



**Lewes District Local Plan:
Issues and Options**

**TOPIC 6:
CREATING HEALTHY
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES
WITH INFRASTRUCTURE**

July 2021





Lewes District Council

Lewes District Local Plan: Issues & Options Consultation

TOPIC PAPERS

A series of Topic Papers have been prepared to support the Lewes District Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation and assist you in understanding the issues and options facing Lewes District (outside of the South Downs National Park) by providing more details on the topic address in the consultation. The topic papers are as follows:



Topic Paper 1 Tackling Climate Change



Topic Paper 2 Protecting and Enhancing the Quality of the Environment



Topic Paper 3 Accommodating and Delivering Growth



Topic Paper 4 Improving Access to Housing



Topic Paper 5 Promoting a Prosperous Economy and Building Community Wealth



Topic Paper 6 Creating Healthy Sustainable Communities with Infrastructure

All of the topic papers are available on-line via the Council's consultation portal.

The topic papers are factual in nature and set out how the topic is covered in current local plan policies, the national planning policy context, how the related issues are addressed in the Lewes District Council Corporate Plan and other strategies, what current evidence and data tells us about the topic, and provides details on the issues raised from these. The questions arising from the topic papers are posed within the Issues & Options document. As such we are not seeking comment on these topic papers.



Topic Paper 6: Creating Healthy Sustainable Communities with Infrastructure

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The timely provision of infrastructure requirements associated with the growth of new homes and jobs is critical to ensuring that the plan area is a place where people want to be – whether to live, work, study or visit. Investment will be required for improvements to existing infrastructure and the provision of new infrastructure to support development growth and the creation of healthy, sustainable communities.
- 1.2 We understand how important and necessary matching growth with improvements to infrastructure is to local residents and communities. The prospect of more housing or jobs can cause worries about traffic congestion, school places, loss of green spaces, difficulty getting a GP or hospital appointment, and other vital issues. The only way to deal with these issues is to plan for them in a co-ordinated way in partnership with the relevant infrastructure providers.
- 1.3 This Topic Paper has been prepared to explore how the new Local Plan can ensure that existing valued community facilities and services are retained, and that new or improved infrastructure is provided in the most effective way to keep pace with development growth in the plan area.

2. Current Local Plan Policies

- 2.1 Core Policy 7 (*Infrastructure*) seeks to protect and enhance existing community facilities and services and to ensure that new provision is located where it is accessible, particularly for the less mobile or more economically deprived members of the community. The policy requires that development proposals involving the loss of sites or premises currently in community use, including outdoor play space, public houses or local shops, are justified either by a viability appraisal or by the provision of an alternative facility on another site.
- 2.2 Core Policy 7 also sets out the Council's commitment to ensuring that land will only be released for development where there is sufficient capacity in the existing local infrastructure to meet the additional needs arising from the proposed development. Alternatively, where there would be a need for new or improved infrastructure, a programme of delivery must be agreed between the applicant and the relevant infrastructure providers to ensure that these improvements are provided at the time they are needed.



- 2.3 Core Policy 8 (*Green Infrastructure*) seeks to protect and enhance the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces in order to ensure a connected network of green infrastructure. This includes outdoor sports facilities, children's play space, allotments, community gardens, parks and gardens, etc. Core Policy 8 prevents development proposals that would result in the loss of existing green infrastructure, unless mitigation measures are incorporated within the development or alternative provision is made elsewhere in the locality. It also requires new development to contribute to the green infrastructure network through new provision.
- 2.4 Core Policies 7 and 8 are supported by Core Policies 9 (*Air Quality*), 12 (*Flood Risk, Coastal Erosion and Sustainable Drainage*) and 13 (*Sustainable Travel*). These policies require the provision of new or improved infrastructure to address any air quality, flooding or transport implications of proposed development. Core Policies 9, 12 and 13 are reviewed in more detail in the **Tackling Climate Change** and **Protecting and Enhancing the Quality of the Environment** Topic Papers.

3. National Planning Policy and Guidance

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out a number of policies in relation to infrastructure provision that local planning authorities must take into account in the preparation of their local plans. In summary, planning policies should:
- be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement with infrastructure providers and operators (para.16)
 - set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development and make sufficient provision for infrastructure and community facilities (para.20)
 - set out the contributions expected from development, including setting out the levels and types of infrastructure provision required. Such policies should not undermine the deliverability of the plan (para.34)
 - enable and support healthy lifestyles through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments, and layouts that encourage walking and cycling (para.91)
 - plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments (para.92)
 - guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs (para.92)



- ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses, and community facilities and services (para.92)
- be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision (para.96)
- be prepared with the active involvement of local highways authorities, other transport infrastructure providers and operators and neighbouring councils, so that strategies and investments for supporting sustainable transport and development patterns are aligned (para.104)
- support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections (para.112)

3.2 The Government's Planning Practice Guidance states local plans should set out the contributions expected from development This should include setting out the levels and types of affordable housing provision required, along with other infrastructure (such as that needed for education, health, transport, flood and water management, green and digital infrastructure). Policy requirements should be clear so that they can be accurately accounted for in the price paid for land.

3.3 Local Plan policy requirements should be informed by evidence of infrastructure and affordable housing need, and a proportionate assessment of viability. The viability assessment should take into account all relevant policies, and local and national standards including the cost implications of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and planning obligations. It should not compromise sustainable development but should be used to ensure that policies are realistic, and the total cumulative cost of all relevant policies will not undermine deliverability of the plan.

4. Council Corporate Plan 2020-2024

4.1 The Corporate Plan sets out the District Council's priorities over a four year period from 2020 to 2024. The new Local Plan has an important role in helping to achieve the aims and aspirations identified in the Corporate Plan.

4.2 The Council aims to become a net zero carbon and climate resilient council and district by 2030. The key areas of focus in terms of planning for the effective provision of infrastructure to assist in achieving these aims are:

- Improving public spaces
- Implementing the Brighton Energy Plan and other plans
- Working with community cycling groups, East Sussex County Council and others to improve walking and cycling infrastructure



- Having the greenest Local Plan and putting sustainability at the heart of the local planning process
- Improving air quality and increasing opportunities for public transport and electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- Introducing new initiatives to maximise local benefits from development
- Working with partners to develop market leading network services across the district, delivering high speed fibre connections to local business and improving broadband connectivity to our rural communities

5. Other Strategies

5.1 The provision of community infrastructure and services within the plan area is the responsibility of a wide range of public and private organisations, including East Sussex County Council, Highways England, Network Rail, NHS England, the Environment Agency, National Grid, and local water, gas and electricity providers. Some facilities and services may cross boundaries or be delivered by several providers or support development in more than one area. All the published plans, strategies and capital programmes of the relevant infrastructure providers will be used to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan and the Council will continue to work closely with its partner organisations to ensure that investment in infrastructure continues to keep up with development growth.

6. Evidence/Data

6.1 An Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) was published in association with the adopted Local Plan. This document is periodically reviewed and amended to ensure that it remains up-to-date and addresses changing circumstances or new information that becomes available. The IDP is presented in two sections:

- The *Infrastructure Position Statement*, which identifies existing infrastructure provision across the district and assesses its capacity to support growth.
- The *Infrastructure Delivery Schedule*, which sets out the critical items of additional infrastructure that are considered necessary to support the growth proposed in the Local Plan and identifies the costs, funding sources, timescales for delivery, and who is responsible for its provision.

6.2 The most recent IDP¹ demonstrates that the key items of additional infrastructure which are considered critical to the delivery of the development growth in the adopted Local Plan are either on track or have been implemented. These include local highway and accessibility improvements, education provision, waste water treatment, and green infrastructure. As part of the preparation of the new Local

¹ [Lewes District Local Plan Infrastructure Delivery Plan \(January 2020\)](#)



Plan, we will continue to gather further evidence on what new or improved infrastructure will be required to support growth over the period to 2040.

- 6.3 A Playing Pitch Needs Assessment, Open Space Study, and Built Facilities Study have recently been completed for Lewes District. These studies provide up-to-date information on the quantity and quality of both outdoor and indoor recreational facilities. This information will be used to determine the need for new provision to meet the demands arising from the projected growth in population. It provides evidence of significant shortfalls in outdoor play facilities for children, and also deficiencies in football, hockey and rugby pitch provision. It is also anticipated that further provision will be required for allotments/community gardens and amenity greenspace over the plan period.
- 6.4 We are currently working in partnership with East Sussex County Council and other local planning authorities to develop a multi-model transport model for the county. This model will be used to review the existing transport situation and test the transport implications of different growth options across East Sussex. We will also maintain a continued dialogue and close working relationship with all other infrastructure and service providers to establish the additional facilities that are necessary to support the planned growth of the district and to ensure that there are no existing deficiencies which are likely to be a significant constraint to new development.
- 6.5 Ultimately, the new Local Plan will be informed by an updated IDP which identifies the new or improved infrastructure necessary for sustainable housing growth and demonstrates that the required items can be delivered in a timely manner over the plan period, either through direct provision or through developer contributions. Further work will be required in terms of viability assessment to ensure that the level of infrastructure provision needed to support development, together with other planning policy requirements, does not undermine the deliverability of the Local Plan. This work will continue as the Local Plan progresses to adoption.



7. Key Issues

- 7.1 The delivery of the right types and levels of infrastructure is essential to support the objectives of increased housing and economic growth and the creation of healthy, sustainable communities. Infrastructure includes:
- Transportation
 - Education
 - Healthcare
 - Community facilities e.g. indoor sports and leisure facilities, community centres, libraries, places of worship
 - Emergency services
 - Flood and coastal defences
 - Utilities e.g. water, power, sewerage, broadband
 - Waste/Recycling
 - Green infrastructure
- 7.2 The provision of adequate services for transport, education, health, leisure and other community needs is a fundamental factor in achieving a high quality of life for residents and with a growing population it is essential that these are planned in such a way that they meet the future demands that are placed upon the district.
- 7.3 The type and scale of infrastructure needed will depend upon the future scale and pattern of development. Funding will come from a variety of sources, including developer contributions and government grants. However, it is important to have realistic expectations about what we can achieve via the planning system and prioritise what is necessary, both to facilitate new development and to sustain it in the longer term.
- 7.4 It is also important to be clear about what we cannot do, which is to:
- expect developers to fund solutions for existing infrastructure problems, #
 - seek provision of infrastructure over and above that necessary to make the impacts of the planned development acceptable
- 7.5 Developers may be asked to provide contributions for infrastructure in several ways. It could be through the Community Infrastructure Levy, planning obligations in the form of Section 106 legal agreements, or Section 278 highway agreements. Developers also have to comply with any conditions attached to their planning permission.



Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 7.6 CIL is a non-negotiable, fixed charge that local authorities can impose on new development to help raise funds to deliver infrastructure that is required to support development and growth in their area. The levy can be used to increase the capacity of existing infrastructure or to repair failing infrastructure, if that is necessary to support development. However, it cannot be used to fund affordable housing.
- 7.7 The Council has adopted a CIL charging schedule for that part of the district outside of the South Downs National Park. This sets out the levy rates for new residential and retail development. Since it became effective in December 2015, the Council has collected a cumulative total of over £7.4 million from CIL for spending on infrastructure provision within the plan area².

Planning Obligations

- 7.8 Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 enables a local planning authority to enter into a negotiated legal agreement – a planning obligation – to mitigate the impact of a specific development to make it acceptable in planning terms. Even where CIL is charged, the Government considers that there is still a legitimate role for Section 106 agreements to enable a local planning authority to be confident that the specific consequences of a particular development can be mitigated.
- 7.9 Planning obligations may only constitute a reason for granting planning permission if they are:
- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
 - directly related to the development; and
 - fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- 7.10 These requirements are set out both as statutory tests in the Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 (as amended) and as policy tests in the NPPF.
- 7.11 Planning obligations are usually used to secure contributions from the developer for on-site infrastructure needs, including the provision of affordable housing, children's play space, access improvements or sustainable urban drainage systems, as part of the new development, either directly or through monetary contributions.

² [Lewes District Council Infrastructure Funding Statement 2019/20](#)



Deciding our priorities for developer contributions

- 7.12 The amount of on-site infrastructure and contributions that the new Local Plan can require of development are affected by the financial viability of development – what the development can afford to provide. The amount of on-site infrastructure and contributions required should not undermine the deliverability of the development. The Government considers that 15-20% of gross development value may provide a suitable return to developers³.
- 7.13 The financial viability of development and the amount that it can afford to contribute towards infrastructure improvements are affected by a number of issues including: the cost of construction; the type and number of specific on-site requirements for development to meet; the value of land that is being developed; and the sale price of the development once it has been completed.
- 7.14 The Council's expectations in the new Local Plan must be clearly set out so that developers do not pay too much for a piece of land and then calculate that they cannot afford to meet our policy requirements. The Government is clear that it is the responsibility of local planning authorities, in collaboration with the local community, developers and other stakeholders, to create realistic, deliverable policies.
- 7.15 Viability assessments will therefore be undertaken as part of the preparation of the Local Plan to ensure that our policy requirements are set at a level that is viable for development to go ahead. The Government expects all viability assessments, including any undertaken at the plan-making stage, to be publicly available (NPPF para.57).
- 7.16 Assessing the viability of plans does not require individual testing of every site allocation or assurance that individual sites are viable. The Council can use site typologies to determine viability during the plan-making process. Average costs and values would be used to make assumptions about how the viability of each type of site would be affected by all the relevant policy requirements.
- 7.17 All our planning policy requirements will be important to residents and local communities, but no requirement should be so high that it makes development unviable. Consequently if one policy requirement is raised, another may need to be reduced. We want to understand what you think is the most important of the following key requirements.

Affordable housing

- 7.18 Affordable housing helps meet the needs of those unable to afford their own home and is mainly delivered by private housebuilders as a requirement of development. It is the biggest influence on the viability of development. The type of tenure

³ Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 10-018-20190509



required will also affect viability where social rented provision is more costly than intermediate tenures (shared ownership, starter homes, discounted market housing, etc.). We currently seek a target of 40% affordable housing within private sector developments of 10 or more homes (see the **Improving Access to Housing** Topic Paper).

Designing for the climate emergency

- 7.19 The Council has joined with many other local authorities across the UK in declaring a climate emergency and we have committed to working towards making the Council and the district net zero carbon by 2030. We therefore need to introduce design requirements to ensure that new developments can be more energy efficient, adaptable, and resilient to climate change (see the **Tackling Climate Change** Topic Paper). However, requiring higher design standards will often have cost implications for development and may also affect viability.

Accessible, adaptable and wheelchair accessible homes

- 7.20 The provision of suitable and adaptable housing can enable disabled people to live more independently and safely, with greater choice and control over their lives. Wheelchair user dwellings include additional features to meet the needs of occupants who use wheelchairs, or allow for adaptations to meet such needs. We can require a proportion of homes to meet these requirements (see the **Improving Access to Housing** Topic Paper) but these homes will have additional construction costs and often take up more land due to greater internal space standards compared with open market dwellings.

Contributions towards strategic infrastructure

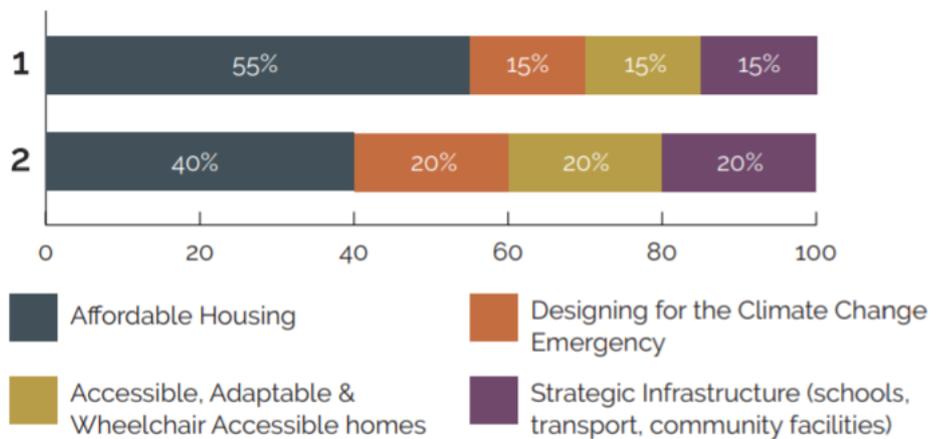
- 7.21 Contributions towards strategic infrastructure (transport improvements, school places, sports facilities, etc.) are normally funded through CIL. CIL contributions are pooled together and the Council decides later what the money will be spent on in accordance with the priorities set out in the IDP. For this reason, the question below asks about strategic infrastructure in general, rather than about specific types. The Council will continue to work with its partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors to investigate additional funding opportunities, including bidding for Government or regional funds, to ensure the timely delivery of any strategic infrastructure required to meet identified needs arising from housing growth.

Examples of how we could manage our priorities

- 7.22 The chart below shows two examples where, firstly, affordable housing is a higher priority and, secondly, where affordable housing is a lower priority. If any one of the different types of policy requirements was increased, it would reduce how much funding could contribute towards other types of infrastructure.



Figure 1 – Examples of managing priorities



Encouraging healthy communities

- 7.24 Our environment goes a long way to determining the quality of our health and our perception of well-being. Planning and health need to be considered together in two ways: firstly, in terms of creating places that support and encourage healthy lifestyles, and secondly, in terms of identifying and securing the facilities needed for primary, secondary and tertiary health care.
- 7.25 We will discuss our emerging strategy for future development growth at an early stage with NHS England, Clinical Commissioning Groups, and the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure that the health needs of the projected increase in population growth over the next twenty years are adequately met. This may involve allocating sites for health care provision in locations which maximise accessibility for new residents.
- 7.26 The adopted Local Plan recognises that access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for both the physical and mental health of its communities. Core Policy 8 (*Green Infrastructure*) protects and promotes a connected network of multi-functional open green spaces throughout the district, whilst Core Policies 12 (*Air Quality*) and 13 (*Sustainable Transport*) prioritise the needs of pedestrians and cyclists above ease of access by the motorist and support the development of a network of walking and cycling routes.
- 7.27 The Council has also adopted standards for the provision of outdoor playing space and requires that, in locations where there is a deficiency of outdoor playing space, the impact of an increase in population arising from new housing development will be mitigated, either by on-site provision or by the use of CIL funds to secure a quantitative or qualitative improvement. The Lewes District Open Space Study 2021 recommends additional benchmark standards for the provision of allotments and community gardens, amenity green space and parks and gardens. It may be appropriate to incorporate these standards in the new Local Plan.



- 7.28 The Local Plan could also require the submission of Health Impact Assessments (HIA) to demonstrate that development proposals would positively contribute to improving the health and well-being of the local population. HIA is a tool used to identify the health impacts of a development and develop measures to maximise the positive impacts and minimise the negative impacts. A guide⁴ has been published by Public Health England to ensure that HIAs are properly conducted and will ultimately contribute to reducing health inequalities.
- 7.29 We could also incorporate Active Design⁵ principles in strategic site allocations to create environments which offer the greatest potential for people to lead active and healthy lifestyles. Ten principles of Active Design have been identified by Sport England, with the support of Public Health England, as follows:
- *Activity for all - neighbourhoods, facilities and open spaces should be accessible to all users and should support sport and physical activity across all ages*
 - *Walkable communities - homes, schools, shops, community facilities, workplaces, open spaces and sports facilities should be within easy reach of each other*
 - *Connected walking and cycling routes - all destinations should be connected by a direct, legible and integrated network of walking and cycling routes which are safe, well lit, overlooked, welcoming, well-maintained, durable and clearly signposted*
 - *Co-location of community facilities – a mix of land uses and activities should be promoted that avoid the uniform zoning of large areas to single uses*
 - *Network of multifunctional open space – should be created across all communities to support a range of activities including sport, recreation and play*
 - *High quality streets and spaces*
 - *Appropriate infrastructure - to enable sport and physical activity to take place*
 - *Active buildings – the internal and external layout, design and use of buildings should promote opportunities for physical activity*
 - *Management, maintenance, monitoring and evaluation*
 - *Activity promotion and local champions – should be supported to inspire participation in sport and physical activity across neighbourhoods, workplaces and facilities*

⁴ [Health Impact Assessment in spatial planning \(Public Health England 2020\)](#)

⁵ [Active Design \(Sport England 2015\)](#)

⁴ [Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan 2019](#)



10-20 Minute Neighbourhoods

- 7.31 The 10-20 minute neighbourhood concept of place-making is an approach that revolves around people having access to essential amenities within 10-20 minutes of their home by physically active travel; essentially foot or bicycle. The concept is gaining traction, with international examples of its success being found under various guises such as '20 minute neighbourhoods' and '15 minute cities' in Melbourne and Paris respectively.
- 7.32 The approach is also being adopted within the UK, including locally within Wealden District, where the Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan⁴ aspires to create a '10 minute town' and break the cycle of car dependency. The Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan aims to ensure that people of all ages and abilities can easily access the services they need, including schools, healthcare, shops, leisure and cultural activities. This approach could potentially be relevant to the creation of sustainable '10 minute', neighbourhoods within the coastal towns of Lewes District.
- 7.33 The name of the approach or number of minutes specified is relatively unimportant; the focus of the approach is to improve people's health and wellbeing, whilst simultaneously tackling issues such as reducing carbon emissions, improving high streets and neighbourhoods, and providing green infrastructure. Development may not necessarily need to demonstrate how it adheres to all of the features highlighted in the figure below but it does provide a basis from which relevant features for the district, or specified areas within the district, can be distilled. Further evidence and research will need to be undertaken if the concept is to be carried forward to identify areas within the district that are void of these features.
- 7.34 Most of the areas that have seen successful implementation of a policy or 20 minute neighbourhood approach to place-making have typically been urban areas comprising cities or towns. Rural areas and villages rarely display all the necessary features (see the diagram above), and in many cases lack pavements or any form of active travel provision. Within the plan area, Ringmer and, to a lesser extent, Newick are the only villages that currently have sufficient facilities to potentially support the 20 minute neighbourhood concept. The challenge for the new Local Plan would therefore be to find a way of making the concept work for the Low Weald villages, as well as the more densely populated coastal towns.
- 7.35 Incorporating the 20 minute neighbourhood concept into the Low Weald area north of the Downs can be broadly separated into two options. The first option would be to identify villages that are separated or lacking in the features shown above, identify a central village, and ensure that the specified village becomes a complete 20 minute neighbourhood. Whilst people from nearby villages or hamlets would need to travel to the village itself, once there, they could walk around and have the majority of what they require to avoid then having to travel to different areas. The second, more challenging, option would be to create a network of smaller villages which as a collective group provide the majority of the features of a 20-minute



neighbourhood, with these areas being joined through avenues of active travel to reduce the need for vehicular transport.

Figure 2 - Features of a 20-minute neighbourhood



Telecommunications

- 7.37 Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Improving digital connectivity is a national and a local priority and is particularly important to our rural communities. It can also contribute towards reducing the need to travel. The Government has set a target of achieving 5G coverage for the majority of the population by 2027 and full fibre connectivity across the whole country by 2033.
- 7.38 Given the critical importance of internet access to residents and local businesses, there may be a justification for requiring all new housing developments to make provision for suitable superfast broadband and fibre connectivity, irrespective of their location. This could also be applied to non-residential developments, subject to viability considerations.



GLOSSARY

Affordable housing – housing for sale or rent for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers).

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – a levy that local planning authorities can choose to charge on new developments in their area, in order that the burden of new infrastructure costs is shared by all development in a proportionate manner.

Green Infrastructure – a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

Infrastructure – the basic requirements for the satisfactory development of an area, including water supply, sewage disposal, flood prevention, surface water drainage, highways, sustainable transport measures, play space, amenity space, education and learning facilities, libraries, health and social care facilities, leisure facilities, recycling facilities, etc.

Local Plan – the plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the community.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - sets out the government's planning policies for England and the methods by which they are expected to be applied and adhered to.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) – a drainage system that includes long term environmental and social factors in decisions about drainage.