



**SPORT
ENGLAND**

ACTIVE DESIGN CASE STUDY ESSEX DESIGN GUIDE: BUILDING ACTIVITY INTO NEW DEVELOPMENT

ACTIVE DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN ACTION:

1. ACTIVITY
FOR ALL



2. WALKABLE
COMMUNITIES



3. CONNECTED WALKING
& CYCLING ROUTES



4. CO-LOCATION OF
COMMUNITY
FACILITIES



5. NETWORK OF
MULTIFUNCTIONAL
OPEN SPACE



6. HIGH QUALITY
STREETS & SPACES



7. APPROPRIATE
INFRASTRUCTURE



ACTIVE DESIGN CASE STUDY

ESSEX DESIGN GUIDE: BUILDING ACTIVITY INTO NEW DEVELOPMENT

ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS OF HELPING TO SHAPE THE DESIGN OF NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS IS THROUGH DESIGN GUIDANCE.

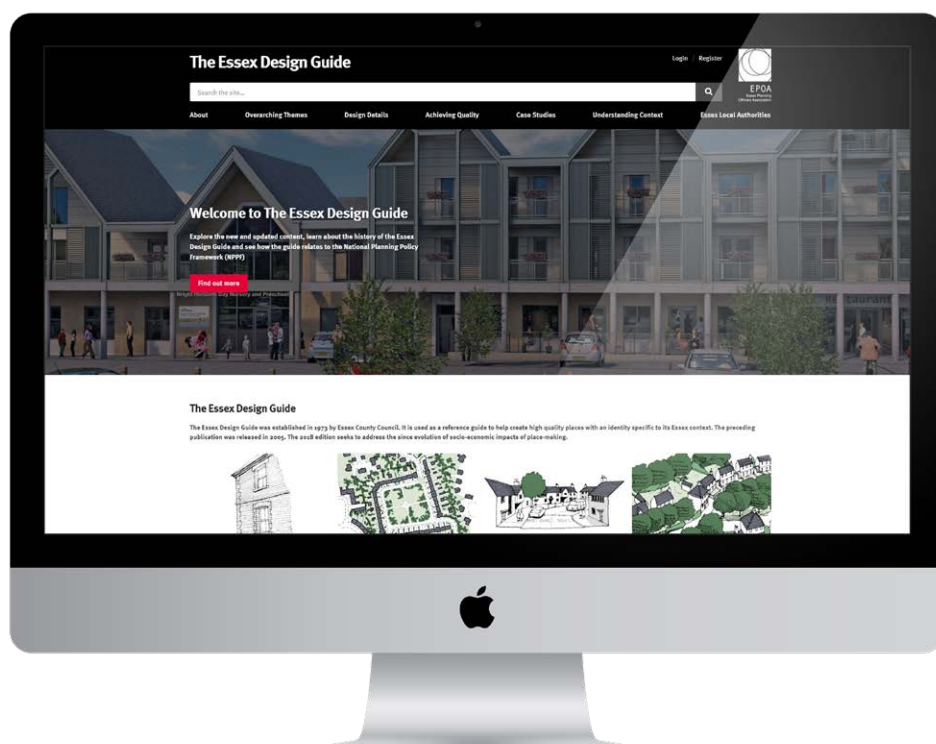
The 10 Principles of Active Design have been included in the latest review of the Essex Design Guide. (<https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk>)

The Essex Design Guide (EDG) was first published in 1973, this seminal work led the way in the planning and development sectors for urban design guidance. The EDG has helped to shape and influence the design and layout of new development in Essex over the past 40 years to help create places of quality and identity which respond to their Essex context. The EDG has received significant praise throughout its history for pioneering local design. Richard Simmons, Chief Executive of CABE described the guide as “an icon for our times” and “has also come to symbolise the vision, leadership and commitment to quality of place that all local authorities should show”.

The guide was reviewed and updated in 1997, 2005 and more recently in 2018. The 2018 EDG has retained the pioneering aspirations of the original while focusing firmly on the future. This includes embracing the 10 Principles of Active Design.

*“The 2018 EDG creates the UK’s first interactive web-based design tool that will receive ongoing updates to ensure the content remains contemporary and effectively responds to the challenges and opportunities for Essex. Through this update we have laid the foundations to ensure the EDG responds to these emerging challenges and opportunities incorporating new themes around Ageing Population, Digital and Smart Technology, Health and Wellbeing, **Active Design** and Garden Communities.”*

www.essexdesignguide.co.uk





WHAT ARE DESIGN GUIDES?

Design guides and codes are produced by local planning authorities and provide detailed and locally relevant guidance on issues such as local character, density, built form, car parking and amenity space standards for new build development. They help to set out what the local planning authority will expect from the design of new development within their area. This is intended to enhance the quality of new developments, thereby making them more acceptable in principle to the local community as well as making them attractive places to live for residents.

The planning system should create well-designed places and environments that enable and support people to take part in sport, be physically active and lead healthy lifestyles. The development and use of design guides and codes, assessment frameworks and review panels are positive mechanisms to help achieve this.

Sport England believes embedding the 10 Principles of Active Design into design guides and codes is one of the best ways to influence new development to help create active environments at scale. By so doing, the 10 Principles are included in the design process when applying the design guidance to new developments, in essence 'hard wiring' activity into the planning process.

"Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which enable and support healthy lifestyles."

National Planning Policy Framework, para 91

"IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE WIDER BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IS DESIGNED TO MAKE TAKING PART IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SAFER AND EASIER, MAKING ACTIVITY THE EASY CHOICE."

HM Govt, Sporting Future:
A New Strategy for an Active Nation

NEED TO UPDATE THE GUIDE

By 2036 Essex will be home to an additional 300,000 people, and see an increase in over 130,000 new homes and around 80,000 new jobs. The scale of the planned new growth for Essex provides an exciting opportunity to create sustainable and vibrant new communities. It is crucial that quality housing is built with a unique identity that will provide environments where people want to live, work and be active and healthy. A reviewed EDG was needed to ensure that some anti-growth and potential poor-quality development concerns that had been raised by Essex residents could be addressed.

The Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA), which comprises Essex County Council and all of the district and unitary authorities in the county, were keen to bring the EDG up-to-date in an easy to use and accessible format. The decision was taken for the iconic EDG to be digitally revamped to provide the UK's first interactive web-based design tool.

"TO PROVIDE MAXIMUM CLARITY ABOUT DESIGN EXPECTATIONS, PLANS OR SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS SHOULD USE VISUAL TOOLS SUCH AS DESIGN GUIDES AND CODES. THESE PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR CREATING DISTINCTIVE PLACES WITH A CONSISTENT AND HIGH QUALITY STANDARD OF DESIGN."

National Planning Policy Framework, para 126

Image courtesy of Countryside Properties



Image courtesy of Countryside Properties





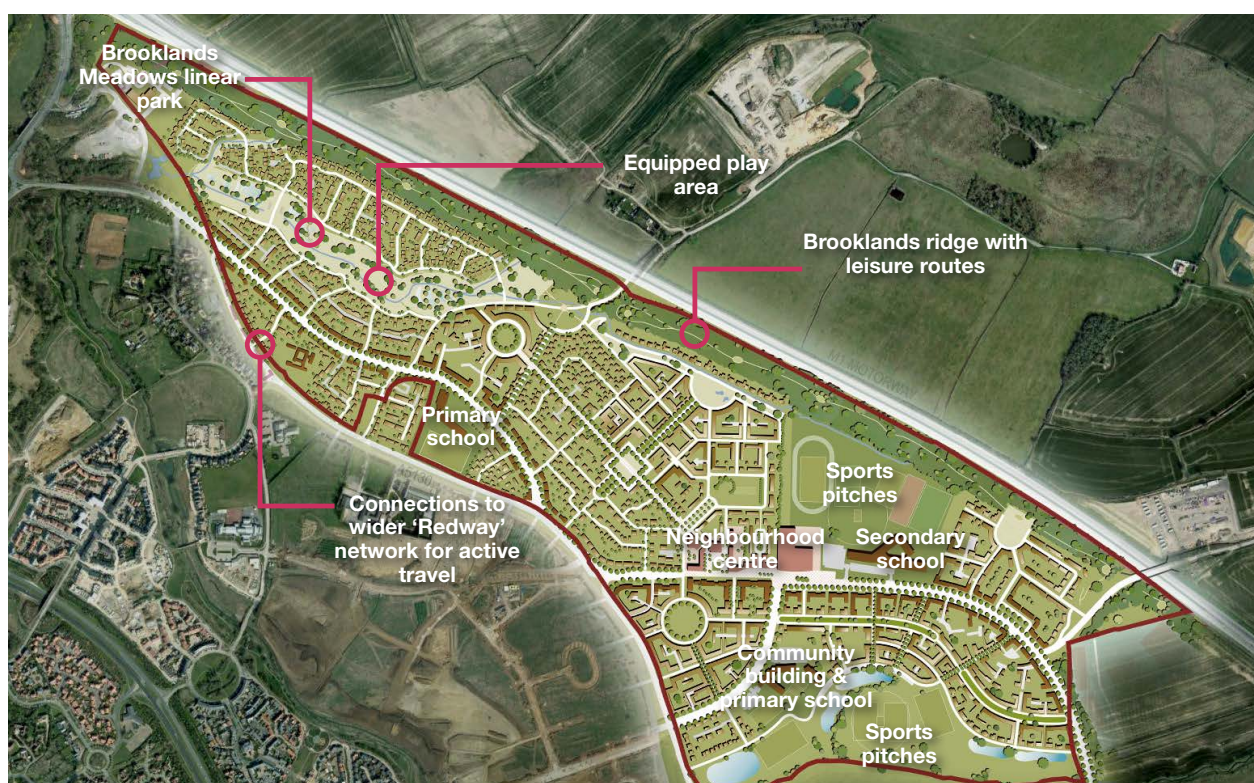
APPLYING THE EDG IN PRACTICE: ACTIVE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The EDG includes case studies from within and outside of Essex to showcase how it can be applied. The case studies, including Brooklands in Milton Keynes, include developments which seek to address large settlement planning, garden communities, healthy towns and active design.

Brooklands Case Study

Brooklands is an urban extension to the east of Milton Keynes, led by master developer Places for People in partnership with house builders Barratt Homes and David Wilson Homes. When complete Brooklands will house 2,501 new homes with a new population in the region of 6,000 people. New homes are being constructed within a comprehensive framework of green open spaces, with schools, play and recreation facilities connected by a network of leisure routes that provide multiple opportunities for activity. Brooklands illustrates how a number of Active Design Principles have been included within the scheme, these principles include:

1. **Activity for all** – New homes are positioned amongst a network of green open spaces providing easy access to opportunities for activity, play, walking, cycling and recreation.
2. **Walkable communities** – Community facilities including schools, parks and play areas are all located within walking distance of new homes. Walking and cycling routes are provided on street and through open spaces.
3. **Co-location of community facilities** – In addition to play areas in parkland and close to primary schools, the planned Brooklands Square neighbourhood centre co-locates the secondary school with shops, services, nearby sports pitches and a community building at Broughton Brook Linear Park
4. **Connected walking and cycling routes** – Brooklands has a comprehensive network of routes for active travel within the site and links into the wider Milton Keynes network of footpaths and 'Redways' (over 270km of safe paths for walking and cycling across the city).
5. **Network of multifunctional open space** – Homes and supporting community facilities at Brooklands are framed by a comprehensive network of multifunctional open spaces, including play areas, sports pitches, drainage and informal landscape. The open spaces stretch through the site linked by tree-lined streets and spaces providing immediate access to all.



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CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES NEED CONTEMPORARY THEMES

The EDG uses five new socio-economic overarching contemporary themes:

- Active Design
- Ageing Population
- Health and Wellbeing
- Digital and Smart Technology
- Garden Communities

Through 2017–18, Sport England worked with the EPOA's design team to embed the 10 Active Design principles into the 2018 EDG.

“The 2018 version of the Essex Design Guide embraces current technology and connectivity to reach out to more users, practitioners and communities to help shape the future of new developments in Essex. For the first time, the Essex Design Guide includes socio-economic themes which are embedded throughout the design guide. Sport England's 10 Active Design principles sit alongside the key urban design principles which the original Essex Design Guide helped pioneer. The inclusion of the 10 Active Design principles ensure that the aims and objectives of the new Essex Design Guide respond to the national best practice guidance while encouraging its users to create healthy communities, embracing the benefits this brings.”

Graham Thomas, Head of Planning Service at Essex County Council and Chairman of the Essex Planning Officers Association.



A wide-angle photograph of a modern, two-story brick building with large windows, situated behind a green grassy field. Several children are playing soccer on the field, and a soccer goal is visible. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

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EMBEDDING ACTIVE DESIGN IN GARDEN COMMUNITIES

In line with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) guidelines of March 2016, garden communities are strategic, larger-scale new developments of 1,500 or more dwellings. There is no single, definitive model for garden communities. However, there is an overarching ambition to create strong, healthy new communities set within a sustainable economy. The concepts that are included in Active Design will contribute to achieving these ambitions of strong, healthy new communities.

Garden communities represent a significant change in the traditional approach to delivery of major and strategic development. The garden community was founded on the principles of community inclusion and walkable, sociable, vibrant neighbourhoods. Communities should be holistically and comprehensively developed, with a distinct identity that responds directly to their context. They should be of sufficient scale to incorporate a range of homes, employment opportunities, green space and other uses, thereby enabling residents to meet the majority of their daily needs in the local area and reducing the need to commute elsewhere.

The Garden Community principles are reflected within Active Design, including:

- green infrastructure to provide multifunctional open spaces which promote healthy lifestyles;
- sustainable transport systems putting walking and cycling at the heart of developments, creating walkable communities and joined up cycling and footpath networks;
- high quality design creating an attractive public realm which people will want use, look after and cherish;
- active local stewardship creating local champions within the community to promote active lifestyles and increase health and wellbeing.

New housing offers the opportunity to embed and encourage healthier behaviours by design and the EDG gives specific guidance on designing Essex's proposed Garden Communities. Active Design principles have been incorporated which is exemplified by the guidance stating:

- Each new Garden Community will make full provision for Active Travel so that walking and cycling account for 70% of all trips;
- The urban structure of a Garden Community should be based around houses and a community hub to allow residents to access most of their day-to-day needs by walking or cycling;
- Recreation and exercise space is integral to the design of new neighbourhoods in Garden Communities and such spaces must be suitable for all ages and abilities, and within walking distance of the doorstep.
- 50% of a garden community's surface area should be allocated to green infrastructure (half of which should be publicly accessible), consisting of a network of multifunctional, well-managed, high-quality open spaces linking to the wider green infrastructure and ecological networks as well as residential and communal gardens.

Garden communities aiming to create a culture of stewardship, health and wellbeing, using existing natural assets to their full potential and incorporating them into the design. <https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/overarching-themes/garden-communities/>



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MORE THAN A GUIDE

One of the notable strengths of the EPOA Design Team's approach was that the review of the EDG was not undertaken in isolation, but as one of three elements of the Essex County's Quality Growth Agenda. The three elements are:

1. To establish a **Quality Charter for Growth** – to be owned by the community of Essex, and which helps to increase public support for growth. This Quality Charter for Growth is effectively a covenant with the people of Essex which seeks to secure their buy-in, which ensures that community support for growth is achieved. In return, the growth delivered needs to be of a good quality, deliver balanced communities and ensure the correct level of infrastructure required is provided, and that this does not result in an infrastructure deficit.
2. To **refresh the Essex Design Guide** – to update and provide a spatially relevant and more easily accessible EDG, to be used by all the local planning authorities (LPAs) in Essex and owned by the EPOA. The refreshed EDG will help to deliver the quality growth agenda by creating good quality well balanced communities with specific new areas of design focus including garden communities, healthy and active lifestyles along with specialist elderly person accommodation. In essence, helping people to understand how we will deliver new places in which people can “work, rest and play”.
3. To establish a **Quality Panel** to independently review larger scale development and or important/ sensitive developments – to provide independent advice which can support developers and LPAs (officers and members) at either the pre-planning application or the all-important Planning Committee decision making stage.

“THE ESSEX DESIGN GUIDE HAS EVOLVED TO BE MORE THAN JUST ARCHITECTURE AND BUILDINGS; IT’S A FRESH, CONTEMPORARY LOOK AT HOW TO CREATE PLACE AND BUILD COMMUNITIES. IT’S LOOKING AT HOW LIFESTYLES HAVE CHANGED AND HOW INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES NEED TO RESPOND TO THESE CHANGES.”

Essex County Councilor Lesley Wagland OBE, Deputy Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning

The refreshed EDG coupled with the forthcoming independent Quality Panel will help to ensure that development schemes deliver quality, balanced communities, with the right level of supporting infrastructure as promised by the Quality Charter for Growth.





AN ONLINE FUTURE

Putting the 2018 version of the EDG on the web was an obvious choice, creating an interactive web-based design tool, ensuring content can be refreshed and added to respond to the challenges and opportunities for Essex. However, the structure and format of the EDG needed a little more thinking about. Guidance documents, and in particular, technical planning documents can become difficult to navigate and given the amount of technical designs, the key design points can become lost. No matter how good the information is in a guide, if the reader gets lost, then the guide's value is also lost.

WWW.ESSEXDESIGNGUIDE.CO.UK

So, a solution was needed to give the user clarity over the key design aspects, whilst providing enough technical detail to help the urban designer. The EDG sets out at the start of each section the key messages from that topic in simple, bullet point statements, usefully summarising the key points. These key messages are then reinforced by key questions, which act as a check and challenge for the users. The detailed technical guidance then follows on from the key questions.

Structure of Guide:

- Key Messages,
- Key Questions,
- Detailed technical guidance

This structure helps to clarify and reinforce the key messages for each section, whilst providing detailed information for the user.



Image courtesy of Bournville Village Trust

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WHAT CAN OTHER DESIGN GUIDES LEARN FROM THE ESSEX APPROACH?

1. **Include clear contemporary themes that are aimed at helping to deliver wider planning objectives** – adopting contemporary themes such as Active Design, ageing population, health & wellbeing, digital & smart technologies brings together urban design with modern day social issues to help find solutions through development.
2. **Use key messages, key questions** – the users are helped to focus in on the key messages within the detailed design sections through the use of simple bulleted key messages and asking key questions.
3. **Embed the Active Design principles** – the ten principles are weaved through the individual design sections, and so are embedded throughout the EDG.
4. **Establish a Design Panel** – the independent Quality Design Panel will help to shape how new communities are designed by proactively using the EDG to ensure that new developments take on board the advice it contains.
5. **Provide an online platform** – an accessible, updateable, easy to navigate format. A clear webpage design makes it simple for the user to navigate a technical design guide. Pulling out case studies means that the user can quickly and easily get to good examples to help their understanding of how the guidance can be applied. The EDG can also be updated easily allowing it to remain relevant and allowing it to exemplify the latest good practice.
6. **Wider Stakeholders** – engaging with a wider range of non-traditional planning stakeholders has helped to link to broad social outcomes, such as health and physical activity along with aging population needs.