



GUIDANCE ON
**Neighbourhood
Planning in
Suffolk**



Suffolk County Council is fully supportive of neighbourhood planning as a way for local communities to have a greater say in where they live and work

The county council will offer appropriate and timely support to Parish and Town Councils as well as Neighbourhood Forums implementing neighbourhood planning in their areas.

This guide is to provide an understanding of the county council's responsibilities and the role it can play in the process of neighbourhood planning. The guide sets out issues which may be relevant to neighbourhood planning, in respect of each of the county council service areas listed below.

There is also a section that contains useful links and information which may be helpful to you. Finally, the contact details are listed below if you have any further questions on any of the topics raised in this document.



What is Neighbourhood Planning?

The Localism Act 2011 paved the way for communities to have a greater say over development in their areas. Neighbourhood planning generally refers to three new powers given to parish councils and 'neighbourhood forums' in non-parished areas like Ipswich.



NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Give communities control over the nature and location of development in their area, as long as they meet the 'Basic Conditions' set by the Government, including general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan.



NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT ORDERS

These enable communities to allow identified types of development to come forward in certain locations, without having to apply for planning permission.



COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BUILD

The Community Right to Build allows communities to bring forward specific small-scale developments, without the need for planning permission.

Each of these options requires a significant commitment, in terms of time, effort and money, on the part of those carrying out the work. Communities should consider carefully whether any of these powers are suitable for what they are trying to achieve. The District and Borough Planning Authorities will be able to provide advice on the benefits and challenges of each option.



FIND OUT MORE:

Localities - Neighbourhood Plans, Road Map Guide

www.locality.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-roadmap-guide/

ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England)

www.acre.org.uk/

Neighbourhood Planning Practice Guidance

www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2

Suffolk County Council's responsibility and role in neighbourhood planning

Where a community wants to take up the opportunities offered by neighbourhood planning, the legislation enables three types of organisation, known as qualifying bodies, to lead it.



The first point of contact for those interested in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan is the local planning authority. In Suffolk, this would be your local District or Borough Council. They are charged by statute with the responsibility for supporting the qualifying body in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans. They can help with approving neighbourhood forums, designating neighbourhood planning areas, assisting with the plan preparation process and the referendum.

The county council does have a number of statutory duties and responsibilities which may impact on the development of Neighbourhood Plans. It is important, therefore, that the Suffolk County Council is engaged in their preparation.

Depending on the scope of your Neighbourhood Plan, Suffolk County Council's interests in respect of neighbourhood planning potentially includes:

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These interests and responsibilities include ensuring that roads, schools, waste facilities and public transport are provided to support new and existing development. We also play a significant role in securing new and maintaining existing infrastructure and services for Suffolk's communities. We are a significant landowner owning large farm estates and hundreds of buildings and properties across the county. As such we can provide useful policy guidance on these matters to those preparing Neighbourhood Plans.

The following topic papers will give an overview on each individual interest and responsibility and how Suffolk County Council will be able to help.

If you are intending to allocate development sites in your neighbourhood plan, you should assess the impacts of your growth proposals and your plan should include any necessary mitigation measures and how they will be funded and delivered. New housing, employment and other development can place pressure on existing infrastructure and services.

The county council can provide strategic comments on prospective sites to aid site selection at an early stage of the plan making process. Furthermore, if the intention of the Neighbourhood Plan is to propose additional development, there may be the need for more services or infrastructure to meet the requirements of this new development. This may need the involvement of the county council to assist with understanding the demands that may be placed on the area.

It may also be the case that the qualifying body wants to improve or expand existing services or infrastructure that is within the scope of one of the county council's roles, and Suffolk County Council may need to be involved to provide advice and information. This includes the apportionment of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts and the securing of contributions or direct mitigation by developers for infrastructure projects.

What you can expect from Suffolk County Council

The county council will always try to help and engage in the neighbourhood planning process as best it can. Given the wide range of responsibilities and the increasing financial pressure local councils are under, the county council may not be able to engage in detail in every Neighbourhood Plan which might be prepared in the county.

In general, the following applies:

- Neighbourhood planning belongs to towns and parishes councils and neighbourhood forums. It is not possible or appropriate for the county council to lead on or own any neighbourhood plan, or any elements of a plan.
- Suffolk's District and Borough Councils lead on planning matters, and are the most important advisors to those producing neighbourhood plans. They will coordinate all advice from statutory consultees, including the county council.
- Suffolk County Council sees its role as being to advise the qualifying body matters relevant to county council service responsibilities and policy objectives.

The table to the right outlines what we see as achievable with our resources, and what is not, at each stage of the neighbourhood plan preparation process.

Suffolk County Council will discuss individual requirements with bodies preparing Neighbourhood Plans on a case by case basis.

LIAISON WITH YOUR COUNTY COUNCILLOR

If you are starting the process of neighbourhood planning we would like to ask you to:

- Notify your county councillor that you are intending to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan.
- Discuss with your county councillor whether they are aware of any plans Suffolk County Council has for infrastructure development in your area, which you may like your plan to acknowledge or develop.
- Keep your county councillor advised of the preparation of your plan; they may be able to help and provide advice. We will help to keep county councillors informed of the progress on communities' emerging Neighbourhood Plans via our regular meetings with them



FIND OUT MORE

If you think Suffolk County Council may be able to assist by providing evidence or advice in the preparation of your Neighbourhood Plan, then get in touch with the planning team at neighbourhoodplanning@suffolk.gov.uk

The planning team will respond to your query or will pass you on to the relevant team.

What we can do	Stage	What we can't do
Respond to the area designation consultation if we believe there could be a need for the county council's involvement	Designating the neighbourhood area and, if appropriate, the neighbourhood forum	Respond to all area designation consultations
<p>Provide advice in the context of the county council's responsibilities</p> <p>Help identify the exact evidence needed and advise you of existing data and information</p>	Preparing a draft neighbourhood plan	<p>Provide assistance to neighbourhood groups that do not have county council related issues raised</p> <p>Collect large amount of new evidence or information</p> <p>Attend a large number of meetings</p> <p>Write sections of the plan or specific policies</p>
Respond to the pre-submission consultation with suggested amendments if needed	Pre-submission publicity and consultation	Respond to all pre-submission consultations or attend all pre-submission events
Respond to the consultation if there is a specific county council related issue	Submission of a neighbourhood plan to the local planning authority	Respond to, and attend, all consultation events
Independent examination		
Referendum and bringing the plan into force		

1.

Archaeology

Suffolk's heritage makes it a great place to live and visit. Its archaeology, from Sutton Hoo to the Mildenhall Treasure, is of international importance. Neighbourhood planning could be used as a tool for taking responsibility for local heritage by identifying important historic assets and an approach on how they could be managed in future.

Suffolk County Council helps to ensure the preservation, enhancement and accessibility of Suffolk's historic artefacts by maintaining local evidence and acting as the expert advisor to Suffolk's district and borough councils, as they fulfil their planning role.

WHAT DOES NATIONAL POLICY SAY?

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires the planning system to conserve and enhance the historic environment (see section 12, NPPF). This also applies to history below the ground, which may not have been discovered and could be destroyed by new development. Furthermore, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides further information on what Neighbourhood Plans need to do in relation to archaeology (see PPG, section 'conserving and enhancing the historic environment').

WHAT CAN A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DO AND HOW CAN WE HELP?

The qualifying body producing a neighbourhood plan may wish to consider how a plan can make the most of the history of the plan area. There are opportunities for design policies to protect, reveal or enhance historic assets, which could be discussed with local planning authority conservation officers.

The county council maintains the Suffolk Historic Environment Record which holds records of known heritage assets and is available online. It can help to identify the presence and

significance of the heritage assets that define and characterise the area, as well as any assets that may be directly affected by any future developments or policies that the qualifying body may propose.

Suffolk County Council archaeologists can provide advice on the potential for archaeological remains and finds from sites proposed for development, and whether sites are suitable for allocation in light of this potential. They can also advise on the likely requirements which would be assigned to development to investigate, record and advance the understanding of the archaeology of the site as part of the planning application process, and whether policy measures are necessary within the Neighbourhood Plan.

In general, if the Neighbourhood Plan is going to allocate sites for development, it is a good idea to consult the Historic Environment Record to see if development might affect known historic assets, or areas considered to have a high potential for further archaeological finds. You might choose to direct development away from certain areas, if the evidence is strong enough, to prevent harm to known finds or remains, or to preserve the setting of an historic asset.

A neighbourhood plan could also consider whether there are positive opportunities to promote historic areas and heritage assets. In addition to development protecting heritage, it can reveal it with new development enhancing the setting of historic assets. The archaeological assessment requirements which commonly accompany planning permissions have also revealed a huge amount about our past, which would have otherwise been undiscovered.

WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

Several neighbourhood plans have considered heritage, with policies relating to (for example) the historic landscape, traditional design and the setting of listed buildings. See, for example, Exeter St James in Devon, and Bankside in London.

We are not aware of one which has specific policies which deal with protection of archaeological (below-ground) assets. However, where neighbourhood plans have allocated land for development, they have used desk-based archaeological assessment as one of the measures to judge the suitability of sites.



FIND OUT MORE:

The county council's webpages provide more information on archaeology. This includes the link to the Historic Environment Record.

www.suffolk.gov.uk/culture-heritage-and-leisure/suffolk-archaeological-service/

Further information:

Historic England Neighbourhood Planning guidance

www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/plan-making/improve-your-neighbourhood/

Local planning authority conservation officers on district and borough level.

2.

Education

The importance of education to Suffolk's future is impossible to understate. Raising the Bar, the name of Suffolk's approach to improving attainment, is a top priority for the county council.

Suffolk County Council has a legal duty to ensure provision of school and pre-school places. The planning system is an important tool for matching provision of school places with the increase in population, resulting from changes within the population as well as new housing growth, alongside school admissions policies and consideration of parental choice.

WHAT DOES NATIONAL POLICY SAY?

The National Planning Policy Framework is unequivocal in setting out the need to ensure that school places are provided (in particular paragraph 38 and 72). The desired approach by Government and the county council is for the plan-making process to resolve how school places will be provided, before the planning application stage.

WHAT CAN A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DO AND HOW CAN WE HELP?

There are different aspects a qualifying body can consider to ensure suitable and accessible education provision locally. A Neighbourhood Plan might look for opportunities to improve safe walking and cycling routes to schools, to reduce car usage, or for providing other community facilities alongside schools. In places where school rolls are declining, a Neighbourhood Plan could encourage the delivery of housing to help ensure that schools are sustainable in the long term.

If a Neighbourhood Plan is going to allocate land for housing, the impact on local schools and consequently the capacity of local early years, primary and secondary schools will need to be considered. Suffolk County Council

has established mechanisms for estimating the minimum number of pupils to come out of a development. The following table is the county council's high level ratio for pupil place requirements, which can be refined at the planning application stage when dwelling sizes and types are known.

Table 1:
Average pupil yields based on 100 new homes

Education	Places per 100 new homes
Pre School (Ages 2-5)	10
Primary (Ages 5-11)	25
Secondary (Ages 11-16)	18
Sixth Form (16+)	4

(Source: Section 106 Developers Guide to Infrastructure Contributions in Suffolk- July 2015 - Topic Papers)

Note: This table does not take into account the forthcoming legislation to increase the number of hours free early years education to be made available to parents.

In Suffolk, neighbourhood plan-making groups have approached the county council for school forecasts at an early stage in their plan-making process to determine whether school places can be provided.

Suffolk County Council will be able to advise as to whether spare capacity is forecast to be available at local pre-schools and schools. If there is not spare capacity, there will need to be discussion as to whether or not local facilities can be expanded.

An ambitious approach might be for a Neighbourhood Plan to allow for schools to expand or relocate, but this would require significant funding which the county council cannot promise to provide. The county council's experience is that reinvesting funds from the sale of existing school sites is rarely, if ever, sufficient to provide new schools.

In general, development will be expected to fund expansion proportionate to the additional demand it creates, from Community Infrastructure Levy funds (where in place) or Section 106 agreements. Developers might also be required to provide land for a school.

Neighbourhood planning bodies should also consider how to locate new housing so as to minimise the need for pupils to travel, to minimise the need to travel by car and to maximise the potential for walking and cycling to school.

WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

The Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan (South Downs National Park) includes policies on walking and cycling which specifically reference routes to schools.

Several areas around the country have held explicit consultation sessions with school children, to speak to those who will live in our communities, and the consequences of our development decisions, the farthest into the future.



FIND OUT MORE

Suffolk County Council's webpages includes information on education and learning in the county:

www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/

The county council also provides information on developer's infrastructure contributions in Suffolk:

www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/planning-and-development-advice/section-106-planning-obligations/

Further information about the education infrastructure requirements are provided in the section 106 planning obligations topic papers.

Education Provision

www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/planning-and-development-advice/section-106-planning-obligations/

3.

Fire and Rescue

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the need for the planning system to create safe environments (see section 8). Therefore new development needs to be designed and located to enable the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service to meet their responsibilities.

Whilst most access issues can be considered at the planning application stage, this section sets out Fire and Rescue Service considerations as a matter of completeness.

As the District and Borough Councils go about determining their strategy for distributing development, they liaise with the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service to consider whether any particular locations would not be suitable for large scale development, due to their distance from fire stations.

WHAT CAN A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DO AND HOW CAN WE HELP?

There are very few areas in Suffolk which are inaccessible to the extent that development is restricted. However, if the qualifying body thinks that the community is in an area which is relatively inaccessible to fire service vehicles, it may wish to consult the Fire and Rescue Service as to whether development needs to be limited to manage risk.

At the planning application stage, development proposals will need to demonstrate that fire service vehicles can access buildings. This relates to the highway layout and hardstanding for vehicles. In addition, developments are required to have access to or include fire hydrants, to provide a water supply to fire service vehicles. This requirement is applied as a condition of planning permission, and so does not need to be included within a neighbourhood plan.

Communities may be interested in the provision of automated sprinkler systems. Suffolk County Council always encourages a risk-based approach to sprinkler provision, as a way of reducing the impacts of fire. However, given that sprinklers are covered by the Building Regulations regime, the planning system cannot require sprinklers unless there is a strong reason to do so. This may include inaccessibility from Fire Stations.



FIND OUT MORE

Suffolk County Council's webpages provides information on fire and rescue matters:

www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2016-18

www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/about-suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service-plan-2015-2018/



4.

Flooding and Water Management

The extreme flooding events in 2007 led to the implementation of The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 which provides legislation for the management of risks associated with flooding and coastal erosion.

The Act reinforces the need to manage flooding holistically and in a sustainable manner. It places a number of new roles and responsibilities on Suffolk County Council which is the 'Lead Local Flood Authority' (LLFA).

The LLFA has a legal responsibility to coordinate local organisations involved in the management of flood risk (including Environment Agency, highway authority, district councils and water companies). The county council is responsible for dealing with flooding from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses. The Environment Agency has primary responsibility for coastal flooding and flooding from rivers.

WHAT DOES NATIONAL POLICY SAY?

The National Planning Policy Framework, published in March 2012, advises that inappropriate development in areas of flood risk should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRA) should be carried out in support of Local Plan proposals, and site specific Flood Risk Assessments (FRA) in accordance with specific site criteria. The use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) is key to effective and sustainable water management.

Technical Guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework sets out what types of development are acceptable in each of the different flood zones.

WHAT IS THE LOCAL POLICY IN SUFFOLK?

Suffolk County Council leads the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership, joining up the work done by flood risk management organisations and working closely with communities and individuals. The Partnership has developed and published the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Strategy which sets out a framework for dealing with the risk of flooding in Suffolk as a whole. The objective is to reduce the risk of flooding and to protect people's safety and wellbeing. The introduction and use of SuDS is key to effective water management and together with careful design and integration with green spaces, the benefits to wildlife and landscape quality can be maximised.

WHAT CAN A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DO AND HOW CAN WE HELP?

Even if the area covered by the neighbourhood plan does not suffer from particular flooding problems, any watercourses which run through the Plan area are likely to be part of a strategic network and part of a catchment area. Policies exist at national and local levels to ensure that development is designed to minimise the rate at which rain water leaves the site, so no further neighbourhood plan policies are necessary. However, if land is to be allocated for development, it is recommended that consideration is given to strategic flood risk management, in addition to local flood risk. Neighbourhood Plans should encourage efficient water and waste management systems as well as sustainable drainage systems.

If there are areas susceptible to any type of flooding in the area, neighbourhood plans will have to take this, and any necessary flood and water management, into account if allocating any additional development.

Communities should begin by consulting their local planning authority's SFRA document. This is a comprehensive study of strategic flood risk. In addition the Environment Agency's website provides interactive maps, including the risk of flooding from surface water and Suffolk County Council keeps records of events and can give advice on flood risk and infrastructure requirements for flood and water management.

Suffolk County Council as the LLFA keeps records of locally reported flood events and maintains a map of these areas. Local knowledge can help supplement this map. The county council Flood and Water Management team

can help to interpret and advise on how new development might be affected by and effect local flood risk and how surface water can be managed.

Neighbourhood plans should encourage proposers of new development to assess flood and water impacts and to apply the principles of SuDS to ensure new development does not increase the surface water flood risk to adjacent properties or land and manages water in a sustainable way.



FIND OUT MORE

Suffolk County Council's webpages provide relevant information on how flooding is managed in Suffolk, with a broad overview of which responsibilities individual and organisations have in terms on flooding and drainage:

www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/flooding-and-drainage/

Guidance is available on Suffolk County Council website pages

www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/flooding-and-drainage/guidance-on-development-and-flood-risk/

The guidance covers SuDS Guidance, Standards and Information.

Flood management in Suffolk

www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/flooding-and-drainage/flood-management-in-suffolk/

Suffolk County Council Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment Report, June 2011

www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/suffolk.gov.uk/Emergency%20and%20Safety/Civil%20Emergencies/SUFFOLKPFRAREPORTFINAL.pdf

The Environment Agency's website has an interactive map of flooding providing the option to view the risk of flooding from surface water.

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency

Technical Guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework, section Flood risk

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6000/2115548.pdf

Local planning authority's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment document

5.

Health and Wellbeing

Health is more than just an absence of illness. Health is linked to physical, mental and social wellbeing, and is affected by a wide range of social, environmental and economic factors.

Suffolk County Council is working with its partners to improve the health and wellbeing of all people living in Suffolk. Our shared policy document is the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which looks at ways of helping people in Suffolk to live happier, healthier lives.

WHAT DOES NATIONAL POLICY SAY?

The National Planning Policy Framework requires the planning system to take into account and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all. It also encourages delivery of sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs. Further to this, Chapter Eight of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out how the Government expects the planning system to contribute toward healthy communities.

The Planning Practice Guidance provides further information on what neighbourhood plans need to do in relation to health and wellbeing. See the section titled 'What is the role of health and wellbeing in planning?'

WHAT CAN A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DO AND HOW CAN WE HELP?

Communities may wish to consider how a neighbourhood plan could contribute to health and wellbeing objectives. The following paragraphs offer some suggested measures which could contribute to the health and wellbeing of communities. They are currently organised under the four objectives of the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2016-18).

Every child in Suffolk has the best start in life

There are two immediately obvious ways in which the planning system can have a direct positive impact on a child's start in life. The first is to ensure sufficient provision of pre-school, school and sixth form places. The education section of this document sets out how neighbourhood plans can help to meet the requirements of paragraph 72 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The second is to ensure sufficient provision of children's outdoor play and sports facilities, with safe walking and cycling routes between play areas and homes. Based on evidenced need for new facilities, policies in a neighbourhood plan could support the delivery or expansion of play services.

Some qualifying bodies have held specific consultation sessions for children and young people to ensure that their voice is considered in planning how the local area may grow and develop to meet the needs of residents now and in the future.

Older people in Suffolk have a good quality of life

Suffolk's population is ageing, and it is ageing faster than the rest of the country. The quality of housing and the built environment can make an important contribution to older people's health and wellbeing. The Government's Lifetime Neighbourhoods strategy gives a very useful introduction to considering the specific needs of older people in relation to the built environment.

Communities might consider the need for specialist housing. District and Borough Council Housing teams will be able to provide advice on local needs. Communities might also consider how accessible their pedestrian routes are to older people who are more likely to have physical impairments.

Improving independent life for people with physical and learning disabilities

A healthy environment is a complex concept, and several contributing factors are set out in the paragraphs above. In addition to those factors, communities may wish to consider opportunities for employment and leisure activities for people with disabilities. This could inspire new ways of working together improving outcomes for people with disabilities and ways of ensuring that people with disabilities are able to participate in community life. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and Building Regulations 2000 require reasonable provision to be made for access to buildings and facilities for people with disabilities (including play areas and games areas).

People in Suffolk have the opportunity to improve their mental health and wellbeing

In addition to the factors outlined above, communities may wish to consider ways to improve access to the countryside and green space, particularly via pedestrian and cycle routes, which would enable people to be fit and active. Being fit and active is proven to have a positive impact on people's mental wellbeing.

Loneliness and social isolation are also important factors affecting people's mental health and wellbeing. The provision of community facilities and places for people to meet and socialise could be considered as part of the neighbourhood planning process.

With increasing incidences of cognitive impairments (such as dementia), wayfinding features such as public art or distinctive architecture can also have benefits with people struggling with memory loss.

WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

In Suffolk, Rendlesham have considered health and wellbeing in their Neighbourhood Plan. Priority was given for reuse of redundant buildings in the district centre for community sport/fitness/leisure and wellbeing activities.

Cringeford's Neighbourhood Plan (Norfolk) included a policy which encouraged walking and cycling by the provision of new routes.



FIND OUT MORE

Suffolk County Council's webpages includes information on health and wellbeing covering different aspects.

www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/the-council-and-its-committees/committees/suffolk-health-and-wellbeing-board/

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-jsna/

A Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Suffolk, May 2016

www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/assets/Health-and-Wellbeing-Board-Papers/JHWS-refresh-2016-2019.pdf

Public Health Annual Report

www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-jsna/reports/reports/annual-public-health-report/latest-annual-public-health-report/

Lifetime Neighbourhoods

www.gov.uk/government/publications/lifetime-neighbourhoods--2

6.

Libraries

A modern Library is a hub at the heart of its community supporting the social, economic, and cultural needs of the people who live and work there. Modern libraries are much more than just books.

They provide digital services, free internet access, help for individuals to develop their skills, interaction for people from new communities, activities for families and children, opportunities for job-seekers and, increasingly, a space with support for older people.

Libraries in Suffolk are operated by Suffolk Libraries, a non-profit charitable organisation established to run libraries for the benefit of the people of Suffolk. Suffolk Libraries' services are commissioned by the county council, who have a legal duty to provide a library service.

WHAT CAN A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DO AND HOW CAN WE HELP?

If a qualifying body wants to include library provision in their Neighbourhood Plan, Suffolk County Council can advise as to whether it will be possible to provide additional or improved library facilities in the neighbourhood plan area and how it can be delivered.

At present, Suffolk County Council seeks developer contributions toward library provision where existing services cannot cope

with increased population arising from new development. The same approach will apply through neighbourhood plans, and communities could choose to use some of their CIL receipts to deliver additional or improve existing library facilities.

Where a library doesn't already exist, or if a library is in a poor quality building, a neighbourhood plan could consider how to establish a new facility. However, it is highly unlikely that this would be in the form of a traditional library. Instead, there is a possibility that new 'satellite' facilities could be provided. These are small, largely self-service facilities operating out shared buildings (such as schools and community halls) and with staff provided from existing libraries.

Provision would be dependent on developer contributions, evidenced community demand (including new housing) and the identification of a suitable location for the service. But a neighbourhood plan could put policies in place to place greater emphasis on the need for developer contributions towards library provision.

There are alternative ways which the community could use to help maintain or provide library services, including through the community rights mechanisms or Community Development Orders.



FIND OUT MORE

Suffolk County Council's webpages provides information on libraries:

www.suffolk.gov.uk/libraries



7.

Minerals and Waste

Whilst districts and borough councils set our local plans and determine most planning applications, Suffolk County Council is the planning authority with responsibility for mineral extraction and waste disposal matters.

These functions are important for supporting economic growth by ensuring a supply of mineral resources (such as sand and gravel), the need for additional waste management facilities, and for managing the environmental impacts of quarrying and waste management.

WHAT DOES NATIONAL POLICY SAY?

The National Planning Framework refers to the sustainable use of minerals (section 13). Overall it states that since minerals are finite natural resources and therefore can only be worked where they are found, it is important to make best use of them to secure their long-term conservation.

The Planning Practice Guidance provides information on planning for mineral extraction in plan making and the application process as well as information on support of the implementation of waste planning policy.

WHAT CAN A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DO AND HOW CAN WE HELP?

It is not envisaged that neighbourhood plans will consider these issues directly. However, the County's Minerals and Waste Plans are part of the Development Plan with which neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity. Furthermore, Neighbourhood Development Orders cannot permit minerals or waste development.

However, Neighbourhood plans will need to consider the following:

MINERALS

The Suffolk Minerals Plan allocates minerals sites for the extraction of important resources such as sand and gravel and sets the policies for granting permission for such uses. Neighbourhood plans will have to consider whether any proposals being brought forward by the community might compromise the use of the minerals sites.

For example, new housing should not be located where the operation of the allocated minerals site might have unacceptable impact on the eventual residents of the new housing. Suffolk County Council officers will be able to discuss these issues.

In addition to this, areas of Suffolk are covered by 'Minerals Consultation Areas'. When development comes forward in these areas, the county council has the ability to require investigation of the mineral resources on these sites, before planning permission is granted. This gives the County Council the ability to prevent new development from being an obstacle to the extraction of minerals or to require that limited mineral extraction is carried out before the new development is constructed.

This does not mean that extraction is automatically required in these areas. Rather, Suffolk County Council will need to consider whether extraction is desirable. If the neighbourhood plan is likely to allocate development in a Minerals Consultation Area, please contact the county council to discuss this matter at an early stage in your plan preparation.

WASTE

The Suffolk Waste Plan sets a framework for development related to the disposal of waste. Neighbourhood plan bodies should consider whether their proposals are likely to conflict with permitted or allocated waste uses, just as with minerals sites.

In addition, to promote sustainable waste management, Suffolk County Council would welcome neighbourhood planning measures which encourage the reuse or recycling of waste. Policy WDM17 of the Waste Plan gives a useful indication of the types of measures which could be required of development.

In general Suffolk County Council can advise on County policy for Minerals & Waste and whether or not the plan needs to deal with issues of waste sites or mineral extraction sites (usually sand and gravel).

WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

Cringleford Neighbourhood Plan (Norfolk) has incorporated a sustainable waste management plan into their Neighbourhood Plan. This includes adequate storage for reuse bins as well as a sustainable urban drainage system (SUDS) to minimise the risk of flooding.



FIND OUT MORE

Suffolk County Council's webpages provides information on mineral and waste development planning:

www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/planning-applications/minerals-and-waste-development-planning/

Waste Core Strategy

www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/planning-applications/minerals-and-waste-development-planning/waste-core-strategy/

Minerals Core Strategy

www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/planning-applications/minerals-and-waste-development-planning/minerals-core-strategy/

8.

Natural Environment

The county council is responsible for the overall health and wellbeing of people and communities in Suffolk. The protection and enhancement of the natural environment is essential not only for the intrinsic aesthetic and historic value that supports tourism and the economy for the area but also to maintain the quality of life for the communities of the County.

Suffolk County Council champions, advises and supports the conservation and enhancement of the landscapes, woodlands and wildlife in Suffolk, of which over 36% is either nationally or locally protected for its wildlife or landscape value.

WHAT DOES NATIONAL POLICY SAY?

A core principle of the National Planning Policy Framework is that any new developments should contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. section 11 states any development should minimise the impact on biodiversity and provide net gains where possible.

Planning Practice Guidance states that when preparing neighbourhood plans, developments should minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment (paragraph 110). For further information on neighbourhood plans, see section 11 on 'Conserving and enhancing the Natural Environment.'

WHAT CAN A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DO AND HOW CAN WE HELP?

Whilst the county council does not have a specific overarching responsibility in respect of ecology, it has a general statutory duty (as with all public bodies including Parish Councils) to biodiversity and the natural environment.

Neighbourhood Plans provide a significant opportunity for communities to recognise, protect and improve local environmental assets. There is great scope for benefiting the environment, from designating green spaces to establishing 'green corridors' by linking open spaces and improving local watercourses.

A qualifying body may want to identify where environmental assets are located in the Neighbourhood Plan area, their value to local communities and whether they require protection or enhancement. These could include assets, such as high quality and distinctive landscapes and habitats, and green infrastructure. Green infrastructure includes open spaces, parks, woodlands, allotments, playing fields, private gardens and street trees.

Communities may wish to protect and enhance sites within their Neighbourhood Plan area which have potential conservation features such as wildlife habitat and species, attractive landscapes, and tree preservation orders. It is also necessary that the design of any proposal should try to retain and incorporate existing landscape or historic features into its design. For example, this could then form the basis of policy that the design of any development proposal should seek to retain and incorporate these features and spaces.

A Neighbourhood Plan could also identify opportunities for green spaces or improvements to public spaces through new development. This could include linking open spaces to make 'green corridors' for people and wildlife, planting trees or making improvements to local waterways.

The statutory requirements for ecological assessment can be complex. The local planning authority (the District or Borough Council, or the Broads Authority) will be able to advise the qualifying body if the emerging Neighbourhood Plan will need to be subject to an assessment. If

an ecological assessment is found to be required, the gathering of evidence for it and its preparation can be integrated into the process of producing the Neighbourhood Plan and may not necessarily require the involvement of external consultants.

WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

The parish East Bergholt, Suffolk, has undertaken a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment which followed the guidance 'Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity' by Natural England. An assessment is made for each area with regards to its landscape value, sensitivity and its capacity to accommodate development without significant effects on landscape character (landscape capacity) highlighting the most significant and valued views and land parcels within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Cringleford's Neighbourhood Development Plan incorporates sustainable drainage schemes which will provide wildlife areas and link where possible with existing county wildlife sites.

These may include features such as ponds, swales, and permeable paving and should be designed as an integral part of green infrastructure.

Fish Quay incorporated natural green spaces into their neighbourhood plan. Where possible and appropriate, micro allotments allow residents to grow their own produce. Also, Denmead's neighbourhood plan proposed a 'Green Infrastructure Strategy,' which will feature new and improved assets in the local area such as the village green, play areas and sites of interest for nature conservation.



FIND OUT MORE

Suffolk County Council's webpages provides various information and different guides on environmental aspects

www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/suffolks-countryside-and-wildlife/

Suffolk's Nature Strategy

www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/suffolks-countryside-and-wildlife/protecting-the-environment/suffolk-nature-strategy/

Natural England also makes available a range of documents to be considered when assessing local environmental issues

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england

Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service

www.suffolkbis.org.uk

Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5146500464115712>

Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35033>

Natural Environment White Paper, February 2014

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/286547/newp-implementation-update-20140226.pdf

Touching the Tide – A Guidance note for preparing Neighbourhood Plans

www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/assets/documents/Landscape-and-Neighbour-Plan-final.pdf

9.

Public Rights of Way Network

Suffolk's extensive rights of way network is a unique and valuable resource which plays a key role in maintaining and improving health and quality of life.

Physical activity which is incorporated into everyday life such as brisk walking and cycling is often more sustainable, as effective and more cost effective than other initiatives that promote exercise, sport and active leisure pursuits.

WHAT DOES NATIONAL POLICY SAY?

The Planning Practice Guidance provides further information on what neighbourhood plans need to do in relation to rights of way – see the section on “Promoting healthy communities,” (section 8).

National Planning Policy Framework states it is the local authorities' role to seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.

WHAT CAN A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DO AND HOW CAN WE HELP?

Those producing a neighbourhood plan may want to consider how the plan can help its community to access and benefit from the countryside by ensuring rights of way are protected and enhanced. There are opportunities to propose new public rights of way and improve conditions to make walking, cycling, horse riding and other forms of green activity and travel safer and more attractive.

The network is comprised of four different types of public rights of way:

- i. Public footpath – this should only be used by people on foot, or using a mobility vehicle. The majority of the network in Suffolk is public footpath.
- ii. Public bridleway – in addition to people on foot, bridleways may also be used by someone on a horse or someone riding a bicycle.
- iii. Restricted byway – this has similar status to a bridleway, but can also be used by a 'non-motorised vehicle', for example a horse and carriage.
- iv. Byway open to all traffic (BOAT) – these can be used by all vehicles, including motorised vehicles as well as people on foot, on horse or on a bicycle. On occasion a BOAT can have a Traffic Regulation Order applied. This restricts certain types of use for all or part of the year and the restriction will be clearly signed. Landowners and land managers can apply for a vehicle permit for access on the BOAT for their work.

Suffolk County Council has a statutory duty to maintain and protect the network of public rights of way. It can advise communities on the extent and legal status of the Rights of Way network and potential designation of new Rights of Way. It may also be able to offer support or guidance around initiatives to encourage local community involvement in monitoring and/or maintaining their local rights of way network.

A plan might also consider how access to the countryside for those who experience limitations in mobility and sight can be achieved particularly around physical barriers such as stiles, widths of footpaths and surface condition.

There are opportunities to link development into public rights of way. You may choose to support developments close to rights of way to provide improved networks between homes, jobs and recreation. Improving the rights of way network can have positive health benefits that can be part of considering the location and potential benefits of new development.

WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

Winsford Neighbourhood Plan has improved pedestrian and cycle access within and to the Eave Valley by delivering a connected network of pedestrian and cycle routes.

Petersfield Neighbourhood Plan aims to establish a well-connected internal street environment with new public rights of way as well as creating connections and links with existing public rights of way.



FIND OUT MORE

Suffolk County Council's webpages provide more information on public rights of way.

www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/public-rights-of-way-in-suffolk/

More information on heritage assets can be found here

Suffolk Public Rights of Ways

www.publicrightsofway.onesuffolk.net/

The website includes information such as:

OS MAPs

www.publicrightsofway.onesuffolk.net/the-definitive-map/

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (currently being updated)

www.publicrightsofway.onesuffolk.net/home/rights-of-way-improvement-plan/#

Way marking Public Rights of Way - Natural England

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414626/waymarking-rights-of-way.pdf

A guide to definitive maps and changes to public rights of way - 2008 revision - Natural England

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414670/definitive-map-guide.pdf

Rights of way circular (1/09) - DEFRA

www.gov.uk/government/publications/rights-of-way-circular-1-09

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidelines on Physical Activity and the Environment

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/PH8

NICE Guidelines on Walking and Cycling

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph41/chapter/4-Implementation

10.

Transport

Reducing the need to travel and promoting sustainable transport options is a key objective of the planning system.

Suffolk County Council is working to improve Suffolk's transport networks, reduce congestion and improve access to jobs and markets. In addition it is responsible for establishing transport priorities and objectives across Suffolk as well as maintaining a range of passenger transport services. A key policy document is the Third Suffolk Local Transport Plan, which sets out our strategy for the years 2011 to 2031.

WHAT DOES NATIONAL POLICY SAY?

National policy is to promote sustainable modes of transport, prioritising walking, cycling and public transport (in that order), above the use of the car. Development should be planned to minimise the need to travel and the emphasis should be on reducing congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. The policy in respect of transport is set out in section 4 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Further information is set out in the Planning Practice Guidance.

WHAT CAN A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DO AND HOW CAN WE HELP?

Neighbourhood Plans can put forward policies related to transport, as long as they meet the basic conditions. The following paragraphs describe some issues and objectives related to different transport modes. However, any transport policies should be developed so as to give consideration to the interrelationship between different transport modes.

WALKING AND CYCLING

If a Neighbourhood Plan is allocating sites, they should be located so as to maximise opportunities for walking or cycling to key services. This entails considering the existing network of walking and cycling routes, and the

potential for requiring development to link in to these networks.

Development should also consider how it impacts on the Public Rights of Way Network. There may be opportunities to provide high quality access to the countryside or green space, which is proven to provide health benefits for residents.

Even if a Neighbourhood Plan is not allocating sites, it may wish to consider how to develop a stronger network of walking and cycling routes, and could use Community Infrastructure Levy funding to do so.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT (BUSES AND DEMAND RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT)

If allocating sites, a Neighbourhood Plan should consider access to bus stops. There may be an opportunity to bring forward development which would justify the provision of a new bus stop or stops, or the improvement of existing stops, though this would be dependent on the scale of the development coming forward.

Provision or amendment of bus routes is dependent on the financial viability of such a service. It is unlikely that a neighbourhood plan would bring forward development of a scale which would make new bus services financially viable.

RAIL

If your community is served by a railway station, you may wish to consider how other transport routes link to rail services. Whilst communities may be interested in establishing new railway stations, a very large scale of development is likely to be needed to justify this sort of provision.

Communities may wish to consider policies which encourage or enable the improvement of railway stations, their facilities and the areas which surround them as a way of improving the 'sense of arrival' and so encouraging their use. Stations are also sustainable transport hubs and, as locations, are capable of being a focus for development.

PRIVATE VEHICULAR TRANSPORT (CARS, MOTORBIKES ETC)

After opportunities for healthy and sustainable transport have been maximised, vehicular traffic can be considered. As per the National Planning Policy Framework, development can only be prevented or refused where cumulative transport impacts are 'severe'.

Where sites are to be allocated, there will need to be consideration of impacts on key junctions. Suffolk County Council highway officers will be able to provide an indication of the likelihood that sites will or won't be acceptable, but the full transport implications of sites cannot be considered until transport statements or assessments are created at the planning application stage.

However, if at the plan making stage, it appears likely that the measures proposed by a Neighbourhood Plan are likely to have significant implications for the highway network, Suffolk County Council may require a study to be carried out on transport impacts and to set out improvements to mitigate the impact.

If a community wishes to resolve highway issues without allocating land for development, it will have to consider alternative funding sources. The county council's approach to funding transport improvements is set out in the Local Transport Plan.

A Neighbourhood Plan could also include policies related to the arrangement of the highway network (including walking, cycling, road and off-road routes), with or without the allocation of housing. If the community wishes to consider highway design measures, such as road layout or car parking provision, it should consult

Suffolk County Council highways officers for further guidance. This is as highway design has implications for the safety of highway users.

In general, county council officers can provide initial outline comments on the feasibility of proposed transport projects, if sites are to be allocated, on whether or not sites can come forward for allocation. It is not possible to provide anything more than initial, high level and indicative comments without detailed studies being carried out. Unfortunately, Suffolk County Council does not have a budget for supporting such studies.

PARKING STANDARDS

Suffolk County Council currently considers parking provision through adopted Parking Standards (Suffolk Advisory Parking Standards- 'SAPS'). The SAPS, allied to the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 39), will be the guide by which parking proposals will be judged, and the mechanism by which this Plan's policies on parking will be implemented. The SAPS are based on best practice and data on car ownership levels.

WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

Chaddesley Corbett's neighbourhood plan aims to improve driver behaviour and reduce speeding in the local area. The parish council have commissioned a feasibility study and worked with its Highways Authority to develop proposals for using landscape and other measures to make the area more distinctive and recognisable, with a view of reducing speeding.



FIND OUT MORE

Suffolk County Council's webpages provides various information roads and transport:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/>

Third Suffolk Local Transport Plan

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/public-transport-bus-pass-and-transport-planning/transport-planning-strategy-and-plans/>

Suffolk guidance for parking (parking standards for new dwellings)

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/planning-and-development-advice/parking-guidance/>

Designated speed limits info on Suffolk County Council website

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/traffic-management-and-road-safety/speed-limits/>

If you need help to understand this information in another language please call 03456 066 067.

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