

Core Strategy Issues and Options

**Spatial Portrait Section
March 2009**



2 Spatial Portrait of Babergh District Council

2.1. An overview of Babergh district has been provided by the latest Annual Monitoring Report for 2007-8, published by the Council (paper copies are available or please see: www.babergh.gov.uk/babergh/ldf) as well as the Babergh District Council Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (paper copies are available or it can be viewed online at the above mentioned web link).

2.2. The Babergh District is mainly rural in character and covers an area of 230 square miles (596 square kilometres). A brief overview of the social, economic and environmental characteristics is provided below.

2.3. Social characteristics

- It is estimated that Babergh had a population of 86,910 in 2006. This is 12.5% of the population of Suffolk County and the second smallest district in the County.
- Babergh has 76 parishes with only 21 of these parishes that had a population of over a 1000 people in 2006.
- Only 18 of the 76 parishes are considered to have most of the key services and facilities within them. These parishes are fairly evenly distributed throughout the district.
- Some areas of eastern Babergh are ranked in the worst 10% in the country for access to housing and other services. Local facilities such as shops and post offices are under threat in a number of areas and villages are under pressure to maintain their viability.
- Babergh has two main centres of population. The largest settlement is Sudbury (including Great Cornard), which had a population of just over 20,000 people in 2006. Hadleigh, the second largest town, had a population of over 8,000 in 2006.
- Babergh's population have risen by 3.8% over the period 2001-2006. It is predicted that the population will rise by 4.9% between 2001 and 2021 to 89,500.
- The district has an ageing population with 19% of the total population older than 65 years in 2001. It is predicted that this figure will increase to 29% of the total population in 2021.
- Good road and rail networks are present from the district to Ipswich, Colchester, Bury St Edmunds, Norwich, Chelmsford, Cambridge and London.
- Affordability of housing is a serious issue in Babergh and 2008 figures shows that an average house price is 10 times higher than the average wages in the area.
- Levels of crime (53 crimes reported per 1000 population in 2006/2007) and deprivation are low for Babergh, and the incidence of crime is reducing. However, crime and disorder is still an important issue for many local people and fear of crime is disproportionate to the levels of crime in the area.
- Educational levels (up to and including GCSE level) for Babergh are higher than those for Suffolk. A total of 81% primary school attainment was achieved in Babergh during 2006 in comparison to 79% primary school attainment achieved in Suffolk during 2006.

2.4. Economic characteristics

- Babergh has a small local economy, less than half the size of the average for Britain.
- The district has a low level of unemployment (1.4% of the population in 2006). These figures do not reflect the recent changes as a result of the economic recession and this will have to be updated when more recent figures are available.
- Babergh District has a diverse economy with a strong manufacturing sector and distribution, hotel and restaurant sector, a declining agricultural base and a tourism industry with significant growth potential.
- 70% of workers are employed in the service sector, 25% in manufacturing and construction sector and 5% in agriculture.
- The average gross earnings in Babergh are slightly below the Suffolk average (£7 per week less in 2007) and well below the national average (£75 a week less).
- The market towns of Sudbury and Hadleigh make a notable contribution to employment within the district.
- There are relatively high levels of small businesses, in 2005 about 12% of the working population were self employed.
- There are gaps in the skills and education base. Whilst Babergh performs better than the GB average up to and including GCSE Level (NVQ2), it performs lower at A Level (NVQ3) and above.
- Many young adults move out of the area seeking higher education, higher paid employment and, sometimes, housing opportunities. Babergh has 8.6% of its population in their twenties compared with 13% nationally.
- The 2001 Census figures recorded that 43% of the workforce in Babergh travel outside of the district for employment; most by travelled by car and on average they travelled 17.45 miles to work. Babergh together with Mid Suffolk has the largest proportion of outward commuting workforce in Suffolk.



2.5. Environmental characteristics

- The Babergh District has a varied landscape consisting of undulating arable farmland interspersed with river valleys, and the Orwell and Stour estuaries on the eastern and south-eastern borders of the district.
- The Stour and Orwell estuaries in Babergh have a distinct and precious character and both these sites are designated as Ramsar Sites and Special Protection Areas.
- Babergh contains many areas of attractive countryside including the nationally designated Dedham Vale and the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Issues and Options

- There are 53 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and 231 County Wildlife Sites in Babergh.
- Babergh has around 4,000 listed buildings, 28 conservation areas, 34 scheduled ancient monuments and 5 registered historic parks and gardens.
- The value of the natural and built environment in the District, including the internationally renowned areas of 'Constable Country' and the medieval wool villages of Lavenham and Kersey, form the basis for a strong local tourism industry.
- There is a need to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill as space rapidly runs out in Suffolk and other parts of the region.
- Traffic congestion and air pollution due to traffic is also an issue in some parts of the district.