

East Sussex Planning Protocol

A planning protocol for delivering
sustainable growth in East Sussex



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Signatories:

- Chair TES – Graham Peters
- Chair DES – Derek Godfrey
- Chair SELEP – Christian Brodie
- Leader ESCC – Keith Glazier

District Leaders:

- David Tutt – Eastbourne
- Andy Smith – Lewes
- Robert Stanley – Wealden
- Peter Chowney – Hastings
- Carl Maynard – Rother

This planning protocol was developed jointly by East Sussex Planning Officers, Developers East Sussex (DES) and the East Sussex Housing Officers Group (ESHOG).

Its role is to encourage continued collaborative working between all those involved in delivering sustainable growth in East Sussex. It is an advisory document and is not binding on any party, but by following these principles, all parties demonstrate their commitment to the agenda.

The Protocol relates principally to the pre-application and planning application stages of the process but where applicable the principles will also apply at the plan making stage.



Jerwood © Ioana Marinescu



Townlands
(small and detail)



Introduction

In East Sussex, we have significant development needs, but are ambitious for growth. Government projections show that the population of East Sussex will rise by 90,000 (a 16.5% increase) over the next 20 years. Such a population rise will necessitate a concerted housing delivery programme across the county. This will be particularly challenging in East Sussex with large parts of the county subject to AONB and National Park designation and there being significant infrastructure needs to support this growth.

East Sussex is looking to plan for an increase in new homes per annum up until 2027. The new level of housebuilding will be alongside the delivery of new and improved employment land provision, which will often be facilitated by investment in key infrastructure, including broadband and transport. The level of planned growth, subject to environmental and infrastructure constraints and opportunities, may represent an increase in the levels of development over and above what the county has seen in the past decade.

To deliver on this planned growth, and strive to meet the development needs of the county, will require a concerted and co-operative approach from councils, developers and contractors, communities, infrastructure providers and other statutory consultees to ensure that the growth is planned and delivered in a way that ensures that sustainable communities are created and sustained.

This protocol sets out the commitment from councils, developers and key statutory consultees/infrastructure providers, as to how we will work together in delivering sustainable growth across East Sussex. It builds on and articulates good practice already taking place across the county to promote a more collaborative approach. Together, local authorities, developers and infrastructure providers are vital to the delivery of quality, sustainable development: this Protocol is our shared commitment.



Our goals

Together, we aim to:

- Deliver, through the planning process, the environment for quality and sustainable growth in East Sussex to strive to meet the county's employment and housing needs.
- Provide increased efficiency and certainty in the planning process for communities and developers.

Our commitments

Commitment 1: We will ensure that appropriate resources are made available to deliver an efficient, high-quality planning service

- Recognising the skills shortage in the sector, councils, supported by developers, will ensure that there are sufficient planning officers with the right skills and experience to meet demand, work collaboratively and pro-actively to manage development proposals through the planning system, and facilitate sustainable development.
- Developers will ensure sufficient resources to make clear, evidenced, quality applications. This will ensure that development proposals are made with sufficient and accurate supporting information and are well-presented, enabling planners to efficiently manage the application through the planning system for determination within the statutory period.
- Developers, where appropriate, will provide financial support to authorities to buy in additional resources via Planning Performance Agreements, to assist in the efficient management of larger and more complex schemes.
- Developers are encouraged to take early meaningful pre-application advice, charges to be proportionate and sufficient to support a high-quality pre-application advice service, maximising the availability of a single point of contact for planning officers to provide advice to developers and developers should utilise this service at the earliest opportunity.

Commitment 2: We will promote training opportunities

- Councils will work jointly with developers and other bodies to provide general training opportunities for all groups, including elected Members to build capacity and to promote a common understanding of issues, approaches and good practice
- Elected Members will be offered regular training on planning issues and offered the opportunity to visit completed schemes and maintain a dialogue with developers
- Both the private and public sector will work together towards a joint initiative to provide employment opportunities through education, training and apprenticeships for both management and operatives, ensuring that not only that the opportunities are available but also that they are encouraged through local education establishments.



UTC, Newhaven

Our commitments

Commitment 3: We will communicate in an open and transparent way

- We will ensure that council officers keep applicants updated with information about their applications and developments to facilitate greater common understanding and consensus on planning matters.
- Developers will engage positively and directly with planners and provide the required, high quality, information in a clear and accessible format within a reasonable timescale, including at pre-application stage.
- Planners, statutory authorities and developers will positively engage through the pre-application process to allow early identification of key issues.
- High quality and consistent pre-application advice will be provided, with service standards published on the website of each council. This will increase certainty for developers and will include clear advice on consultation requirements and the information to be submitted with a formal planning application.
- Where appropriate, there will be an increased opportunity for engagement with elected Members, through briefings at the pre-application stage. This will ensure that community issues and needs are considered early in the process and that Members will have a better understanding of developers' proposals at the pre-application stage.
- Developers will engage early, openly and collaboratively with neighbourhood forums, community and amenity groups and where relevant, Town and Parish Councils before and when planning applications are made. Where appropriate, developers will demonstrate in support of any subsequent planning application, how the responses to this engagement have been taken into account and have shaped the scheme.

Commitment 4: We will increase certainty and consistency

All parties will engage positively and proactively with consultees to ensure that all considerations are addressed at an early stage.

- Developers and Councils will seek buy-in from the Consultees including the utilities companies to the principles of this agreement.
- Early dialogue will be considered in advance of any pre-application discussions to obtain early consideration of proposals.
- Where appropriate and for schemes that will have significant impacts, democratically elected Members will be invited to become involved in pre-application briefings, or earlier, to ensure that the needs of the local community are taken into account when proposals are formulated.
- Local Authority Officers including Housing Officers will provide planners with clear and consistent advice at an early stage in the planning process and will maintain dialogue throughout the application process up to and including the heads of terms of the section 106 agreement.
- The County's Building Control Services for Eastbourne, Hastings, Rother and Wealden have recently formed a joint shared BC Service. This will enhance further the quality and consistency of building control delivery across the County for the technical implementation of Building Regulation and Building Standards.
- Councils will seek to promote development opportunities to allow more small to medium size builders to enter, operate and successfully deliver development within the County.
- Housing Associations and other Registered Providers (RPs) will be involved at the earliest possible stage in the planning process where affordable housing is required or proposed.

- All parties will seek to develop a better shared understanding of design quality standards, and, where appropriate, to engage in a Design Review at the earliest stage.
- All parties will seek to take into account the health infrastructure needs of the locality in bringing forward new developments.
- When appropriate the use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) will be encouraged to achieve a more efficient and effective application process for larger developments. Where applicable, East Sussex County Council Highways and the legal departments of other relevant parties will be included in PPAs, which should be established and set up at pre-application stage.
- Developers will provide draft heads of terms of section 106 agreements in advance of applications and at the earliest opportunity to ensure that all necessary information about the proposed development is available to decision makers.
- All parties will seek to negotiate and conclude section 106 agreements so that planning permissions can be granted without unreasonable delay.
- All parties will seek to minimise the delays associated and the number of pre-commencement conditions requiring the submission of further details.
- All relevant parties to proactively and appropriately engage in the compliance with and the management of discharging conditions and other commitments.



Monitoring success

This protocol sets out a shared approach between developers, contractors and local authorities to working together.

DES, East Sussex Housing Group and East Sussex Planning Officers periodically review the implementation and effectiveness of the Protocol and share best practice that emerges from such reviews.



**>DEVELOPERS
EAST SUSSEX**



Lewes District Council

