

## **Essex Developers Group – Terms of Reference (July 2021)**

**Essex Developers Group (EDG) is a unique association of Councils, owners, enablers and developers in Essex.**

### **Key objectives**

- **Accelerate housing delivery and growth**
- **Maximise commercial opportunities**
- **Support shared ambition, collaboration and intelligence**
- **Improving the process of Local Plan making and Development Management**

### **The benefits of being a member of EDG include:**

- An effective communication channel between the private and public sectors to remove barriers to growth and bring about deliverable development.
- The opportunity to play a part in the growth of EDG to deliver future prosperity to Essex within the Government's localism agenda / structures and under the "new normal" operating environment post Covid-19.
- Access to key officers to promote joint working at local authority and county level.
- Bi-monthly meetings or more frequently as required, providing an excellent opportunity for networking and presentations on legal matters, planning, the environment, sustainability and design, as well as learning from other developers' experiences and exchanging useful contacts.

### **Key areas for joint working**

#### Policy / evidence base

- Sharing and collaboration to deliver sound Local Plans / Joint Strategic Plans (JSP)
- Shared understanding of evidence base e.g. Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), strategic transport investment plans / other infrastructure requirements, and the opportunity to shape future development in Essex.
- Sharing information on public owned land and disposals.

#### Working in partnership

- Engaging with a much stronger voice with public and private agencies on current and future Local Plan / JSP developments, investment in transportation, affordable housing programmes and with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP).
- Opportunity to engage with Government, Homes England and key national delivery agencies on developing a pipeline of activity to deliver new homes in the county.
- Working more closely with Essex County Council, the Unitary and District Authorities, Registered Providers, Garden Communities, Local Housing Companies Opportunity South Essex, Haven Gateway, Heart of Essex and West Essex, with opportunities for creating joint ventures or entering partnering arrangements.
- Working with the Essex Employment and Skills Board to continue to invest in the local skills pipeline and training provision; addressing shortages, future needs and enabling greater quality homes and accelerated delivery by developing a highly skilled workforce.

- Developing links with the Kent Developers Group (KDG), Cambridgeshire Developers Forum, Developers East Sussex (DES) and other strategic alliances.
  - Supporting the work of the Essex Climate Action Commission and contributing to the delivery of key recommendations to meet zero carbon targets.
  - Engaging with Highways England on their plan to build and operate the Lower Thames Crossing to maximize the benefits to Essex.
- Continue to develop / enhance the Housing Essex website to support the aims and objectives of the Group. <https://www.housingessex.org/>

#### Site development

- Reviewing an Essex wide pipeline of strategic sites with the opportunity to deliver schemes on the ground.
- Reviewing Public Sector land disposal to ensure a strategic approach to the disposal of land with the support of Essex County Council, see [here](#) for interactive map.
- For Homes England's Land Hub see [here](#) and their new Dynamic Purchasing System which can be found [here](#)
- For reviewing and sharing relevant contract information via Contractor Finder see [here](#), including contracts relating to the house building / construction sector in Essex.
- Updating the already published Greater Essex Planning Protocol to assist with delivery.
- Support adoption of the Essex wide viability protocols – setting parameters; creating a level playing field.
- Contribute to the ongoing revision of existing and new guidance including [The Essex Design Guide](#), Essex Developers Guide to Infrastructure Contributions, Parking Review and other housing / planning related documents and a new section on Climate Change
- Lobbying for strategic infrastructure asks and other post Covid-19 support
- Other areas for joint working could include discussions around strategic planning through the Duty to Cooperate or other mechanisms, Right to Buy, First Homes how to bring forward small sites, provide support to SME house builders / supply chains and stakeholder engagement looking at the impact of growth on Essex emergency services.

#### External Liaison and working arrangements

The Group will be an independent body supported by SELEP, Essex CC (including Essex Skills Board, BEST, EPOA and Essex Emergency Service Collaboration), Unitary and District Authorities and Homes England. The accountable body for the Group will be Castle Point BC who will act as coordinator with the assistance of other enabling officers across the County.

#### Membership:

Developers / house builders, contractors, land promoters, agents, , property lenders, solicitors, housing associations (both “for profit” and “not for profit”), Essex Planning Officers Association, Essex CC and Essex district and unitary local authorities with the support of the Homes England and South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

There will be a two-tier membership rate subject to the Chairs' discretion as follows:

*Full membership:* decision making role on EDG, attendance at bi-monthly meetings and all events (up to three representatives), access to key government officials.

*Associate membership:* advisory role on EDG, attendance at quarterly meetings and some events (up to one representative).

Future membership will be at the discretion of the wider group.

### **Declarations of interest**

All full and association members must give a declaration of interest at the beginning of the meeting in relation to any specific agenda items where it might be considered they have an interest.

### **Election of the Chair**

The Chair of the Essex Developers Group will be elected for a period of three years from among the full members of the group at a meeting of members. The first election took place on the 18 October 2016 and was subject to a three-year initial term. The second election process dually commenced on [1 October](#) 2019 and was ratified at the [12 December](#) 2019 meeting. The next re-election will be due autumn 2022.

### **Meeting arrangements**

The Group will meet bi monthly (or more frequently as required) via virtual Teams meetings or in person.

Pre-meetings of the Chairs from the Essex Developers Group, Essex Housing Groups, Essex Planning Officers Group, Essex CC Heads of Service Group, with support from advisory members will take place regularly throughout the year to ensure agendas and work programmes are planned accordingly.

Meetings will be themed around specific development issues such as skills / training, Climate Change / Zero Carbon, Building Garden Communities, Duty to Cooperate, devolution, viability, Homes England funding, Essex Housing Strategy and specialist housing provision and healthcare.

The Group will support a series of development seminars, conferences and a Housing Excellence Awards programme 2021/22 (assuming current Covid restrictions allow)

### **Funding and operational matters**

Funding to be agreed annually (current subscription is £3,000 full member and £1,500 for associate).

EDG will operate as an unincorporated and informal partnership with support of Castle Point Borough Council who will act as the accountable body for contractual purposes.

For further information please contact Alastair Pollock, the Strategy Coordinator at [apollock@castlepoint.gov.uk](mailto:apollock@castlepoint.gov.uk).

Updated: 22 July 2021 by Housing Chairs Group and wider EDG Group 20 August.