Report from Cllr Lenton on East Suffolk Council

Town and Parish Planning Forum - 16th September 2026

The Clerk and I spent an informative morning at East Suffolk House, Riduna Park, learning more about Planning in East Suffolk.

Forthcoming Changes in the Planning Processes

The reforming of the Planning Committee has been in open discussion since 2024 which has culminated in the Town and Country Planning Regulations 2026. These regulations will come into effect on 31st October 2026.

East Suffolk will move to a single Planning Committee with 11 members. The planning meetings will alternate between Melton offices and Lowestoft, regardless of the location of the planning application.

Applications under Schedule 1 will automatically be delegated to Head of Planning and Building Control.

Applications under Schedule 2 will likely be delegated to planning committee (if nominated officer and nominated member agree).

Schedule 1 applications as required by law:

Householder applications; Minor commercial applications; Minor residential applications; Applications for permission in principle; Variation of condition and Non-material Amendments to the above; Applications to modify or discharge planning obligations connected with a Schedule 1 approval; Lawful Development Certificates; Biodiversity Gain Plans; Reserved Matters applications relating to outline permissions (other than large outline permissions prescribed by the Regulations); Discharge of conditions; Prior approval applications; and Certificates of Appropriate Alternative Development

Schedule 2 – everything else

This is a fundamental shift in current processes. The changes to the 'National Scheme of Delegation', and the subsequent need for the changes to the Planning Committee structure, were government lead, and have been imposed on ESC.

CIL Parish Support

We were shown the new CIL web pages and how to access the information with guidance, templates and a check list for Clerks. East Suffolk PFM - CIL

National Planning Policy Framework

ESC Planning Manager, Andrea Mc Millan, delivered a Planning Policy Update. NPPF was first published in 2012, and subsequently updated a number of times. 2026 NPPF is a significant re-write.

Objectives behind changes to the NPPF are:

- Ensure national planning policy is accessible and understandable;
- Establish a comprehensive suite of national policies on general planning matters;
- Make the policy which it contains more 'rules-based' and 'certain'.

The new NPPF is structured around Plan-Making Policies and National Decision-Making Policies. Achieving sustainable development remains the overarching objective (economic, social and environmental).

The Government identified the 12 most significant reforms as part of the consultation. Broad principles of these remain in final version:

- A permanent presumption in favour of suitably located development
- Building homes around stations
- Driving urban and suburban densification
- Securing a diverse mix of homes.
- Supporting small and medium sites
- Streamlining local standards
- Boosting local and regional economies
- Supporting critical and growth minerals
- Embedding a vision-led approach to transport
- Better addressing climate change
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Taking a more positive approach to the use of heritage assets

Local Plan Update

The new plan-making system was introduced in March 2026. National Planning Policy Framework, published August 2026, sets out the role of Local Plans:

- Set out a vision for the plan area, supported by no more than ten measurable outcomes;
- Set out a spatial strategy, policies for the minimum amount of development, land allocations and broad locations for growth;
- Identify contributions expected from development towards affordable housing and infrastructure;
- Include other policies only where these support delivery of allocated sites or address particular local issues.

The New Local Plan will plan for the period covering April 2026 – March 2045.

Current activity on Local Plan

Working closely with other authorities in Suffolk – ESC have broadly aligned timetables and are working closely on evidence and approaches, and on joint working with key stakeholders.

Evidence gathering:

- Employment needs study
- Housing needs assessment (mix and type)
- Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs assessment
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Water Cycle Study
- Retail and Town Centre study (the consultants will shortly be doing household phone surveys and in-person town centre surveys)
- Transport modelling
- Infrastructure capacity / baseline

ESC will cover some of the key matters and challenges for the East Suffolk Local Plan in later workshop sessions.

Call For Sites

A Call for Sites was held between October 2025 and January 2026. This provides the evidence to where land is potentially available to meet ESCs housing requirement of 1658 homes per year. 505 sites were received across the district.

ESC are now looking to carry out a second Call For Sites to provide confidence they have the number and range of sites available to meet their need. Also, to capture opportunities for sites not submitted in the first Call For Sites. ESC are carrying out an assessment on the sites received and considering their suitability. Details will be published in the future.

Attending such meetings is an important way for Bucklesham Parish Council to learn more about ESC planning first hand, and an opportunity for Councillors and the Clerk to meet in person, those who they deal with via email.

The Clerk was able to personally thank those in the CIL department who helped with our recent successful CIL application for the Play Equipment Project.

I was also able to hear other Clerks and Councillors thanking Ruth for all the help she offered them with various problems, such as a VAT query and grant applications. This puts Bucklesham on the map and enhances our already excellent reputation for collaborative working.

Cllr Clive Lenton