

Essex Developers Group – Terms of Reference (2024-25)

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 as part of the Government's new housing agenda including planning reform and devolution.
- 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 including Housing Needs Assessments (HNAs) skills / labour forecasting, strategic transport investment plans / other infrastructure requirements aimed at creating high quality place-making 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 / master planning, investment in transportation, affordable housing programmes.
- 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. Supporting the delivery of Homes England's new Strategic Plan 2023-28 including its five strategic objectives and creation of Strategic Place Partnerships (SPPs).
- Working closely with Essex County Council, the Unitary and District Authorities, Registered Providers, Garden Communities, Local Housing Companies, South Essex Councils, Heart of Essex / West Essex and North Essex Councils, with opportunities for creating joint ventures and / or SPPs.

- Supporting the delivery of Garden Communities through the Building Garden Communities Programme of round tables events, working groups and conferences covering a range of themes including master planning, delivery of infrastructure, skills, stewardship, zero carbon and biodiversity net gain and the integration of new and existing communities.
- Working with the Essex County Council Commissioner for Skills Development Employment and Skills Team, Essex Chamber of Commerce and Construction Alliance 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 / maintaining links with South Essex Councils (SEC), Thames Estuary Growth Board, Essex Local Nature recovery Partnership, the Kent Developers Group (KDG), Developers East Sussex (DES), the South East Housing and Development Group (SE HDG) 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 including the Developers' Climate Action Charter.
- Assisting with best practice and innovation in relation to retrofit works covering assessments, design, and coordination of workstreams. Supporting the upskilling of the Essex workforce through the Retrofit Academy. Achieving the best results in terms of improvements and value for the individuals/companies requiring stock improvements compliant with PAS 2035.
- Engaging with Highways England on their plan to build and operate the Lower Thames Crossing to maximize the benefits to Essex.
- Supporting the Estate Charging and Stewardship Forum which shares best practice and develops new approaches to long term stewardship as part of the Building Garden Communities Programme.
- Delivering the Essex Housing Awards programme in 2024 to celebrate the housing excellence in Essex covering an expanded range of categories.
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 and Emergency Services Protocols 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.

- Lobbying for strategic infrastructure asks and other initiatives to support housing recovery.
- Other areas for joint working include: affordable housing delivery / S106, 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 Essex CC (including Commissioner for skills Development, South East Housing and Development Group (SE HDG), 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, Essex Emergency Services and Essex district and unitary local authorities with the support of Homes England and the South East Housing and Development Group (SE HDG).

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

Tier one house builder / developers, housing association: decision making role on EDG, attendance at bi-monthly meetings and events (up to three representatives), access to key government officials.

SME house builder, contractors, agents: advisory role on EDG, attendance at bi-monthly meetings and events (up to two representatives).

Declarations of interest

All 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 four 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 third election commenced 9 August 2022 and the new Chair was appointed at the 13 October meeting for a four-year period to October 2026.

Meeting arrangements

The Group will meet bimonthly (or more frequently as required) via live in person meetings or hybrid meetings as required.

Pre-meetings of the Chairs from the Essex Developers Group, Essex Housing Officers 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 planning reform, viability, skills / training, Climate Change / Zero Carbon, Biodiversity Net Gain, Building Garden Communities, devolution, Homes England funding, Essex Housing Strategy and specialist housing provision and healthcare.

The Group will support a series of development seminars, conferences and the Essex Housing Awards 2024/25.

Funding and operational matters

Funding to be agreed annually (current subscription is £3,000 tier 1 housebuilders / developers, housing associations etc and £1,500 for SME house builder agents and contractors). Essex County Council and the founding members of the South Essex Housing Group who are also members of EDG, contribute £10,000 each to support the budget.

Should a member wish to leave the EDG, this should be done in writing three months before the beginning of the new financial year; otherwise the full annual subscription would be levied.

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.

Updated: Reviewed at the Housing Chairs' Group 19 June and agreed by the wider EDG Group at the 17 October 2024 meeting