**Adept Award Submission (500 words)**

**Improving the environment, prompting health**

Essex faces many challenges: demand for housing, high house prices, limited land availability, and viability challenges which has led to too many developments being completed without properly addressing infrastructure requirements or the quality needed to create great places. By 2036 Essex will be home to an additional 300,000 people and see an increase in over 190,000 new homes and a similar number of additional jobs.

In 2016 the Chief Planners through the Essex Planning Officers’ Association stepped forward to provide ‘system leadership’ to champion and address the need to improve design quality and the development viability challenges. Quality, place-making and infrastructure deliver are equally important to the pace of delivering new homes.

The Essex Design Guide (EDG) has a long history - promoting good design. The new online EDG format has retained the good design principles as well as focussed on new themes to shape today and tomorrow, including planning for health, an aging population, digital and smart technology and active design principles.

By working collaboratively with NHS and Public Health colleagues the EDG seeks to ensure we “design in” health by focusing on several key issues broadly captured as:

* Active living, physical activity and active design principles
* Active travel
* Healthier food environments
* Education, skills, and employment
* Supporting communities
* Design of homes and neighbourhoods
* Access to healthcare
* Environmental sustainability

The design and layout of open space is important to increasing physical activity and play. Spaces should be inclusive, accessible and address the various, differing needs of people throughout their life stages and supporting the reduction of inequalities.

The Sports England Active Design Principlesadvise on increasing activity through the design have been integrated into the EDG with the help of Sports England colleagues who formed part of the EDG team, who reference the EDG as best practice guidance.

<https://www.sportengland.org/media/13481/spe-case-studies-essex-design-guide-final.pdf>

The section on landscapes and green spaces covers the important role landscape plays in our lives and explores how to deliver beneficial landscapes through good design.

Green developments deliver important environmental, social, health and economic benefits. Green spaces are a community resource and provides recreational benefits, aids social cohesion and improves the physical and mental quality of life. Trees/plants contribute to tackling climate change and provide habitats for different species.

Cycling and walking are integral to encouraging active modes of travel, healthier lifestyles and improved accessibility. The EDG addresses community spaces for growing food and integrated sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS).

Topics include:

* Ecology and biodiversity
* Protection of species
* Trees and hedge species
* Appropriateness of planting for specific areas within the landscape
* Materials
* Details of areas
* Public space quality guidance

Central to the success of this work has been the engagement and collaboration with partners. Particularly, the NHS, Public Health England, Sports England, national house builders, local authorities, Government’s design advisor. They engaged and offered insight, innovation and practical advice.

The positive impact of the 2018 EDG is influencing the quality of an increasing number of new developments coming forward. Through this work we’re creating more than a design code, we’re building quality places where people want to live, work and be active and healthy.

A short video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNSPYYm63j4> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NejYpe4ylKg>

**150 Character Summary**

The new Essex Design Guide retains the best of the original but focuses on new themes. It ensures that developers “design in” health. Advice is given on SuDS, ecology, plants and public spaces.