



# GUIDANCE ON **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING IN SUFFOLK**

*Guidance for Parish Councils and Communities*

Produced by Suffolk County Council

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# Acronyms List

<b>AGLV</b>	Areas of Greater Landscape Sensitivity	<b>LLFA</b>	Lead Local Flood Authority
<b>ALLS</b>	Areas of Local Landscape Sensitivity	<b>LPA</b>	Local Planning Authority
<b>AONB</b>	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	<b>LNRS</b>	Local Nature Recovery Strategy
<b>BNG</b>	Biodiversity Net Gain	<b>LTP4</b>	Local Transport Plan
<b>BOAT</b>	Byway Open to All Traffic	<b>NPPF</b>	National Planning Policy Framework
<b>CAS</b>	Community Action Suffolk	<b>PPE</b>	Personal Protective Equipment
<b>CIL</b>	Community Infrastructure Levy	<b>PPG</b>	Planning Practice Guidance
<b>EBP</b>	Enhanced Bus Partnership	<b>PROW</b>	Public Rights of Way
<b>FRA</b>	Flood Risk Assessment	<b>RoWIP</b>	Rights of Way Improvement Plan
<b>HER</b>	Historic Environment Record	<b>SCC</b>	Suffolk County Council
<b>HGV</b>	Heavy Goods Vehicle	<b>SFRA</b>	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
<b>JSNA</b>	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	<b>SLA</b>	Special Landscape Area
<b>LCWIP</b>	Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan	<b>SMWLP</b>	Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan
<b>LEA</b>	Local Education Authority	<b>SuDS</b>	Sustainable Drainage System
<b>LGS</b>	Local Green Space	<b>TPO</b>	Tree Protection Order
<b>LHA</b>	Local Highway Authority		

# Introduction

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. If you have any further questions on any of the topics raised in this document, please get in touch with the planning team by emailing:

[neighbourhoodplanning@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhoodplanning@suffolk.gov.uk)



# 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.



## THE COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BUILD

This 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:

[Localism Act 2011](#)

[Localities – Neighbourhood Plans, Road Map Guide](#)

[Neighbourhood Planning Practice Guidance](#)

[ACRE \(Action with Communities in Rural England\)](#)

# 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 organisations, 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 (LPA). 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 (SCC) is engaged in their preparation.

Depending on the scope of your Neighbourhood Plan, Suffolk County Council's interests in respect of neighbourhood planning can potentially include our duties as Local Education Authority (LEA), Local Highway Authority (LHA) Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), Health and Social Care Authority, and Minerals and Waste.

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. As such we can provide useful policy guidance on these matters to those preparing Neighbourhood Plans. We are also a significant landowner owning large farm estates and hundreds of buildings and properties across the county.

The following chapters 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 development of projects to be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements.

# 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, Suffolk County Council may not be able to engage in detail with every Neighbourhood Plan that is prepared in the county.*

In general, the following applies:

- Neighbourhood planning belongs to Town and Parish 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 on matters relevant to county council service responsibilities and policy objectives.

Table 1 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 when we are consulted.



## 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 SCC Planning team at: [neighbourhoodplanning@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhoodplanning@suffolk.gov.uk)

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

**TABLE 1: SCC RESPONSIBILITIES**

What SCC can do	Stage	What SCC 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	Regulation 14: Pre-submission publicity and consultation	Respond in detail to all pre-submission consultations
Respond to the submission consultation if there is a specific County Council related issue	Regulation 16: Submission of a Neighbourhood Plan to the Local Planning Authority	Respond in detail to all submission consultations
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 should be used as a tool for taking responsibility for local heritage, by identifying important historic assets and an approach to how they could be managed in future.*

Suffolk County Council helps to ensure the preservation, enhancement and accessibility of Suffolk's historic environment. This is achieved 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, Dec 2024) requires the planning system to conserve and enhance the historic environment (see Section 16 of the NPPF). This also applies to below-ground heritage assets, 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 '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 showcase and promote 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 (LPA) conservation officers.

The County Council maintains the Suffolk Historic Environment Record (HER) which holds records of known heritage assets within the county

Information on the HER is available by a HER search through the County Council Archaeological Service and publicly available records can be viewed online through the Suffolk Heritage Explorer. The HER 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. The Neighbourhood Plan could include details of currently recorded finds and monuments within the parish using information from the County Historic Environment Record (HER) and the information reproduced on a map in the document.

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service can provide advice on the potential for archaeology to be found within sites proposed for development, and whether sites would therefore be suitable, having assessed the potential for allocation. The SCC Archaeological Service can also advise on the likely archaeological requirements which would be assigned to a 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 best practice to consult the County HER to see if development might affect known heritage assets, or areas considered to have a high potential for archaeology. Should there be sufficient evidence, the Neighbourhood Plan might deem it appropriate to direct development away from certain areas to prevent harm to known below-ground heritage assets, or to preserve the setting of a heritage asset.

A Neighbourhood Plan should also consider whether there are opportunities to promote the historic environment through development. Development led archaeological works can provide further opportunities to enhance the County HER and our understanding of the local historic environment. Such archaeological works can provide opportunities for public outreach, to enable communities to engage with their local heritage, as increased public understanding of heritage assets is an aspiration of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Suffolk Farmsteads project provides information on barn conversions, information is on the Suffolk Heritage Explorer.

Advice for Grade II listed buildings and non-designated built heritage assets is provided by the Local Authority Conservation Officer.

Advice for Grade I and Grade II is provided by Historic England and the Local Authority Conservation Officer. Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service should be consulted regarding below-ground heritage in association with built heritage.

### WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

Several Neighbourhood Plans have considered heritage, including policies relating to the historic landscape, traditional design and the setting of listed buildings. For example, see Playford Neighbourhood Plan's Policy PFD6 (adopted in 2024) and Carlton Colville Neighbourhood Plan (adopted in 2022).

SCC are not aware of one which has specific policies which deal with the 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.

[Historic Environment Record](#)

[Suffolk Heritage Explorer](#)

[PPG Historic Environment](#)



## 2.

## Education

*The importance of education to Suffolk's future is impossible to understate.*

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

### NOTE:

Before proposing a site that includes a school or education facility, please engage with SCC as the Education Authority.

### WHAT DOES NATIONAL POLICY SAY?

The NPPF is unequivocal in setting out the need to ensure that school places are provided (in particular, paragraphs 100 and 128 (Dec 2024)). The desired approach by the Government and SCC 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, reduce car usage, or provide 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 uses the Department for Education pupil yield dashboard for estimating the minimum number of pupils to come out of a development. Table 2 shows the pupil yield requirements for pupil place requirements, which can be refined at the planning application stage when dwelling sizes and types are known.

*Table 2: Estimated pupil yields for different dwelling types*

Dwelling Type	Primary		Secondary		Sixth Form	
	<i>Per dwelling</i>	<i>Per 100 dwellings</i>	<i>Per dwelling</i>	<i>Per 100 dwellings</i>	<i>Per dwelling</i>	<i>Per 100 dwellings</i>
Flats with 1 bedroom	0.03	3	0.02	2	0.015	1.5
Flats with 2 or more bedrooms	0.18	18	0.05	5	0.017	1.7
Houses with 1 bedroom	0.13	13	0.06	6	0.024	2.4
Houses with 2 or more bedrooms	0.32	32	0.15	15	0.055	5.5

From April 2024, there was an introduction of new entitlements for eligible working parents which includes the 15-hour entitlement for children aged 2 years of eligible working parents. From September 2024, the 15-hour entitlement has been extended for children aged 9 months of eligible working parents. From September 2025, the 15-hour entitlement has been extended to 30-hour entitlement for children aged 9 months of eligible working parents. This equates to a Suffolk wide average of 12 FTE places per 100 dwellings. Please contact SCC for the ward variance and parent eligibility.

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 to allocate development requiring a local school to expand or even a new school would require a significant quantum of growth to ensure the school is viable. In general, developments 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. SCC's experience is that reinvesting funds from the sale of existing school sites is not possible as other Education and Community uses will repurpose the school site. The Developers Guide to Infrastructure Contributions in Suffolk (2025) provides further information on this matter.

Neighbourhood Planning bodies should also consider how to locate new housing to:

- minimise the need for pupils to travel; and
- minimise the need to travel by car; and
- maximise the potential for walking and cycling to school.

### WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

The Kesgrave Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2021, includes Policy KE9 where new developments must improve and maintain walking and cycling infrastructure which is important within the neighbourhood where over 900 cyclists commute each day to school. This is the highest rate of pupils cycling to school in the whole of the UK.

Several areas around the country have held consultation sessions with school pupils, to speak to those who will shape the future of our communities, and to assess the consequences of our development decisions.



### FIND OUT MORE:

[Suffolk County Council's webpages include information on education and learning in the county](#)

[Developer Contributions in Suffolk](#)

[Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions in Suffolk](#)

# 3.

## Fire and Rescue

*The NPPF sets out the need for the planning system to create safe environments (see Section 8 Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities). Therefore, new developments need 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 to ensure comprehensive documentation.

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 be unsuitable 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, 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.



### FIND OUT MORE:

[Suffolk County Council's webpages provide information on fire and rescue matters](#)

[Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Plan](#)



## 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 Flood and Water Management Act 2010 reinforces the need to manage surface water run-off and flood risk holistically and sustainably. The legislation establishes Suffolk County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and outlines its roles and responsibilities.

The LLFA has a legal responsibility to coordinate local organisations involved in the management of flood risk (including the Environment Agency, Highway Authority, District and Borough Councils and water companies). SCC LLFA is responsible for managing flooding from surface water and ordinary watercourses (pluvial flooding) and groundwater risk. The Environment Agency has primary responsibility for coastal / tidal flooding and (fluvial) flooding from rivers.

## WHAT DOES NATIONAL POLICY SAY?

The 'planning and flood risk' part of Section 14 of the NPPF advises that inappropriate development in areas of flood risk should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future), 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 NPPF 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 mitigate 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 rainwater 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.

**NOTE:**

Before proposing or allocating any sites outside of any Local Plan allocations, please speak to us as LLFA. SCC LLFA offer pre-app advice which we recommend for all sites either at master-planning stage and for allocated and un-allocated sites.

Neighbourhood Plans should encourage efficient water and waste management systems as well as sustainable drainage systems. Water is a valuable natural resource, and the management of rainfall and runoff can support sustainable development. Good urban design aims to deliver attractive, pleasant, useful and above all “liveable” urban environments that support and enhance local communities. Where possible, SuDS and amenity features can be merged to create multifunctional spaces. By doing so, the amenity and biodiversity of the SuDS feature is maximised while still providing its primary purpose. SuDS can be used to count towards BNG when designed with this in mind from the outset.

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. SCC’s Flood and Water Management team can help to interpret and advise on how new development might be affected by, and affect local flood risk, and how surface water can be managed.

Neighbourhood Plans should encourage proposers of new developments 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.

**WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?**

Great Barton Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2021 have set out a number of Development Principles, including “The need to manage surface water drainage in a suitable manner including Sustainable Drainage Systems”.

The Boxford Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2022 has created Policy BOX 15 on localised flooding. All new development including minor development must use appropriate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), wetland and water features should protect against pollution, provide drainage and wider amenity, recreational and biodiversity benefits.



## 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, individuals and organisations have in terms of flooding and drainage](#)

[Guidance on Development and Flood Risk](#)

This guidance covers SuDS Guidance, Standards and Information.

[Flood management in Suffolk](#)

[Suffolk County Council Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment Report, June 2011 \(updated December 2017\)](#)

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

- [Flood Risk Map](#)
- [Flood risk information for planning in England](#)

[PPG - Flood Risk and Coastal Change](#)

## 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 (2022-2027), which looks at ways of helping people in Suffolk to live happier, healthier lives.

Communities may wish to consider how a Neighbourhood Plan could contribute to health and wellbeing. The following paragraphs offer some suggested measures which could contribute to the health and wellbeing of communities.

The key priorities set out the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2022-2027) and its 2025 Review are:

- Public mental health
- Good work and health
- Listening and engaging with local voices
- Wellbeing of children and young people

## WHAT DOES NATIONAL POLICY SAY?

The NPPF requires the planning system to take into account and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all. It also encourages the delivery of sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs. Further to this, Section 8 of the NPPF (Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities) 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 'Health & Safe Communities'.

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

### Meeting the needs of an ageing population, and adaptable and accessible housing

A considerable amount of time is spent in the home. The quality and affordability of homes can influence the health of residents. Living in good quality and affordable housing is associated with many positive health outcomes. Support should be given for developments that are designed in accordance with the Building for a Healthy Life Toolkit. This can help create neighbourhoods that blend with their surroundings and prevent secluded and disconnected places that are difficult to navigate and move through.

Suffolk's population is ageing, and the proportion of older people in Suffolk is increasing. The quality of housing and the built environment can make an important contribution to older people's health and wellbeing.

Communities may wish to offer their specific support to development proposals where homes will be built to M4(2) and M4(3) standards of Building Code, which can be easily adapted to an individual's changing care needs. This provision involves building dwellings with features that make them accessible and adaptable thereby increasing suitability for older people, wheelchair users and those with reduced mobility. This can help meet the changing and varying needs of current and future occupants of all ages and vulnerabilities, without restricting the needs of younger occupants and families.

Whilst a Neighbourhood Plan cannot set additional technical standards under the Ministerial Statement of 2015, they can state specific support for these standards, such as M4(2) and M4(3).

Communities might also wish to consider the need for specialist housing including for extra care. 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. This could extend to requiring developers to install benches at regular intervals, allowing pedestrians resting places during journeys.

## Active Travel

Active travel means travelling in physically active ways such as walking, wheeling and cycling. This can improve health and wellbeing by increasing levels of physical activity and, contribute positively to air quality and climate objectives by reducing reliance on private vehicles. It can also lead to less congestion on the road network freeing it up for those that have to use it and increasing travel choices.

Neighbourhoods should be easily navigable by walking, wheeling and cycling. This includes the provision of new linkages and/or footways, cycle paths and bridleways to provide access to local facilities and public transport, as well as the provision of safe cycle parking. Developments that make it safe and simple for children to walk, wheel or cycle to school should also be encouraged. Safe crossing points are of particular importance.

Communities may wish to support incorporating distance and time indicators on new or updated signs. Using distance and time markers on street signs is a concept that aims to provide pedestrians and cyclists with more useful and relevant information about travel times and distances to various destinations. This can help encourage active travel and make environments more pedestrian and cycle friendly.

## Air Quality and Climate Change

The reduction of car usage can also improve air quality, as there are less emissions and pollutants. This can help to improve health of those living in areas of high congestion, and especially can help to reduce symptoms from respiratory illnesses such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and Asthma.

Trees play a significant role in defining the appearance and quality of urban areas. They provide natural shading and cooling and deliver nature-based remedies to climate change by sequestering carbon, improving air and water quality and supporting biodiversity.

SCC suggest incorporating policies that encourage new developments to use on-site energy generation from renewable sources such as solar, and utilise energy efficient heating sources such as air-sourced heat pumps.

## Community facilities, including Allotments and access to green outside space

It is important 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 the evidenced need for new facilities, policies in a Neighbourhood Plan could support the delivery or expansion of play services. In new developments, this could include initiatives that make it more attractive to children to walk to school, such as 'play on the way'. Some examples of this provision may include: gamified public spaces such as stepping stones parallel to a footpath, hopscotch on a path or a set of swings outside of a building. This can help to enhance the experience of moving through the neighbourhood, making it safer and more enjoyable for children and families whilst encouraging physical activity and active travel.

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.

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 part of the neighbourhood planning process, for example the provision of chatty benches.

Allotments can have benefits for individuals' health, provide space for outdoor recreation, provide social connectivity, be a tool for social prescribing and can improve the diet of residents. Policies in a Neighbourhood Plan could support developments that provide space for allotments.

Eating a healthy diet is crucial for children's overall growth, development, and well-being. Accessibility to healthy and affordable food is crucial. Communities may wish to include policies that require development proposals to offer good connectivity to healthy food.

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, and having access to green outside spaces, is proven to positively impact mental wellbeing.

## WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2023 includes two policies focused on improving the health and wellbeing of the community. Policy HAL TC1 explains how proposals which enhance the quality and accessibility of the public realm will be supported. And Policy HAL COM1 sets out that support will be given for proposals relating to play facilities expansion and/or improvement.

Shadingfield, Sotterley, Willingham and Ellough Neighbourhood Plan adopted in 2023, included in policy SSWE STP2 that Public Rights of Way and bridleways should provide a high level of amenity value in order to support healthy lifestyles within the community.

Leavenheath Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2023 included in Policy LEAV7 Housing Size, Type and Tenure, the support for proposals for adaptable housing.



## FIND OUT MORE:

[Suffolk County Council's webpages include information on health and wellbeing covering different aspects.](#)

[Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\)](#)

[Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 – 2027](#)

[Public Health Annual Report](#)

[PPG - Health and Wellbeing](#)

[PPG - Housing for older and disabled people](#)

[ASC Accommodation Strategy 2025-2035](#)

[RTPI Dementia and Town Planning Guidance](#)

[Suffolk County Council's webpages include information on help to stay at home and living independently.](#)

[Chatty Benches](#)

# 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 jobseekers and, increasingly, a space with support for older people.

The libraries service is managed by Suffolk County Council, and operated by Suffolk Community Libraries.

## WHAT CAN A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DO AND HOW CAN SCC HELP?

Suffolk County Council can provide support and advice around the current library provisions, and any plans for capital development if funding is identified.

At present, Suffolk County Council seeks developer contributions toward library provision to meet the need of the increasing population arising from the new development. The same approach will apply through Neighbourhood Plans, and Parish Councils could choose to use some of their Neighbourhood CIL to deliver additional or improve upon existing library facilities.

All communities in Suffolk are within the catchment of one of the 45 fixed library facilities, and many rural communities are supported by the outreach offer which includes three mobile libraries covering several hundred stops, and in some cases a pop-up/home library service.

Neighbourhood Plans should consider the needs of their growing community and how their catchment library service can help to meet these needs. It is important that reference is made regarding library provision in Neighbourhood Plans as this enables libraries to justify their request for contributions from developers.

## WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

Beccles have created Policy BECC2 on community facilities within their Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2021, which focuses on the provision and/or improvement to selected community facilities. This includes the expansion of Beccles Library to provide greater opportunities for a range of community activities.



## FIND OUT MORE:

[Suffolk County Council's webpages provide information on libraries](#)

[More information about Libraries can be found in the Developers Guide to Infrastructure Contributions](#)

[Suffolk Libraries branch and mobile library information](#)



## 7.

## Minerals and Waste

*Whilst Districts and Borough Councils set the local plans and determine most planning applications, Suffolk County Council is the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority for Suffolk. This means the County Council makes planning policy and decisions regarding minerals and waste matters. The relevant policy document is the Adopted Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan (SMWLP), which was adopted in July 2020. This plan, or any successor document, forms part of the wider local development plan.*

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.

### NOTE:

SCC is starting work on a new Minerals and Waste Plan.

### WHAT DOES NATIONAL POLICY SAY?

The NPPF refers to the sustainable use of minerals (Section 17). 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 (PPG) provides information on planning for mineral extraction in the 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 adopted SMWLP (2020) is 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 (and Waste policy)

The Adopted SMWLP 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 (if the development exceeds 5 ha), the County Council has the ability to require an 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 sterilising minerals by requiring the mineral to be extracted, if it is uneconomical for the mineral to be extracted it may be requested that mineral be used on site during construction where possible.

Important policies to consider from the SMWLP 2020 are MP10: Minerals consultation safeguarding areas and WP18: Safeguarding of waste management facilities.

This does not mean that extraction is automatically permitted on the sites allocated in the plan. Rather, Suffolk County Council has identified a need and land suitable to provide that need with local landowners, each application submitted regarding these allocations will be considered on its own planning merit.

If the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to allocate development which will be impacted by or have an impact on a safeguarded or allocated minerals site then Suffolk County Council, as the Local Minerals and Waste Authority should be consulted (MP10).

The Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local plan also outlines a “minerals consultation zone” this is a safeguarded area which spans large areas of Suffolk (usually along Fluvial tracks) which outlines where it is likely for minerals to form.

If development or activities which will have an impact on these areas are put forward, then Suffolk County Council as the Local Minerals Authority should be consulted.

**Please contact the County Council to discuss this matter at an early stage in your plan preparation or to help identify safeguarded sites or areas. You can email:**

[neighbourhoodplanning@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhoodplanning@suffolk.gov.uk)

## WASTE

The SMWLP 2020 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. The safeguarding zones for waste sites set a 250 / 400 metre safeguarding, and proposed development within this area must consider the waste development and consult Suffolk County Council as the Minerals and Waste Authority (Policy WP18).

In addition, to promote sustainable waste management, Suffolk County Council would welcome Neighbourhood Planning measures which encourage the reuse or recycling of waste.

In general Suffolk County Council can advise on County policy for minerals and waste and whether the plan needs to deal with issues of waste sites or mineral extraction sites (usually sand and gravel).

SCC is responsible for waste disposal while Districts and Borough Councils are responsible for waste collection. Your plan may seek to address design issues such as bin storage or adequate space and layout for refuse vehicles. Please refer to the Suffolk Design Streets Guide and the Suffolk Waste Partnership: Waste Technical Guidance for Residential and Commercial Developments.

### WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

Great Barton Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2021, has incorporated a sustainable waste management plan into their Neighbourhood Plan. Policy GB 12 includes providing sufficient provision for sustainable waste management.



## FIND OUT MORE:

[Suffolk County Council's webpages provide information on mineral and waste development planning:](#)

[Adopted Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan \(2020\)](#)

[A new Suffolk minerals and waste local plan](#)

[PPG - Minerals](#)

[PPG - Waste](#)

[Suffolk Design Street Guide](#)

[Suffolk Waste Partnership: Waste Technical Guidance for Residential and Commercial Developments](#)

## 8.

# Natural Environment

*The County Council is responsible for the overall health and wellbeing of people and communities in Suffolk to help maintain a good quality of life. 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 of the area, but also to provide a significant opportunity for communities to recognise, protect and improve local natural environment assets through Local Green Space Designation. Objectives and Policies should recognise and distinguish the two intertwined, yet distinctive strands.*

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

## WHAT DOES NATIONAL POLICY SAY?

A core principle of the NPPF is that any new developments should contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment, and reducing pollution. Section 15 states any development should minimise the impact on biodiversity and provide net gains.

Section 15 of the NPPF, 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment' states that when preparing Neighbourhood Plans, developments should minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment.

## WHAT CAN A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DO AND HOW CAN SCC HELP?

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

Neighbourhood Plans provide a significant opportunity for communities to recognise, protect and improve local environmental assets. When setting out objectives and policies for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment, it is helpful to recognise and distinguish two intertwined, yet distinctive strands:

1. Measures designed primarily to improve the natural environment in its own right (ecological and biodiversity enhancements, such as improvements to local water courses and bodies, creation and connection of wildlife corridors, promoting dark skies).
2. Measures primarily aimed to protect and improve the amenity for and well-being of the residents of the parish (such as the provision of high-quality open spaces, the protection of the local landscape character and key views, the integration of new proposals into the setting through structural planting and/or the stipulation of settlement gaps).

## Baseline

A qualifying body may want to identify its environmental assets and where they 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 views, and green or blue infrastructure, providing valuable habitats. Green infrastructure includes:

- Woodlands
- Field boundary vegetation (hedgerows and trees)
- Greens/Tyes
- Playing fields
- Parks
- Private gardens
- Allotments
- Other open spaces
- Street trees, ancient and veteran trees

Mapping exercises, ecological surveys, landscape character and sensitivity studies, as well as community led key view assessments would be expected to be part of this process.

## Objectives and Policies

Communities may then wish to protect and enhance some or all of the identified environmental assets within their Neighbourhood Plan area. This can be achieved through a suite of policies, tailored to the requirements and objectives of the parish, including:

- *Design Policy* – The design of any proposal should aim to retain and incorporate existing landscape (and historic) features and be in keeping with the local landscape character. This should be secured within a suitable Design policy.

- *Light Pollution/Dark Skies, Key/Important Views, Landscape Character, Areas of Local Landscape Sensitivity, Settlement Gaps Policies* – Wider design considerations, such as how to resist increased light pollution in rural areas and the coalescence of settlements, and how to protect identified important views and areas of sensitive landscape within the parish, may warrant their own policies, which should be cross-referenced to the Design policy.

It is useful to include questions for important views within the residents' survey, as this will give a good starting point to assessing forthcoming views against a set of criteria, that determines their importance, for example if they show landmarks of the parish and/or have few detracting elements in the view.

The designation of Special Landscape Areas (SLA) is no longer supported in forthcoming Local Plans. Parishes have the opportunity to decide, whether they wish to define areas within their parish as Areas of Local Landscape Sensitivity (ALLS) or Areas of Greater Landscape Value (AGLV). These new areas may be geographically the same or different from the previous SLA designation.

## National Landscapes

National Landscapes (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or AONBs) are designated due to their high landscape quality.

Some Parish Council areas fall within the Dedham Vale and the Suffolk & Essex National Landscapes. Parish Councils are Relevant Authorities and as such are required to seek to the further the statutory purpose i.e. the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of these areas to comply with Section 85 of Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 when they are preparing their Neighbourhood Plans.

If your parish is located within or adjacent to a National Landscape, please familiarise yourselves with the National Landscape Management Plans for Suffolk. The Section 85 Guidance now requires closer alignment between Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans and Minerals and Waste Plans with Management Plan objectives.

## BNG and Biodiversity Policies

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a legal requirement introduced by the Environment Act 2021. Any biodiversity policies in Neighbourhood Plans should reflect the Environment Act 2021.

Most planning permissions in England must now demonstrate at least a 10% measurable increase in the biodiversity value of habitats, using the statutory Biodiversity Metric. The statutory metric (currently metric 4.1) measures habitat area, distinctiveness, condition, and strategic significance, and is used to calculate the levels of creation and enhancement where required to deliver a minimum increase of 10% on or off site.

Some types of development are exempt from BNG, including householder applications and 'De-minimis sites'. These are developments that do not impact a priority habitat, and impacts less than 25sqm of non-priority onsite habitat (such as modified grassland) or 5m for non-priority onsite linear habitats (such as native hedgerows).

Development to which BNG applies, must result in a 'measurable increase' in biodiversity. BNG units are awarded only for the creation or enhancement of habitats.

It is important to note that features such as bird boxes, bat boxes or insect hotels, while providing important ecological benefits, do not create permanent habitat. Therefore, they do not generate biodiversity units or contribute to the statutory 10% requirement, and there is no mechanism to record them on the standard metrics. These features should instead be viewed as supplementary ecological enhancements that support biodiversity, but do not replace or contribute to, measurable Biodiversity Net Gain.

## Open Space, Green/Blue/Wildlife Corridor, Local Green Space, Local Nature Reserves Policies, Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

The LNRS is a spatial strategy which will be used to outline habitats and habitat connectivity across East Anglia and the country as a whole, to create a nature recovery network. It will be used to inform how development can best work alongside nature while identifying habitats which can be made bigger, better and more joined up by aiding and directing key measures and actions, for example enhancements gained through BNG requirements to development.

A Neighbourhood Plan could also identify opportunities for the creation or protection of green open spaces or improvements to public spaces through new development. This could include linking green open spaces to make 'green corridors' for people and wildlife, planting trees or making improvements to local waterways and water bodies and/or designation of Local Green Spaces (LGS).

In order to qualify for designation as an LGS, the site in question will need to fulfil certain criteria (see National Planning Policy Framework, section on 'Open Space and recreation' within Chapter 8 'Promoting healthy and safe communities', paragraph 107 (Dec 2024)).

For additional support, SCC has created a guidance document on [Designating Local Green Spaces](#).

## Trees, Green Verges Policies

The qualifying body may wish to protect significant trees, such as ancient and veteran trees or trees that are important to the amenity of the public realm, with an appropriate policy.

Green verges can be a considerable asset, however, they very rarely fulfil the criteria for designation as a Local Green Space. Protection to verges can be given through environmental, green infrastructure and/or design policies, or as a standalone policy such as the Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan.

## WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

Playford Neighbourhood Development Plan's Policy PFD6, adopted in 2024, incorporates sustainable drainage schemes (SuDS) allowing wildlife areas to connect with existing county wildlife sites. These features should be incorporated into design considerations to the network of pipes and sewers to nearby watercourses which are an integral part of green infrastructure.

Newmarket's Neighbourhood Development Plan, adopted in 2020, has incorporated Local Green Spaces where possible and appropriate. One location which has been designated, is the community allotments which allow residents to grow their own produce which can help to improve community nutrition, emotional resilience and a healthy activity.

Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2023, includes Policy HAL ENV4 on verges. This includes retaining green verges to maximise biodiversity value through planting trees or wildflower meadows with new proposals being strongly supported.



### FIND OUT MORE:

[Suffolk County Council's webpages provide various information and different guides on environmental aspects.](#)

[Suffolk County Council's webpage for Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)

[SCC Guidance on Designating Local Green Spaces](#)

[Natural England also makes available a range of documents to be considered when assessing local environmental issues](#)

[Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service](#)

[Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#)

[Touching the Tide – A Guidance note for preparing Neighbourhood Plans \(2021\)](#)

[Lighting Design Guide - Dedham Vale National Landscape & Coast & Heaths National Landscape](#)

[Dedham Vale AONB & Suffolk & Essex Coast & Heaths AONB](#)

[TGN 02-21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations](#)

[Environment Act 2021](#)

[National Landscape Association Section 85 Briefing Note for LPAs](#)

## 9.

# Public Rights of Way (PROW) Network

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

When physical activity (such as brisk walking and cycling) is incorporated into everyday life, it is often more effective, sustainable and financially beneficial than other initiatives that promote exercise, sport, and active leisure pursuits.

Suffolk's public rights of Way provide an extensive network of legally protected and maintained routes for walking, cycling, horse riding and other forms of green activity and travel. The network in Suffolk is almost as long as the road network, and alongside Open Access land and the public forest estate, provides a wide range of opportunities for accessing countryside for physical and mental health benefits. The network also provides links between communities and places of interest, facilities, services, and education and employment, and this can create off-road connections for commuting reducing reliance on car journeys.

The Public Rights of Way network is comprised of:

- i. *Public footpath* – these should only be used by people on foot, or those 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 these 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.

## WHAT DOES NATIONAL POLICY SAY?

The NPPF, Section 8 encourages planning policies to seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails (paragraph 105).

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) also known as Suffolk County Council's Green Access Strategy (2020-2030 or any successor documents) sets out the council's commitment to ensuring and promoting sustainable travel options for all. The strategy focuses on walking and cycling for commuting, accessing services and facilities, and for leisure reasons.

Section 2.1 of the Green Access Strategy states that SCC "Seeks opportunities to enhance public rights of way, including new linkages and upgrading routes where there is a need, to improve access for all and support healthy and sustainable access between communities and services. Funding to be sought through development and transport funding, external grants, other councils and partnership working."

## 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, enhanced and promoted. There are often opportunities to improve conditions to make walking, cycling, horse riding and other forms of active and sustainable travel, safer and more attractive.

Where new developments are proposed there can be opportunities to upgrade existing, or propose new, public rights of way to create new connections. This is especially important where the new development needs to connect to the existing community and the rights of way network, or where the development itself creates a destination for the existing community.

Communities may choose to support developments that improve the rights of way network between homes, jobs, schools and recreation, and create a positive benefit. The focus should be on creating routes that are attractive to use, such as placing rights of way within off-road, green corridors, to encourage their use. They should be integrated into the wider green infrastructure and sustainable transport strategies.

A Neighbourhood Plan might also consider how access to the countryside for those who experience limitations in mobility and sight, or have mental health conditions, can be achieved particularly around physical and psychological barriers such as steps, accessible gates, widths of rights of way, signage and surface conditions. Development proposals should include safe, user-friendly crossing points where PROWs intersect with roads.

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

The current PROW network should be clearly mapped within the Neighbourhood Plan's evidence base.

SCC PROW would support the inclusion of text that clarifies the distinction between access provision and ecological enhancement. PROWs are vital for access but are not, in themselves, biodiversity delivery mechanisms. If the work falls under a creation agreement (under Highways Act 1980, Section 25), Creation Orders (under Highways Act 1980, Section 26) or a Definitive Map Modification Order under Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, Section 53) it is not subject to BNG. However, if the work is part of a wider planning permission under the Town and County Planning Act (1990) or any associated Section 106 Agreement, then the PROW and its impact will be considered within the wider development proposal.

Any habitat improvements along PROWs should be seen as separate to BNG requirements, not a substitute for them. However, where appropriate we welcome the improvement of habitats along public rights of way. SCC PROW welcomes wording in Neighbourhood Plans that reinforces this distinction and ensures developers meet both access and biodiversity obligations.

PROWs within themselves are not biodiversity corridors as this term implies, they are intended solely for wildlife or should remain undisturbed by people, which is not their purpose. Also, not all improvements to PROWs will increase biodiversity, such as, widening or resurfacing works. Instead, policies can safeguard their value as 'green access network', in line with the Suffolk Green Access Strategy (2020).

Policies should include requirements to:

- Protect existing PROWs
- Incorporate safe and attractive connections
- Enhance the quality and usability
- Provide safe crossing points
- Ensure the improvements to PROWs are delivered independently of other planning obligations, such as BNG

## WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

Carlton Colville Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2025, requires major development proposals to demonstrate safe, convenient and attractive pedestrian and cycle access within Policy CC3. There is strong support for segregated pedestrian and cycle routes and for ensuring inclusive access for disabled users. Developments that adjoin the countryside are expected to provide perimeter walking and cycling connections, linking into the wider landscape where feasible.

Hitcham Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2025, emphasises improving accessibility and connectivity throughout the parish within Policy HIT11. This includes delivering new, safe and attractive pedestrian, bridle and cycle routes, alongside strengthening the Public Rights of Way network to connect new development with the village centre and community facilities.

Ixworth & Ixworth Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2025, includes Policy IXW8, where development proposals are expected to prioritise walking and cycling, providing routes that are physically separated from traffic and designed to accommodate disabled users. The policy also states that proposals should protect and enhance the Public Rights of Way network, creating connections to green spaces where possible and contributing to their improvement.



### FIND OUT MORE:

[Suffolk County Council's webpages provide more information on public rights of way.](#)

[Suffolk Green Access Strategy 2020-2030 \(Rights of Way Improvement Plan - ROWIP\)](#)

[Suffolk Public Rights of Ways webpage](#)

[Discover Suffolk – walking, cycling and riding, webpage:](#)

[SCC Definitive Map and Statement of public rights of way](#)

# 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 9 of the NPPF (2024). 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 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 developments to link into 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. Community Infrastructure Levy funding could be used 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. Current bus services operating near development sites can be checked at [suffolkonboard.com](http://suffolkonboard.com) and officers from the Passenger Transport team will be able to give advice on stop improvements.

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, but it may be possible to arrange a diversion of an existing route to cover new development. Most bus services in Suffolk are operated commercially by the bus companies under the provisions of the 1985 Transport Act. This means that they receive no subsidy from the council and the companies are free to set the routes and timetables themselves. Since 2022 Suffolk County Council has formed an Enhanced Bus Partnership (EBP) with the operators in the county, which gives us a better level of co-operation in defining routes going forward. Suggestions for route changes to cover new development sites can be made through the EBP process for consideration by the operators. Developer funding can be used to meet the costs of such diversions until such time as passenger use from the site is sufficient.

Where services are not provided commercially, Suffolk County Council has the ability to let contracts for routes to fill these gaps. This can be done using developer or other external funding. Experience shows that a site needs to have at least 500 homes and be able to provide funding for a bus for at least 5 years for the service to have a chance of becoming commercially viable.

Where a scheduled bus service is unlikely to become viable, demand responsive Community Transport options may be able to offer an alternative to the private car. Suffolk County Council has contracts covering the whole county providing pre-booked transport for those who are unable to access regular buses either because no such service exists or due to disability or other reasons that make buses unsuitable. These services can be boosted on a local level with developer or other funding to provide either a dedicated resource for the site and surrounding area or to increase overall capacity in the contracts, making it more likely that travel requests can be met.

As with stop works, the Passenger Transport Team is able to offer advice and guidance on planning travel options for new sites.

## **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 NPPF, 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 indicate 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 because 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, and 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 provisions through adopted Suffolk Guidance for Parking (updated October 2023). This has superseded the previous 2002 Suffolk Advisory Parking Standards.

The purpose of this document is to support the aspirations expressed in the National Planning Policy Framework and provide the highest quality advice to planners, members of the public, developers and architects.

Neighbourhood Plans should make specific reference to the Suffolk Guidance for Parking document, in that all new developments should accord with these parking standards (or any successor documents).

The NPPF states at paragraph 112. *“If setting local parking standards for residential and non-residential development, policies should take into account:*

- a) the accessibility of the development;*
- b) the type, mix and use of development;*
- c) the availability of and opportunities for public transport;*
- d) local car ownership levels; and*
- e) the need to ensure an adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.”*

## **LOCAL TRANSPORT PLANS**

SCC has published the Suffolk’s Local Transport Plan (2025 – 2040). Also referred to as LTP4, this is a 15-year strategy that highlights the council’s long-term ambitions for the transport network. This plan is accompanied and works in tandem with the implementation plans.

The implementation plans indicate how we are proposing to address the issues identified within the longer-term transport strategy. These include

- Area Transport Plans – are location-specific transport plans that identify issues, set priorities, and propose schemes for the 15 largest settlements of Suffolk.
- Rural Area Transport Plan – focuses on improving mobility and accessibility for Suffolk’s rural communities.
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) – sets out how Suffolk will develop a safe, connected network for walking and cycling, supporting the county’s active travel objectives.

## WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

Rushmere St Andrew's Neighbourhood plan, adopted in 2023 aims to make the area safer for non-car users through introducing a traffic calming scheme and working with residents and the Police to free up public footways from parked vehicles. The Parish Council will also work with relevant agencies to address the issue of speeding vehicles. Working with the County Council has allowed the parish to designate some of the narrower lanes as 'quiet lanes'.

Bredfield Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2021 has created two policies on traffic and transport. BDP10 focusses on vehicle parking where new residential and economic development must adhere to the SCC parking standards. BDP11 focusses on transport considerations within new developments where safe walking and cycling routes should be provided, with opportunities to extend existing routes for walkers and cyclists as well as accommodating people of all ages and abilities.



### FIND OUT MORE:

[Suffolk County Council's webpages provide various information on roads and transport:](#)

[Suffolk's Local Transport Plan](#)

[Suffolk guidance for parking](#)

[Designated speed limits info on Suffolk County Council website](#)

[Quiet Lanes Suffolk webpage](#)

[Suffolk Design Guide for Streets](#)

[Implementation Plans:](#)

- [Area Transport Plans](#)
- [Rural Area Transport Plan](#)
- [Suffolk Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan \(LCWIP\)](#)

## 11.

# Community Aspirations

*Community Actions or Community Aspirations can be used to action non-policy aspirations in the community.*

Community Action Suffolk (CAS) has a variety of resources available, including volunteering, community and social enterprises in Suffolk, as well as assisting with sourcing funding and setting up Good Neighbour Schemes, and providing assistance to vulnerable communities in times of emergency.

CAS provides a range of conferences, workshops, and specialist networks, many of which are free of charge to attend. This is achieved through working closely with a variety of partners from other sectors including Suffolk County Council, Borough, District, Town and Parish Councils, Health and the Police.

## WHAT CAN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS DO?

Neighbourhood Plans sometimes include some Community Actions or Community Aspirations. Community Aspirations are not policies and do not form part of the development plan but sit alongside these. They can detail what non-policy actions and aspirations can be undertaken by the community and Parish Councils. Community Aspirations help to identify local initiatives that address issues and concerns raised during community engagement sessions.

SCC is supportive of Community Aspirations and Actions as part of Neighbourhood Plans.

Once a Neighbourhood Plan has been adopted, CAS can help to signpost and provide information to achieving community actions. CAS supports organisations in the sector to enable them to operate more effectively to provide a voice for organisations and groups who may not otherwise be heard and represent their interests to the private and public sector. Through working with multiple parties, they have a vital role in improving the lives of people in Suffolk.

SCC can help communities to identify their own priorities and get involved in the design and delivery of services. Through providing support, giving advice and expertise SCC can also help communities to achieve their ambitions. SCC can work with District and Borough Councils, police and health professionals as well as in the voluntary and community sector to provide this support.

## Themes of Community Actions/Aspirations in Neighbourhood Plans:

### Environmental:

- Tree Protection Orders (TPOs)
- Rewilding/wildflower meadows
- Tree & hedge planting schemes

### Traffic & Transport:

- Designation of Quiet Lanes
- Introduction of speed limit areas/traffic calming/Speed Indicator Devices
- Heavy goods vehicle (HGV) & lorry routes
- Walking & cycling infrastructure improvements
- Public transport, bus services (times, frequency, stops)

### Community:

- Creation/maintenance of allotments
- Creation of children play areas, leisure/sports facilities
- Broadband/internet & mobile phone network coverage / homeworking
- Energy (sustainable)
- Community facilities – toilets, benches, community shop
- Historic asset preservation / conservation areas
- School & education (safeguarding, expansion, parking/drop-off)

## WHAT HAVE OTHERS DONE?

Rushmere St Andrew's Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2023 created a number of community aspirations. These are local initiatives that address issues and concerns raised during community engagement sessions. They focus on a range of issues including wildlife, the landscape, services and facilities, highway and travel and improving Public Rights of Way.

Saxmundham Town Council created a number of community aspirations within their Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2023. These included creating a thriving and prosperous town, a safe and healthy town, maintaining a distinctive character and attractive environment.

### **UK Men's sheds association.**

Suffolk now has 23 Men's Sheds operating, with another 4 in development. These community spaces offer men opportunities to connect, converse and create, helping to reduce isolation and support wellbeing. A restart grant helped transform what was once a single lorry-container shed in Debenham into an accessible, interconnected workshop where people can meet, repair, make and upcycle items. The £2,500 CAS grant awarded in 2021 enabled the group to purchase additional tools and equipment, as well as PPE and safety measures following the Shed's Covid-19 closure.



## FIND OUT MORE:

[Community Action Suffolk webpage](#)

[Suffolk Community foundation webpage](#)

[Quiet Lanes Suffolk webpage](#)

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