



Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Update

Babergh Town and Parish Council Briefing

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10th July 2026

Local Plan-Making progress so far ...



- ▶ Preparation of the new Joint Local Plan was announced in January 2025.
- ▶ Local Development Scheme published in March 2025.
- ▶ Call for Sites exercises held in 2024 and 2025/26.
- ▶ Draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) published in September 2025.
- ▶ Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) Scoping undertaken February to March 2026.
- ▶ Close working across Suffolk local authorities ahead of Local Government Reorganisation.

Local Plan-Making progress so far ...



- ▶ Plan-Making Regulations published in March 2026.
- ▶ Updated Local Plan timetable published on 3 June 2026. Updated monthly: <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/local-plan-timetable>
- ▶ Notice of Intention to Commence preparation published on 3 June 2026: <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/w/notice-of-intention-to-commence-local-plan-preparation>
- ▶ The Plan will cover the period to 2045.

Local Plan Making Overview

- required stages



- ▶ Publish Local Plan timetable
- ▶ Publish notice of intention to commence Local Plan preparation
- ▶ Scoping Consultation
- ▶ Gateway 1: self-assessment of readiness
- ▶ Consultation: proposed local plan content and evidence
- ▶ Gateway 2
- ▶ Consultation: proposed Local Plan
- ▶ Gateway 3
- ▶ Examination
- ▶ Adoption

Prescribed Requirements (Plan-Making Regulations 2026)



- ▶ The Local Plan must:
 - ▶ set out policies in relation to the amount, type, location and timing of development;
 - ▶ include a vision for the future of the area;
 - ▶ contain no more than ten measurable outcomes;
 - ▶ help mitigate and adapt to climate change;
 - ▶ take account of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy;
 - ▶ assess housing needs, including affordable housing;
 - ▶ not include anything that is not addressed in the vision and outcomes.

Scoping Consultation



Why this matters: This is the earliest opportunity to influence the direction of the new Joint Local Plan.

- ▶ The Scoping Consultation launched on 5 June 2026 and runs until 31 July 2026: <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/w/joint-local-plan-scoping-consultation>
- ▶ Questionnaire format to help shape the scope and content of the Plan.
- ▶ Responses will inform the first draft Local Plan in early 2027.
- ▶ A consultation summary will be published after Gateway 1.
- ▶ Town and parish councils are encouraged to take part.

Scoping Consultation

Why this matters: The consultation will also help identify the issues the new Local Plan should address before policies are drafted.

- ▶ Completed questionnaires are due by 31 July 2026. A Baseline Information document and context document have been published alongside the questionnaire.
 - ▶ 23 questions covering place, challenges and future priorities.
 - ▶ Housing needs and where new housing should be focused.
 - ▶ Environmental issues and climate change.
 - ▶ Jobs, businesses and employment development.
 - ▶ Transport matters
 - ▶ How to improve future engagement methods.



Next steps



- ▶ October 2026 – Gateway 1: readiness to formally commence the 30-month plan-making period.
- ▶ January 2027 – consultation on proposed Local Plan content and evidence.
- ▶ September 2027 – Gateway 2: Planning Inspectorate review of the Plan, evidence and progress.
- ▶ February 2028 – intended consultation on the proposed Local Plan.
- ▶ April 2028 – introduction of three new unitary authorities (confirmation expected by end of 2026).
- ▶ July 2028 – Gateway 3: pre-examination assessment by the Planning Inspectorate.
- ▶ September 2028 – intended submission for Examination.
- ▶ April 2029 – intended adoption date.

These dates are indicative.

Evidence base being produced to support the Local Plan



Environment

- ▶ Strategic Environmental Assessment.
- ▶ Habitats Regulations Assessment.
- ▶ Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessments.
- ▶ Suffolk Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.
- ▶ Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.

Places and communities

- ▶ Settlement Character Assessment.
- ▶ Heritage Impact Assessment.
- ▶ Suffolk Water Cycle Study.
- ▶ Playing Pitch Strategy.
- ▶ Built Facilities Audit.
- ▶ Open Space Assessment.

Evidence base being produced to support the Local Plan



Places and communities

- ▶ Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Strategy.
- ▶ Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- ▶ Babergh and Mid Suffolk Employment Study update.
- ▶ Suffolk Employment Study.
- ▶ Suffolk Housing Needs Assessment.
- ▶ Accommodation Needs Assessment for Gypsies and Travellers, Travelling Showpeople, and Boat Dwellers.
- ▶ Suffolk Transport Assessment and Modelling.
- ▶ Air Quality Assessment and Viability Assessment.

Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs)



► How we work with communities

- Reviewing existing and emerging Neighbourhood Plans;
- Supporting communities that are preparing Neighbourhood Plans;
- Building evidence to understand local housing needs;
- Helping ensure future Neighbourhood Plans identify suitable sites for development;
- Using Neighbourhood Priority Statements to inform the new Local Plan.

Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs)



- ▶ **What this means in practice**
 - ▶ Up-to-date Neighbourhood Plans that include **both planning policies and site allocations to meet identified housing needs** can still carry significant weight in planning decisions.
- ▶ However, plans that:
 - ▶ Do not allocate sites for new housing; or
 - ▶ Rely mainly on sites that already have planning permission,
 - ▶ are less likely to influence decisions where the **presumption in favour of sustainable development** applies.

Why this matters: NDPs remain important, but they are most effective when they actively plan for future housing needs rather than relying solely on existing commitments.

Five-Year Housing Land Supply



Why this matters: A robust housing land supply helps support plan-led decision making and provides greater certainty for communities and developers.

- ▶ The National Planning Policy Framework requires councils to demonstrate a **five-year supply of deliverable housing sites**.
 - ▶ This helps ensure enough land is available to meet housing needs over the next five years.
 - ▶ The position is reviewed regularly using the latest Government guidance.

Babergh's Current Position



- ▶ Government policy has significantly increased Babergh's housing requirement.
 - ▶ From **1 July 2026**, councils in Babergh's position must also apply a **20% buffer** when calculating their five-year housing land supply.
 - ▶ As a result, Babergh's current housing land supply is **4.68 years**.
 - ▶ This reflects changes in national policy.

Many councils across England are facing similar challenges following changes to national planning policy.

What Does This Mean?



- ▶ The Council may receive more speculative planning applications.
- ▶ However:
 - ▶ every application must still be considered on its own planning merits
 - ▶ National planning policies and local planning policies (other than strategic housing policies) continue to apply
 - ▶ proposals can still be refused where there are strong planning reasons and evidence is essential
 - ▶ Neighbourhood Plans adopted within the last five years continue to carry weight.

Why this matters: This is **not** a free-for-all. Planning decisions will continue to be made carefully, taking account of issues such as heritage, landscape, flood risk, highways safety and design quality.

What is the "Tilted Balance"?



► When does it apply?

- The Tilted Balance is a national planning rule that promotes housing delivery above other matters.
- In Babergh, it applies when the council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land.

► It may also apply if:

- Housing delivery falls significantly below target.
- Planning policies become out of date.

Why this matters: Since July 2026, Babergh cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, making the Tilted Balance a significant factor in housing decisions.

Does the Tilted Balance mean all housing gets approved?



- ▶ No – applications must still be assessed on their individual planning merits. Permission can still be refused where:
 - ▶ Important landscapes, heritage assets or environmental designations would be harmed.
 - ▶ The negative impacts clearly outweigh the benefits.
 - ▶ What decision-makers still consider
 - ▶ Sustainable locations
 - ▶ Design quality
 - ▶ Affordable housing provision
 - ▶ Impact on communities and infrastructure
 - ▶ Environmental and heritage considerations

Why this matters: The Tilted Balance gives greater weight to the benefits of new housing, but it does not override good planning. Well-planned schemes are more likely to succeed, while poor proposals can still be refused.

Babergh's Plan for Sustainable Growth



- ▶ **The Council is taking a proactive approach to managing future growth.**
- ▶ **Our priorities are to:**
 - ▶ deliver the right homes in the right places
 - ▶ secure supporting infrastructure
 - ▶ expect high-quality design
 - ▶ encourage meaningful community engagement
 - ▶ continue preparing the new Joint Local Plan.

Why this matters: The new Joint Local Plan is a key part of the long-term solution. It will help shape sustainable growth for our towns and villages, informed by evidence and the views of local communities.