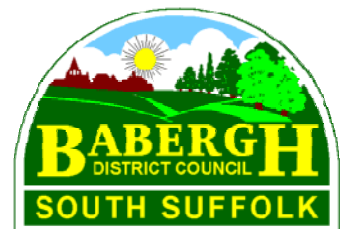


Core Strategy Issues and Options

**Social & Community Infrastructure
March 2009**



10 Social and Community Infrastructure

Background

- 10.1. As a predominantly rural district, community and social infrastructure provision is dispersed around the district and tends to be related to the settlement pattern. The geographical make up of the district means that access to facilities will always be an important issue, particularly in remote rural areas where settlements are widely dispersed. Alongside investment in new housing and jobs, investment in community infrastructure is central to improving the lives of existing and future residents in the district and in creating and maintaining sustainable communities. Adequate community infrastructure, both now in accordance with additional requirements generated by growth is an important part of the LDF.
- 10.2. A new all encompassing aim is suggested, which is “to ensure that there is an appropriate range and distribution of community facilities and services provided in accessible locations to meet the needs and aspirations of all people in the Babergh district”
- 10.3. For the purposes of this section, community and social infrastructure includes, education, health, social care, community facilities (libraries, post offices, village halls), sport recreation and open space / green infrastructure.

Context Social and Community Infrastructure

- 10.4. An over-riding aim is set out in Planning Policy Statement 1, which states; “Planning should facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development, by ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities, with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community.”

Local Context

- 10.5. Many of the services associated with community and social infrastructure are provided or supported by other authorities or agencies. The Strategic and policy context is therefore of significant importance. The key Strategic Policies are illustrated comparatively in the table below;

Transforming Suffolk Suffolk CC Strategic Plan	Western Local Strategic Partnership	Babergh East Local Strategic partnership	Babergh District Council strategic Plan 2008-2018
Safe, healthy and inclusive communities	Develop and maintain safe strong and sustainable community	Support projects which raise opportunities for local communities	Vibrant places, strong communities
	Create and support healthier community		Safer healthier Babergh

Greenest County		Cleaner greener Babergh
Learning and skills for the future	Maximise potential of all children and young people	Engage with young people and promote sense of active partnership

Crime and Disorder

- 10.6. It is acknowledged at a local and national level, that problems arising from crime and disorder are linked to a wide range of issues. It is understood that good provision and access to a range of community and social facilities can have a significant impact on reducing crime and disorder. Planning for new development can contribute to crime prevention, through good design. There is an abundance of national guidance in respect of design as well as the Office for Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) / Home Office Safer Places- the Planning System and Crime Prevention.
- 10.7. Babergh's Community Safety Partnership (CSP), through its annual strategic assessment, have identified alcohol fuelled criminal damage and public order offences (including violence) as a key priority for its plans to tackle crime and disorder in the District. Currently criminal damage accounts for 27% of all recorded crime in Babergh and violence against the person (includes public order offences) accounts for 18%. These are the top two crimes committed in Babergh and further analysis on the location and times that the offences occur, coupled with information on those perpetrating the crimes, show a very strong correlations with alcohol use and the 'night time economy' (pubs and clubs).
- 10.8. The purpose of the CSPs annual strategic assessment is to provide a balanced evaluation of the most significant issues affecting the residents of Babergh and to propose specific actions to try and tackle them. One of the actions that the partnership are agreed upon is to work with planners and development staff to pro-actively influence the establishment of a more balanced social (night-time) economy in town centres, particularly Sudbury but also to a lesser extent Hadleigh. The aspiration behind this is that providing more socialising options for people could lead to less alcohol use and/or less intensive alcohol use, which will have a positive impact on people's behaviour. This, it is hoped, would reduce crime and increase the range of people (i.e. a community benefit) who feel able and comfortable to use the town centres at night. Town centre issues are covered in the Retail section.

Question SCI1: Do you consider that crime and disorder issues in the town centre can be addressed through a Town Centre Strategy, if Option 3 Question R2 in the retail section is preferred, or should this be addressed in subsequent, more detailed DPDs? Please specify?

Please give reasons for your answer

Education

- 10.9. As a rural district, education provision is closely linked to the surrounding areas and districts. There is a total of 50 schools in the district, comprising a mix of Primary, Middle, Upper and High as well as a few Schools for Special Education Needs. Suffolk County Council is responsible for the provision of education. The whole issue of education in Suffolk is currently under review and the Government is moving towards achieving a two tier system throughout. The School Organisational Review is already underway in some parts of the district with other areas due to follow later in 2009/10.
- 10.10. Issues and options relating to education provision are therefore, driven by processes outside of the Local Development Framework. Whilst the Core Strategy will need to reflect future changes, at the present time issues are very broad.
- 10.11. The development of additional housing will require the funding of school places or provision depending on the size and location of the development via a Section 106 Agreement with the developer. The Council will ensure that education provision develops in accordance with new housing development and reflects the projected educational need in specific areas and district wide.

Care for young people

- 10.12. Most of the issues concerning young people are addressed through either education provision or through community facilities. It is necessary to ensure that young people are adequately catered for in the district, through provision for education and leisure as well as childcare, as more parents seek employment. Again much of this is catered for through the education system, with more extended school activities being provided often linked to schools, including holiday activities. In addition pre-school needs are important, and are usually provided through a mixture of private nurseries/ crèches and private child minders or nannies. Children's Centres are a relatively new concept and are already provided by Suffolk County Council in Hadleigh, Great Cornard and Sudbury. A further Children's Centre is planned for at Glemsford, with the aim of establishing Centres at East Bergholt, Capel St Mary, Holbrook and Brantham. Ensure that the very young in the district are catered for in terms of pre school needs and hours beyond the school day for school age children.

Health

- 10.13. Babergh district lies within the area covered by Suffolk Primary Care Trust. As a large rural district, healthcare issues are inevitably linked in with those of surrounding areas and districts. Major hospital facilities are provided outside the district at larger urban locations at Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich. Primary health care is provided at a local level through a network of GPs, health Clinics and Doctor Surgeries. Maintaining provision in Sudbury is a key issue for the LDF as conventional hospital provision at Walnut Tree and St Leonards are to be replaced by a health centre.

- 10.14. The exact location of new primary health care in Sudbury is not yet finalised. Planning and feasibility for this are already underway and part of a separate process.
- 10.15. Elsewhere in the district healthcare provision is available to varying capacities. The timescale for reviewing health care needs seems to vary from practice to practice, but in all cases it is shorter than the Core Strategy timescale. It is necessary to ensure that needs meet demand throughout the district and that the LDF must be flexible enough to accommodate changes arising from reviews of healthcare provision at various stages during the life of the Core Strategy. The Council will ensure that healthcare provision in Sudbury must ensure that it is not only adequate for the existing population but also caters for any future growth. Elsewhere in the district it is necessary to ensure that health care provision is adequate for additional population as a result of residential growth. In rural areas good access to adequate health care facilities is vital to safeguarding community health and wellbeing. Mechanisms to prevent inequalities need to be explored to ensure delivery of good access for all.

Social care

- 10.16. Care for older people: Suffolk County Council is now an enabling Authority, rather than a direct provider of services. The service is under review, but the overall aim is to care for people in their own homes for as long as possible, and when more intensive care is needed, that this be provided elsewhere. It is important therefore, to ensure that homes are as adaptable as possible. The Government's "Lifetime Homes" and Code for Sustainable Homes will assist with this process. Issues concerning housing for older people are in the Housing Section.
- 10.17. Whilst it is expected that for the most part people will remain in their own homes when they are older, it is also expected that there will be a period when more intensive care is needed. This is likely to be very sheltered accommodation, rather than the more traditional care homes. It is important to ensure that adequate support services are provided close to where older people are living.

Community Facilities

- 10.18. Provision of adequate community facilities, particularly in rural areas contributes to maintaining sustainable communities. Access to key facilities, including libraries, village halls/community centres, and post offices contributes towards the national objectives of "meeting diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal well being, social cohesion and inclusion and creating equal opportunities for all utilisers" (PPS1).



10.19. The parish profile evidence base lists all the of the community facilities in all settlements throughout the district. Most of the villages have access to community / village halls, although some are in need of improvement and may not serve all the local community needs. The decline of Post Office facilities in rural areas has been a national trend which has affected some areas of Babergh. However, the larger settlements have retained a post office service, it is the more remote areas which may now need to travel further for the closest post office. The library service is the responsibility of Suffolk County Council. Opportunities for improvements to the provision may be required, looking at potential for the library buildings to provide a greater focus for additional community services. Much of the rural area of the district is served by the mobile libraries, a service which the County Council hopes to increase. Again there is an opportunity for mobile library vehicles to improve access to services in rural areas which is a recurring theme in community strategies throughout. Babergh will be guided by an aim of establishing and maintaining sufficient service provision of community facilities and particularly to ensure reasonable access to all, including within the more remote rural areas.

Sport and Recreation Facilities including Green Infrastructure

- 10.20. Provision for sport and recreation is important in meeting many cross cutting objectives. These include;
- Promotion of health and wellbeing by making provision for physical activity; (PPS1, PPG17)
 - Social cohesion and a contribution to healthy and safe places to live (including crime reduction); (PPS1)
 - Provision of public space which could benefit a range of interests from recreation, biodiversity, design and public realm (PPS1) PPG17);
- 10.21. The wider context also relates to a network of green infrastructure corridors and it is acknowledged that all open spaces can contribute to landscape and biodiversity. Issues are also covered in the Built and Natural Environment Section. A Strategy for Open Space Sport and Recreation is currently being prepared by Babergh District Council which will form part of the evidence base. The audit information which is already researched indicates where provision currently exists and also makes an assessment of its quality as required by PPG 17. The Strategy will identify local standards of provision and highlight areas in need of additional provision, the type of provision required and the need for qualitative improvements.
- 10.22. Other sport and recreation facilities provided in the district range from swimming pools, indoor sports halls, multi-use games areas, tennis courts. These often are intended to serve a wider catchment area as people are willing to travel a greater distance for the use of such facilities (The Strategy being prepared on Sport and recreation will also include facilities for indoor sports and recreation).
- 10.23. Where shortfall of provision has been identified it is possible to seek contributions from development to help fund the additional facilities which will be needed to serve the development. The current planning policy approach for this is to request contributions from most residential development to allow for the cumulative effect of lots of small developments. This is consistent with guidance in PPG17.

10.24. The Babergh district also offers a range of opportunities for informal recreation including many water recreation opportunities, the most extensive being Alton Water and the Stour and Orwell Estuaries. The estuaries are also important for their nature conservation interest, so recreational use has to be carefully balanced. Alton Water already serves a regional catchment and is identified in the Haven Gateway Green Infrastructure as having potential to be extended to contribute towards the Accessible Natural Green Space standards (ANGST). It is necessary to ensure that everyone has easy access to a range of sport, recreation and open space provision to contribute to their well being, health and safety.

Question SCI2: Do you consider that green infrastructure should be addressed through the Core Strategy? And what priority should it have?

Option 1

If yes please specify options

Option 2

No green infrastructure should be dealt with by more specific DPDs

Please give reasons for your answer

Delivery of Community and Social Infrastructure

10.25. It is essential that infrastructure provision is improved to support the demands made by new development. The opportunities for delivering improvements to social and community infrastructure to support the growth of the district needs to be considered and addressed through the Core Strategy. Currently, contributions are sought for open space and provision for affordable housing, and highways (or other appropriate) improvements are usually secured through the use of Section 106 Agreements on individual planning applications, as appropriate. There is a need to identify priorities and to consider the weight to be given to the different community facilities (health facilities, school provision, village / community halls, post office, shop (general stores), libraries, children's play areas, other public open space.

Question SCI3: Do you consider that all facilities are of equal importance?

Option 1

Yes

Option 2

Do you consider that one or more facilities are of greater importance, please specify

10.26. The need to consider the most appropriate mechanisms for securing sufficient provision for social and community infrastructure from new development.

Question SCI4: Do you consider that there should be a threshold for the type and size of development that should contribute to the improvement of social and community infrastructure?

Option 1

Yes

Option 2

Issues and Options

Do you consider that contributions should continue to be sought and secured through Section 106 Agreements, case by case?

Question SCI5: Specific Provision

Do you consider that the Core Strategy should make any specific provision for social and community infrastructure?

Option 1

Yes, Please specify what and / or where?

Option 2

No, this should be left to development control policies