network Operators, and [Planning for Digital Connectivity \(focused on fixed line broadband connections\)](#).

# 14. Airports & Aviation and Ports & Freeports

## 14.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

Both London Stansted and London Southend airports are located within Essex. They are key multimodal transport hubs, and play an important role for domestic and international connectivity, as well as the movement of goods and people. They also provide residents with a range of employment and skills opportunities.

As a coastal county, Essex has several ports of varying scale and natures. Harwich is part of the Freeport East cluster and Tilbury in Thurrock is part of Thames Freeport. Freeports are designated to generate and boost substantial economic growth.

Local communities can provide locations for ancillary development / supply chain development that are needed to support the airports and ports, as well as being a source of potential workforce for them. Local communities can also benefit from the opportunities that these can bring to the local area, such as skills and employment.

In preparing Neighbourhood Plans consideration should be given to site allocations and/or policies that seek to support the provision of such development, as well as securing appropriate and sustainable connectivity between the local communities and the airports and ports. The availability of local affordable housing for the workforce at airports and ports is also an important consideration for local planning authorities to plan for, and emerging Plans providing housing supply will need to consider the relationships between these factors.

## 14.2 ECC Role and interest

### Airports & Aviation

ECC has statutory duties that are directly interrelated and important considerations for continued, safe, equitable and sustainable operation, development and growth of the airports in Essex.

As a Transportation and Highways Authority, ECC is responsible for ensuring the County Council's transport policies and proposals are implemented at the local level. ECC works with the airports to ensure their Surface Access Strategies, masterplans, and future strategies are consistent with national and local transport / aviation policy and strategies.

ECC promotes and facilitates continual liaison and working with the airports and key transport partners to facilitate sustainable transportation. It is recognised that ongoing partnership with the airports and transport providers is essential to delivering their respective surface access targets.

ECC is keen to ensure that the airports in the county operate multimodal transport hubs and seek to work with airport operators and other partners to promote the efficient use of them for transportation interchange.



ECC recognises that there is potential for further development and inward investment, and that the proximity to airports provide the opportunity for business connectivity. It also recognises the need to support and enhance the skills and training within the aviation and aerospace sectors.

ECC is an active participant within a range of formal and informal officer and Member forums including Airport Consultative Committees, airport Transport Forums, Local Authority liaison, the LGS Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group, and the UK Research and Innovation – Future of Flight Community and Integration Group.

### **Ports & Freeports**

ECC has a strong interest in the ports serving Essex (and areas beyond) given their significance in transport terms. Access to the strategic route network is essential for both freight and passengers, and access to the rail network is essential in order to enable sustainable freight movement. The ports are also very important in economic terms, bringing benefits, providing and supporting jobs at the ports themselves and through related activities such as logistics.

In addition, an increasingly important role in supporting the clean and renewable energy industries is being developed and explored further by the ports on Greater Essex, which will promote and help deliver the net zero carbon objectives and actions identified in the ECAC Report and its recommendations.

## **14.3 Key Documents and Guidance**

### **Airports & Aviation**

The majority of key documents and guidance are produced at a national level by the Department for Transport. The airports also have to produce their own Surface Access Strategies, masterplans, and future strategies.

The Local Authorities who ‘host’ an airport in Essex also has its own policies in relation to development at and around the airports and these are contained in the respective Local Plan.

ECC works with the airports and ports to ensure their future masterplans and strategies have consideration of ECC’s policies (as set out in this Guide).

### **Ports & Freeports**

The [Essex Sector Development Strategy](#) (2022) identifies five economic sectors with significant growth potential that could be realised in Essex. These are construction (including retrofit); clean energy; advanced manufacturing and engineering; digi-tech; life sciences (including med-tech and care-tech). The ports have a potentially important role in enabling, supporting, and servicing the offshore clean energy sector, particularly for offshore wind energy, with Harwich ideally located for the development of a green energy hub, and a centre of technical excellence for the wider energy industry and support technological innovation.

ECC has actively lobbied Government and agencies such as National Highways for major transport route improvements including capacity and safety enhancements. Together with the rail lines serving the ports, these routes are essential for serving all of the ports in Essex and limitations impact the efficiency of port operations. Accordingly, it is essential that future plan making serves to enable and support these schemes and do not inhibit their delivery.

ECC supports initiatives underway with the ports that seek to promote sustainability and the drive towards net zero carbon. These include efforts to promote sustainable freight movement by rail transport of shipping containers, smart logistics, and travel for passengers by sustainable modes.

ECC recognises and supports the growth in jobs likely to arise at the ports / Freeports, and there are numerous programmes and initiatives ECC and its local authority partners are promoting within a number of localities, including Tendring and south Essex that may serve to help meet future skilled labour supply, matching locally based residents to the jobs available.

# 15. Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

## 15.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

A Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) is a large-scale development over a specific threshold that the Government considers to be of national importance. Essex, like its neighbouring countries Suffolk and Norfolk, has specific natural and geographic advantages which make it an optimal location for NSIPs particularly in relation to transport and energy.

NSIPs do not require planning permission from the local authority. The developer must make an application to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for development consent. PINS examine the application, make a recommendation to the Secretary of State, who then makes the final decision, guided by National Policy Statements.

Local communities can provide locations for ancillary development / supply chain development that are needed to support NSIPs, as well as being a source of potential workforce for NSIP developments. Local communities can also benefit from the opportunities that an NSIP can bring to the local area, such as skills and employment. In preparing Neighbourhood Plans consideration should be given to site allocations and/or policies that seek to support the provision of such development, as well as securing appropriate connectivity between the local communities and NSIPs. The availability of local affordable housing for the workforce related to NSIPs may also be an important consideration for local planning authorities to plan for, and emerging Plans providing housing supply may need to consider the relationships between these factors.

## 15.2 ECC Role and interest

ECC is a statutory consultee in the development consent process with any representations being a material consideration in the determination of any Development Consent Order. ECC seek to ensure that decisions made by Government in the national interest fully consider the impacts, both positive and negative, to the local economy, environment, and health and wellbeing of communities across Essex are considered. This includes ancillary development that falls outside of the scope of the development consent process but is related to any NSIP scheme.

## 15.3 Key Documents and Guidance

Information on the development consent process can be found on the [PINS website](#), including National Policy Statements on Energy; Transport (Ports; National Networks; Airports); Hazardous Waste; Waste Water; Geological Disposal Infrastructure; and draft Water Resources.

The ECC [Nationally Significant Infrastructure Policy](#) provides clarity and certainty about which sets out ECC's position in relation to NSIPS and how and when ECC will engage in the development consent process.

ECC also has a [Aims and Guidance Document](#) which shows what ECC as the Highway Authority consider are necessary in support of any NSIP scheme which is submitted.

ECC has also produced a document on the role of [ECC in the development consent process for NSIPs](#), which includes guidance for members of the local community who would like to engage in the NSIP process.

The Essex Design Guide provides a set of [Solar Farm Guiding Principles](#) which can be used in the preparation of planning policy documents.

# 16. Design

## 16.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

Design is an integral part of the planning and place making process, and a key aspect of sustainable development. The quality and design of new developments, buildings, infrastructure, and landscapes affects both the built and natural environment, and applies to all forms of development. It has a direct impact on the quality, health and wellbeing, environment, sustainability, and success of the communities they will become part of and should therefore be given consideration within the Neighbourhood Planning process from an early stage.

Design policies can guide and have a positive effect on how new developments and places complement and enhance the existing built and natural environment aesthetically, mitigate potential negative impacts, as well as deal with practical issues such as layout, physical appearance, access, and parking.

Design policies developed with local communities and Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the local character and special qualities of each area, and explaining how these should be reflected in development. Neighbourhood Plans can play a role in establishing design principles, local design policies and standards, and design guides or codes to respond to these local characteristics.

The inclusion of policies for non-residential forms of development, such as commercial, retail, leisure, airports, ports, and multiple forms of infrastructure, as well as for natural forms of development, such as multifunctional green and blue infrastructure, is equally important to the creation of high quality places.

Neighbourhood Plans are a key tool in delivering local planning policies and need to consider all aspects of design, as part of both the site allocation process, and policy formation, and when assessing the impact of different forms of development, in both size, type, and location. The use of best practice in producing policies on design and access within a Neighbourhood Plan would also be beneficial.

Stewardship is an important part of placemaking and placekeeping in relation to the care (maintenance & management) of public assets and the carrying out of community development practices. Delivering a successful new community requires a clear understanding of how assets created as part of the design and construction of the new development will be properly managed in perpetuity, and stewardship arrangements have an important role to play in creating and maintaining cohesive communities.

Meaningful community participation will be needed to be established from the outset to enable people to engage in the management of their local areas and for community needs and opportunities to be identified. Stewardship requirements should be incorporated into policy documents.

## 16.2 ECC Role and interest

ECC seeks high design standards when delivering the infrastructure it is directly responsible for. The appropriate design and location of infrastructure is an integral part of designing developments and successful place making. This includes education facilities, flood and water management schemes, minerals and waste provision, and embedding sustainable and active travel modes, increased environmental standards (green and blue, biodiversity net gain, energy efficiency) and effective stewardship. We also seek to ensure all forms of development take a positive and innovative approach to architecture, urban design, landmarks, and public realm provisions; and where appropriate consider stewardship arrangements.

ECC with its local authority partners has played an important part in championing good design in Essex. The Essex Design Guide (EDG) was first published in 1973 and was an award winning and pioneering document. Subsequent revisions were made in 1997 and 2005, and it has been a document that has guided development in Essex throughout this period. In 2018 EPOA commissioned ECC (Place Services) to undertake an update, which embedded new themes and provided an online format. Regular revisions are now managed through a process owned by EPOA working group (who commission Place Services), with all updates approved through EPOA.

Place Services are a traded unit of ECC, and are a multidisciplinary team, including planners, urban designers, landscape architects, historic environment advisors, ecologists, arboriculturists, conservation and community engagement specialists. They provide environmental assessment, planning, design and management services, and can provide specialist advice and input for Neighbourhood Plans at each stage of their production.

As the primary infrastructure delivery body, ECC has a critical role in the design and delivery of successful stewardship arrangements in new developments. This is particularly the case for highways and transportation, and education infrastructure. ECC is also responsible for other critical areas of new development such as public health, surface water management/drainage, waste management, libraries and culture, adult community learning, adult social care, and the preparation of nature recovery strategies. These all interact with stewardship arrangements and early engagement with ECC will be necessary to ensure the statutory responsibilities complement proposals for more localised management of relevant assets and services by stewardship bodies.

## 16.3 Key Documents and Guidance

The [Essex Design Guide](#) (EDG) provides a key planning and design resource to help inform the plan making process, including Neighbourhood Plans. It contains core design principles and socio-economic themes around ageing population, digital and smart technology, health and wellbeing, active design, garden communities, and climate change. It also includes supplementary guidance on net zero; school design; building with nature; health impact assessment; air quality; planning for 5G; solar farms; Gypsy, Traveller and Showpeople accommodation; and commercial, industrial and large footprint buildings, together with the

inclusion of the Essex Parking Guidance, Highways Technical Manual, Essex Green Infrastructure Standards, and reference to the ECC SUDS guidance.

The EDG reflects much of the content included in the National Design Guide (NDG), however it goes further and provides design guidance on a wider spectrum than the NDG which is largely focused on housing. The information, detail, and case studies contained within the EDG are therefore considered important to informing the preparation of any Neighbourhood Plan, design guide or code.

[Essex Quality Character and Quality Panel](#) was established by EPOA in partnership with Place Services to ensure delivery and promotion of high quality new development. The Quality Review Panel provides a method of offering independent and impartial guidance on the design of development.

[Livewell Developer Charter and Accreditation Scheme](#) encourages developers to promote the physical and mental health of residents when designing and building new developments. Developers are assessed, using HIA's or the Healthy Checklist, on how they have embedded healthy design principles into their emerging schemes, and then development is assessed on a credit-based scoring process on a number of principles, including design of homes and spaces; active environment and connectivity; environmental sustainability; supporting communities; access to healthier food environments; and improving access to education, skills and employment. Developments will then be awarded bronze, silver or gold status.

Essex local authorities involved in the planning and delivery of garden communities have worked together to establish a set of principles to inform an approach to stewardship. These cover quality of place; community assets; community identity and cohesion; professionalism and entrepreneurship; financial sustainability; accountability and governance; and incremental approach.

# 17. Historic Environment

## 17.1 Relevance to Neighbourhood Planning

Planning for the historic environment involves the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets within a Plan Area. Heritage assets can range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance. These are defined as a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. They include designated heritage assets (such as Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Park and Gardens, Registered Battlefields or Conservation Areas), and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Consultations with Historic England and reference to the [Essex Historic Environment Record](#) (EHER) would be required to understand the significance of heritage assets and determine where potential harm could impact on these in a Plan area.

The historic environment is relevant to Neighbourhood Planning, as the impacts on historic assets and their settings within the Plan area, can determine the location of sites, and the quantum and type of development. Policy formation and site selection should therefore consider both the potential impacts and any mitigation that may be required.

## 17.2 ECC Role and interest

Place Services manages and maintains the [Essex Historic Environment Record](#) on behalf of ECC and other Essex local planning authorities.

The responsibility for conservation areas and locally listed buildings within Essex lies at the borough, city, and district, and unitary authority level. Information regarding these can be obtained from the relevant local authority.

## 17.3 Key Documents and Guidance

The [Essex Historic Environment Record](#) (EHER) is a computerised database of heritage assets in the County, including archaeological, historic landscape and historic building information. A summary version of the EHER can be searched online at the [Heritage Gateway](#).

The [Heritage at Risk Register](#) provides information about buildings, scheduled monuments, and other sites at risk of current and future neglect or decay.

Further information regarding individual conservation areas can be found in specific conservation area appraisals held by the individual Local Authorities.



This information is issued by:  
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Published July 2025