



Report of the Suffolk Design Management Process Roundtable 2

## **Roundtable 2: CMT**

16<sup>th</sup> December 2019

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<b>Date</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> December 2019
<b>Meeting location</b>	The Wherry-Flint Room, The Quay Place, Key St, Ipswich IP4 1BZ
<b>Attendees:</b>	Cairistone Foster-Cannon, ESC Philip Ridley, ESC Marie Smith, WSC Philip Isbell, BMS Andrea Mayley, WSC David Collinson, WSC Martyn Fulcher, IBC Vicky Moseley, IBC Tom Barker, BMS Russell Williams, IBC Matt Williams, SCC Julie Baird, WSC Nicole Rickard, ESC Simon Lanning, IBC James Cutting, SCC Carlos Hone, IBC Adam Baker, SCC Steve Merry, SCC Karen Chapman, SGPB Kay Bonning-Schmitt, SGPB
<b>DSE Team:</b>	Chris Lamb, Design South East Kieran Toms, Design South East Garry Hall, Design South East
<b>Purpose:</b>	To discuss the Suffolk Design Charter, our long-term approach to embedding high quality design into future developments.

The session was conducted under Chatham House rules, meaning the outcomes of the discussion can be reported but not attributed to any one individual in attendance.

## **Introduction:**

In this roundtable participants responded to the first draft of the Charter document. A large amount of ideas, thoughts, analyses and suggestions were shared and debated in the roundtable. The below gives an outline of the different views and opinions that were expressed. The notes below are not intended as definitive ‘findings’ from the session, but rather to give a sense of the key points made.

## **Response to the Charter**

### *Purpose / Context of the Charter*

- This document needs to spell out its underpinning rationale in order for users to understand and therefore interact with the document effectively. The document needs to demonstrate what the added value is and why it is worthwhile interacting with it.
- “The Charter should be for everyone and should be written and laid out in a way that a community group can understand.”
- More explaining that this is a “charter of consensus” – so the journey to develop the words and concepts should be explained so readers/users understand that it was done by asking lots of people what they want and what the outcomes should be, and that this document is a distillation of that consensus.
- More reference to where it sits in the broader context of other Suffolk Design work.
- The Charter needs to explain that it is set of expectations and aims to ensure that growth and development in Suffolk meets a set of principles.
- The introduction should explain what the charter is about. It should explain what communities should expect from new development. Somewhere in the document it would be useful to set out what it means to key stakeholder groups.
- More reference to The Suffolk Design Management Process, and will in this way help to embed within the LPAs that there **is** a way to do it that it has been agreed across Suffolk

### *Effectiveness of the Charter*

- This document “will stretch developers, particularly in relation to connecting to a wider area.” It could stretch/push some of the design details further.
- “It is certainly helpful for guiding and shaping our own development “
- “I think it’s a very positive tool” “
- I welcome this, welcome lots of it”
- “Describing outcomes is a really positive approach”
- Content to be straightforward, to say “we want you to help us make this kind of place”
- “We hear about how development fits in and how development looks at wider area around the site. What we don’t currently do is challenge the developer to look around the site more. So this is a welcome document.”

- From a public health perspective, it was seen as positive, although it could be more aspirational, and more explicit about how the document benefits the community, could identify what is it that we want that makes a community.

#### *What participants would like to see*

- More direct language
- More explanation of who is involved at each stage.
- More reference to non-motorised uses: pedestrians etc.
- More on who the audience is and who this is being targeted at, what would motivate them to the approach, and how it would add value. “I think it would be far more powerful and have more impact if it challenged the notion that development should make only itself good – instead it’s about making a whole place better” - “If you’re creating 100 homes on the edge of settlement with 1,500 existing homes, you’re creating a 1,600-home community.” – so new development is also highly influenced by older/existing development, but also has the chance to influence and improve existing places.
- More on how different groups can use it: “If you’re a developer you can use it like this, if you’re a community group you can use it like this etc.”
- Must work across building types
- More mention of climate change/climate emergency.
- More human language – currently it “does rely on planner speak.” “Whilst the language doesn’t need to be overly simple, it does need to be jargon-free”

#### *Challenges:*

- Implementing and ensuring widespread use of this document will be a key test.
- How much it is new development focused? “80% of the built environment in 20 years will be what we’ve already got. There is a danger we spend our whole time focusing on new development, when there could be more focus on how to manage change”
- If it tries to be “absolutely everything to everyone, it will only get 60% take-up rather than 100%”
- Not all problems will be solved by building 10 homes so we can’t expect perfect social cohesion, for example, from a small new development.
- People don’t feel they’re being listened to. This document needs to try to address this issue.
- Building for Life 12 is in Local Plans. So, removing that link would mess things up.
- “This is about a culture change. The key is to engender a process where people gladly want to co-operate and co-produce. This document describes where we want to go with that approach.”
- “Are we as an authority willing to resource ourselves in order to implement this?”

- There will be difficult tensions that will emerge as a development is progressed. e.g. where we have a compromise around an access or over design character, that will be a challenge to implementing this Charter.

### *Making it Suffolk-specific*

- It needs a bit more rooting in Suffolk. It should mention the changing demographics of Suffolk, and should have a page at front setting out challenges, for example the growing proportion of over-65s. Foregrounding and outlining demographics etc. will start to deal with/ lead into other topics, such as the relationship between urban / rural, and social isolation and loneliness.
- This document is a moment in time and is supposed to be a statement – but at the same time it is supposed to evolve as time goes on and interact with other part of Suffolk Design / other Suffolk policies/initiatives.
- It needs to explain **why** a bit more: to “sell the benefits not the features.” And explain why we do great design

### *Photos – challenges and suggestions*

- What are the key Suffolk Images? Let’s bring those out a bit more.
- There was some discussion about the extent to which the document offered good balance between ‘urban’ and ‘rural.’ Feel. Some felt it did, others felt there could have been more urban images.
- Should it be highlighting the Suffolk to which we aspire? Should it show some of the challenges?
- More pictures with people in them would be welcomed

### **Summary:**

A number of areas of broad consensus emerged from the discussion.

The framing and contextualising of the document was seen as an important part of the document that needed to be improved.

This would involve identifying the purpose of the document, and therefore the challenges it is attempting to address, up front and more explicitly.

The document needs to explain that it should be thought of as a “*cultural statement*” – a statement of intent. To do this it can explain how each user might use it and why it useful to them. It should also bring out how it relates and fits in with the other Suffolk Design work undertaken, such as the Topic Papers. This will help demonstrate how it is an extended programme of work looking to change behaviours and expectations, rather than just a one-off piece of work. It would demonstrate that this document fits into a wider suite – which as a totality constitutes Suffolk Design.

The other key challenge posed and area of suggestions made was about making sure the document felt specifically about Suffolk. It was felt that this could be brought out by specifically addressing the Suffolk's unique challenges, the broader context of Suffolk, and by using images that showed a wide spread of locations from across Suffolk, and didn't over or underrepresent any one area or type of area (such as rural vs urban)

Making the document usable is partly about making its purpose clear but it is also about making sure the language used is accessible and comprehensible to everyone. This includes practitioners but also the general public. Removing some of the planning-specific text was a goal, although it was also cautioned that we would not want to make the text "too simple" –the right balance between expressing sometimes complex ideas and making the text as simple and straightforward as possible needs to be found.

The Charter will also feel more relatable and accessible if the range of photos includes people doing things and taking part in "the nitty gritty of life." Places are, after all, where we live our lives.

### **Next Steps:**

The next steps will be to make adjustments to the Charter in order to fit in with the comments, as well as ensuring the approach to the SDMP and the Charter are coherent with each other.



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