



ESSEX DEVELOPERS CLIMATE ACTION CHARTER

Image: Kettering Energy Park

Introduction to the Essex Developers Climate Action Charter

Following the publication of the Essex Climate Action Commission report in July 2021, the Essex Developers Group were asked to respond to one of the recommendations by bringing together partners from the public and private sector to deliver a Climate Action Charter with the ambition of becoming zero carbon by 2030. Further details are set out below.

In line with UK Government policy and their Net Zero Strategy – Building Back Greener, the Essex Developers Group has agreed to sign up to a Developers Climate Action Charter with the four-fold aim of:

- 1** Securing global net-zero by mid-century and keep 1.5 degree C within reach
- 2** Adapting to protect communities and natural habitat
- 3** Mobilising finance
- 4** Working together to deliver the above goals



Prof. Jules Pretty
Chair of the Essex
Climate Action
Commission

Professor Jules Pretty said:

“The Charter is important work and supports the wider Essex Climate Action Commission, as Chair, I am delighted to endorse the document.”



Mark Curle,
Chair of Essex
Developers Group

Mark Curle said:

“Working together to combat climate is very much alive, through signing up to the Charter we will build up a programme of events, studies and other activities to support partners meet their zero carbon ambitions in the construction sector”.



The Government's 10 Point Plan for a Green Revolution forming part of the Net Zero Strategy, particularly in relation to Green Transport (5), Green Buildings (7) and Protecting our Natural Environment (9) provides the framework for this Charter, as have the outcomes of COP26 which have been considered in the Charter's Action Plan.

EDG recognises the need for urgent action across the built environment including minimising carbon and greenhouse gas emissions from buildings, transport, energy and waste.

EDG can help to plan for this future change by carefully designing and locating private market / affordable housing in sustainable locations, minimising energy and transport and supporting the roll-out of smart infrastructure. It can support the transition to a zero carbon energy system by integrating renewable energy technology in buildings. EDG can adapt and protect communities and natural habitats, through improving resilience of existing homes and neighbourhoods and improving access to green space. Also prioritising green and blue infrastructure and sustainable urban drainage systems.

EDG can help mobilise finance from both the public sector in terms of grants and loans and private sector through fund raising, Section 106 contributions, to support continued investment, resourcing and training to meet the UK's sustainable development ambitions (set out in the Net Zero Strategy) and those being developed more locally through the Essex Climate Action Commission and through professional bodies such as the Royal Town Planning Institute.



Key Essex Climate Action residential targets are set out as follows:

- Two thirds all dwellings to be retrofitted as far as possible to net zero carbon standards by 2030.
- Existing residential buildings - carbon emissions reduction of 50% by 2030 and Carbon Zero by 2040.
- All New Homes Consented to be Carbon Zero by 2025.
- All New Homes and non-domestic buildings consented to be Carbon Positive by 2030 (along with the schools zero carbon programme).

Meeting these ambitious targets will deliver a number of additional benefits from Climate Action. In the construction sector alone in Essex, these include:

- 200,000 new sustainable homes & 40+ schools.
- Retrofit c800,000 existing homes of which 70% are EPC D or below.
- Bringing 67,000 homes out of fuel poverty.
- Green construction expected to create 1.8m new jobs of which 0.5m in Wider South East.

Working together to deliver the ambition to collaborate and respond to climate change across the built environment sector is at the very forefront of our planning across the county. The level of climate action required cannot be done in isolation. This will require a “whole systems” approach where there is collaboration between house builders, contractors, agents and public sector who will also need to embrace cross departmental working and engagement with local communities.

To this end, Essex Developers Group have agreed a Developers Climate Action Charter.

Richard Davidson, Director at Willmott Dixon and members of EDG, commented:

“We fully support the ambitions of the Climate Action Charter, as a company we have already targeted all our new build and refurbishment projects delivered from 2030 to be net zero carbon in operation without offsetting. In doing so, we would like to share our experience and help to support the delivery of a meaningful action plan to meet these ambitious targets”.

The Essex Developers Climate Action Charter

Between members of
the **Essex Developers Group (EDG)**,
Homes England and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP),
Essex Climate Action Commission (ECAC)
& **Essex Planning Officers Association** (representing the 15 Councils of Essex)
(The Parties)

1.0

The Parties share the common
understanding that:

- a. scientific consensus has developed that increasing emissions of human caused greenhouse gases (GHG), including carbon dioxide, methane and other GHG emissions, that are released into the atmosphere is affecting the Earth's climate;
- b. the evidence of global warming is unequivocal and the effects of climate change are already evident across South East England and Essex;
- c. reducing GHG emissions will generate environmental, health and economic benefits for individuals, families, and communities;
- d. climate change and reducing GHG emissions are issues of importance to Essex businesses and residents;
- e. we call on Government to urgently accelerate their efforts to implement effective measures to reduce GHG emissions and anticipate and prepare for climate change impacts; (as set out in their Net Zero Strategy and the targets recently agreed at COP26).
- f. protecting the environment can be done in ways that promote economic prosperity; and
- g. it is important to take action and to work together to share best practices, to reduce GHG emissions and address the impacts of climate change.



The Essex Developers Climate Action Charter

2.0

The Parties acknowledge that each has an important role in addressing climate change and that:

- a. Essex partners have already started to take action on climate change, through the publication of the Essex Climate Action Commission Report (Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral, July 2021).
- b. House builders, contractors and agents are also taking action on climate change, through for example, development of zero carbon housing developments, examples to be shared.
- c. Local authorities including Essex County Council, Unitary, City, Borough and District local authorities are developing strategies and programmes to retrofit the existing housing stock, encouraging green developments such as Garden Communities and development of electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- d. Housing associations are also leading the way on pilots designed to retrofit their existing housing stock and developing low / zero carbon housing for the benefit of resident especially those suffering from fuel poverty, examples to be shared.
- e. These actions create the foundation for the Parties to be leaders in addressing climate change.

3.0

The members share the common goals of:

- a. fostering co-operation across the building sector and inter-governmental relations;
- b. aiming to reduce GHG emissions, including both their own and those created by others;
- c. removing legislative, regulatory, policy, or other barriers to taking action on climate change;
- d. implementing programmes, policies, or legislative actions, that facilitate reduced GHG emissions, where appropriate;
- e. encouraging communities that are sustainable, healthy, socially responsive and resilient to a changing climate; and
- f. encouraging infrastructure and a built environment that supports the economic and social needs of the community while minimising its environmental impact including reducing the embodied carbon impact of new development;
- g. being prepared for the Future Homes/Buildings Standard 2025 and working towards a cost neutral solution to Climate Change;
- h. supporting biodiversity and measures to secure net gain in new development;
- i. encourage water conservation, water supply and flood protection as part of regional infrastructure, working with the water companies.



The Essex Developers Climate Action Charter



4.0

In order to contribute to reducing GHG emissions:

- a. Signatory members agree to develop strategies and take actions to achieve the following goals:
 - being carbon neutral in respect of building by 2030;
 - measuring and reporting on their community's GHG emissions profile using Government recognised tools hosted on the UK - SME Climate hub (businessclimatehub.org) or as otherwise directed by Government;
 - creating sustainable, more energy efficient rural and urban communities (e.g. foster a built environment that supports a reduction in car dependency and energy use such as the walkable neighbourhood concept, establish / develop local planning policies and processes that support fast tracking of green development projects, and green infrastructure strategies including supporting the emerging Local Nature Partnership and nature recovery strategies, adopt sustainable planning practices that encourage land use patterns that increase density and reduce sprawl, drawing on principles from the Essex Design Guide.
 - b. Homes England and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership with the support of other partners in Government will support EDG in pursuing these goals, including developing options and actions for all partners to become carbon neutral in respect of their operations by 2030.

5.0

The Parties agree that this commitment to working together towards reducing GHG emissions will be implemented through a sub group of EDG working closely with the Essex Planning Officers Association and guided by the Essex Climate Action Commission recommendations with the following purposes:

- To **develop and promote a series of events / studies and other activities** to assist partners develop their own actions to address climate change and prepare for zero carbon. Initially this will focus on two key areas:
- **Implementing relevant recommendations from the Essex Green Skills Infrastructure Review**
- **Developing steps to prepare partners for the new Homes/Buildings Standard in 2025.**

Some initial actions to take forward the principles of the Charter are set out on page 9 and will be updated on the Housing Essex website - [Climate Action Topic page](#).

The Essex Developers Climate Action Charter

6.0

To recognize and support the GHG emission reduction initiatives and the climate change goals outlined in this Charter, Signatory parties are invited to seek the support of other organisations in the supply chain to sign up to a statement of their initiatives and commitments.

7.0

This Charter is not intended to be legally binding or impose legal obligations on any Party and will have no legal effect, nevertheless, signatories will have confidence that their schemes will broadly comply with ambitions of the county and districts across Essex and are more likely to find favour therefore with planning authorities subject of course to compliance with the local plan and other matters consequent on the normal development management and planning process.



The Essex Developers Climate Action Charter

The Essex Climate Action Commission is working with the Essex Developers' Group on actions that will take forward the principles of the Charter. These will include:

1. Net Zero Carbon Show Home

Developers are encouraged to include within Show Homes where appropriate key features of a net zero carbon home, such as a renewable heating source (not using fossil fuels) and application of very high building fabric standards.

These homes could show how to install highly energy efficient systems and appliances in new homes and build in integrated renewable energy technology such as rooftop solar pv; including these features in show homes on major sites will encourage prospective home buyers to consider the advantages of including these features.

Developers may also show how a commercial or community building can be built to a high standard such as BREEAM Excellent/Outstanding.

2. Case Studies

Identification of exemplar fossil fuel free developments undertaken by Essex developers either in the County or elsewhere to demonstrate incorporation of energy and water efficiency solutions to the development as a whole or to buildings.

The aim is to demonstrate how these can be included in viable and affordable schemes which are working towards a net zero carbon outcome. Developers will be encouraged to put forward examples to be uploaded into a Directory of Best Practice hosted on the Essex Design Guide website. Developers will be able to add to the Directory on an ongoing basis, and particularly when they have secured an award or commendation. The Climate Action Commission will also use this site to showcase good examples.

3. Sponsorship of Apprenticeships in Design and Green Construction Skills Training

Developers will be encouraged to work with Essex local authorities to offer apprenticeships in key 'green' skills areas from design to construction. This may include sponsorship through a university or college course in 'green' skills.

4. Essex Housing Awards 2022

These annual awards, sponsored by the Essex Developers' Group and South Essex Housing Group; includes within the 12 categories a dedicated award for Climate Action and also progress towards zero carbon. The Climate Action Commission has agreed to sponsor one of the awards this year and will also develop from next year an expanded range of awards to reflect opportunities and solutions to achieving green and net zero development.

5. Climate Change Sustainability Statement

The Commission will produce a Climate Change Sustainability Statement in consultation with the Developers Group that will act as a Climate Change response checklist of features that can be included when designing a layout, green and blue infrastructure, and buildings.

It will complement the Health Impact Assessments to ensure we are creating climate resilient places of safety, comfort and which maximise wellbeing.

6. Supporting the Supply Chain and the Work of Smaller Developers

The Climate Action Commission has undertaken a study of green skills training availability and supply chains across the County. The next step will be to work with developers as well as businesses and training providers to ensure that the skills and goods supply chains can be supported in Essex to work towards sustainable construction, and climate resilient development.

7. Climate Action Advice packs for residents, businesses and schools

The business pack has been specifically developed to help SME businesses access the most relevant information and advice on climate change and sustainability, with tips and ideas to help businesses thrive whilst keeping their impact on the environment low.

Further details can be viewed on the [Climate Action Topic Page](#) and in the [Commission Report](#).

Signed on behalf of the **EDG** by the Chair:

MARK CURLE

Date:

Signed on behalf of **Homes England**

Date:

Signed on behalf of **Essex Climate Action Commission**

Date:

Signed on behalf of the **Essex Planning Officers Association** (representing the 15 Councils of Essex):

Date:

Signed on behalf of **South East Local Enterprise Partnership**

Date:

