EAST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Dear Stakeholder

An open letter to the development industry: raising the standard in East Hampshire

East Hampshire needs homes that give people the opportunity to build their lives here. We also need development that respects our historic towns, charming villages and beautiful countryside, supported by the infrastructure and services our communities depend on.

As we prepare our new Local Plan, the council is taking responsibility for bringing those ambitions together. We are asking the development industry to do the same.
Planning for growth involves difficult choices. Residents rightly expect answers about roads, schools, healthcare, water and the quality of what gets built. They need to know how pressures will be addressed, who is responsible and when improvements will happen. Those concerns must influence the development that comes forward.

We must also hear from people whose housing needs are too often missing from the discussion – young adults trying to take their first steps towards independence; growing families needing more space; older residents wanting to remain independent and close to everyday services; and people who want to live nearer their work.

Local employers have a perspective too. Homes their workforce can afford, reliable transport and supporting infrastructure all matter to their ability to recruit, retain staff and grow.

When those experiences go unheard, we risk overlooking the cost of failing to provide the right homes. People move away, families struggle in unsuitable housing and businesses lose the employees they need.

Our council is trying to frame the conversation around this Local Plan differently. We're gathering local stories about what finding the right home means in everyday life, and what happens when that home is unavailable or unaffordable. We are reaching people whose experiences too often go unheard, so that their needs can help shape better development. We're doing this to represent voices that are often absent and to improve the quality of conversation around the Local Plan.

We are asking the development industry to match our effort to facilitate a better conversation. The council is taking a lead, but much of the responsibility for changing how we engage with communities rests with you too.

Across East Hampshire, developers and promoters are investing millions of pounds in bringing sites forward. We want to see that investment help to understand the people who could live in the homes, work in the commercial space or use the infrastructure you propose, as well as those who already live nearby. We expect engagement to go further, reach more people and make a visible difference to your plans.

That means actively seeking out residents and employers whose experiences bring the need for good development to life. Use your local relationships and the experience of people living and working in your developments to understand those perspectives. Ask what would make a difference to them and show how your proposals respond.

We recognise the financial pressures facing the industry. Importantly, we are not asking you to spend more on engagement. We're asking you to spend what you would usually but better. In a way that has a greater impact for our communities and, if we get it right, for your businesses and the new communities you will build. There are some incredibly straightforward changes some can make, including:

- We want developers to engage early and positively with the wider community, not just those who traditionally participate or are most vocal
- Go where people are: engage at markets, sports centres and online.
- Use everyday language: talk about homes, streets and parks; explain technical terms.
- Show what development contributes: explain how it funds and delivers roads, schools and other local services. We should be proud that development contributed nearly £4 million through CIL and s.106 in 2024/25, a charge on development to support infrastructure, and Section 106 agreements, which secure contributions such as affordable homes and funding for local services or transport improvements.

Our own place-based approach to community development, supported by dedicated Community Development Officers working closely with town and parish councils, is helping communities reach and involve a broader range of residents. We encourage the development industry to adopt the same principles, recognising that effective engagement can help shape better proposals that reflect the needs and aspirations of the whole community.

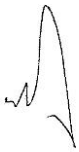
The new National Planning Policy Framework reinforces the importance of early engagement and explaining how proposals have changed in response. It also explicitly recognises positive responses to pre-application engagement among the planning matters councils should consider. Your submissions should give a clear account of who you engaged with, how you sought to reach those whose voices are less often heard, what you heard and how it influenced your plans.

Be specific about the benefits you propose. Explain who the homes are for, what infrastructure will support them and how commitments will be delivered. Communities need to be able to judge your proposals against promises they can understand. Above all, explain how you have responded to the needs people identify and the concerns they raise. Where something cannot be delivered, explain why. But make the effort to speak to those who might be supportive as well as those who are not.

We are asking you to work with us to get this right. The test is whether people can see their needs and concerns reflected in what you propose and, ultimately, what you build.

We are proud of East Hampshire and ambitious for its future. Our council will take a lead in planning the homes we need and setting expectations for their quality. We ask you to match that ambition.

Yours sincerely,



Leader of East Hampshire District Council
Cllr Richard Millard