

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils – Neighbourhood Planning Briefing Note

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils recognise that the pause in the Examination of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan may be causing concern for some Neighbourhood Plan Groups. It is therefore appropriate that we clarify the current position and set out interim guidance.

Background

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils submitted their Joint Local Plan on 31st March 2021 for independent Examination. Progress has been made on many matters but proceedings were then paused in October 2021 to allow the Councils to consider the scope of additional work that needed to be undertaken for the Joint Local Plan to continue progress through Examination.

The Councils wrote to the Planning Inspectors on 18th November 2021 ([Document G08](#)) identifying the additional work they considered was necessary to be undertaken. The Inspectors replied on 9th December 2021 ([Document G09](#)) with a proposed way forward, to which the Councils agreed to in principle in a letter dated 10th December 2021 ([Document G10](#)), noting further discussion to be had. On 16th December 2021, an Exploratory Meeting was held with the Planning Inspectors at which the Councils agreed that it is necessary to split the Joint Local Plan into two parts.

The Part 1 document will contain all strategic policies (less Policy SP04 – Housing Spatial Distribution) and all development management policies (less Policy LP30 – Designated Open Spaces). Current settlement boundaries and open space designations would be saved from existing adopted policy and carried forward into the Part 1 document.

The Part 2 document would contain Policy SP04 – Housing Spatial Distribution and Policy LP30 – Designated Open Spaces and would include identifying residential site allocations; updated settlement boundaries; updated Gypsy and Traveller, and Travelling Showpeople policy and any necessary allocations; and open space designations. The timetable for the Part 2 Joint Local Plan will be set out in an updated Local Development Scheme to be adopted by the Councils in the first part of 2022.

What does a two-part Joint Local Plan mean for Neighbourhood Plan Groups?

The move to a Part 2 Joint Local Plan means that the minimum housing requirement for Neighbourhood Plan Areas set out in the Joint Local Plan (November 2020), has a new meaning. These numbers are now indicative and will be updated as the Part 2 document moves forward.

At this time, we would advise that Neighbourhood Plan Groups continue to produce Neighbourhood Plans in accordance with this indicative number. However, it is understood that some groups may feel they wish to plan for an alternative number, and will need to consider the merits of doing so in each case.

If a Neighbourhood Plan is made with a lower number than is subsequently identified in the Part 2 Joint Local Plan, the Councils will need to make allocation(s) to meet the Part 2 identified number.

It is recommended that Neighbourhood Plans are continued to be progressed, which will enable local communities to have an up-to-date site-specific document with locally specific development management policies that are part of the adopted Development Plan.

If a Neighbourhood Plan Group wishes to discuss any of these matters further, please contact us at communityplanning@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk.

16th December 2021