

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Planning for the future of Babergh and Mid Suffolk

The councils are preparing a new Joint Local Plan to help shape how Babergh and Mid Suffolk will grow and change over the coming years.

The Local Plan will guide decisions about:

- new homes
- jobs and business space
- transport and infrastructure
- climate change and sustainability
- green spaces and biodiversity
- town centres and local services

As part of this work, the councils are carrying out early consultation and gathering evidence to help inform future decisions.

Taking part in consultation does not require planning knowledge. Everyone is encouraged to share their views.

About the Joint Local Plan

- town centres
- infrastructure
- the environment
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What is a Local Plan and why is it important?

A Local Plan sets out how an area should develop over time. It helps councils plan for future housing, jobs, infrastructure and environmental protection.

Local Plans are important because they guide planning decisions and help ensure development happens in a coordinated and sustainable way.

Why are Babergh and Mid Suffolk preparing a Joint Local Plan?

The councils are legally required to maintain an up-to-date Local Plan.

Preparing a Joint Local Plan allows both councils to work together on shared issues such as housing growth, transport, infrastructure, climate change and the local economy.

How could the Local Plan affect me?

The Local Plan may influence:

where new homes and employment development are located

transport improvements

protection of countryside and green spaces

future infrastructure such as schools and healthcare

the future of town centres and local services

The plan will help shape the future of communities across both districts.

How long will the plan cover?

The Joint Local Plan will help guide development over approximately the next 15–20 years.

About the Scoping Consultation

What is the Scoping Consultation?

The Scoping Consultation is the first formal stage of preparing the new Joint Local Plan.

It is an opportunity for residents, businesses, organisations and stakeholders to help shape the vision, priorities and themes for the new plan.

When will the Scoping Consultation take place?

The consultation is scheduled to run from 5 June to 31 July 2026.

What kinds of questions will the consultation ask?

This consultation will help us to establish the priorities for the new local plan. The consultation asks questions about housing, environment, transport, infrastructure and your local area. The answers to these questions will help us to develop a picture of the key issues and opportunities for Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

We also want to learn how we can best engage with our communities and stakeholders throughout the local plan process, which will last several years.

Do I need planning knowledge to take part?

No. The councils welcome views from everyone, regardless of planning experience.

Will my comments make a difference?

Yes. Feedback received during consultation will help inform the direction and content of the emerging Joint Local Plan.

Call for Sites

What is a Call for Sites?

A Call for Sites is an opportunity for landowners, developers and others to suggest land that may be suitable for future development or other uses.

This could include land for:

- housing
 - employment
 - community facilities
 - green infrastructure
 - open space
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Does submitting a site mean it will definitely be developed?

No. Submitting a site is only the first stage of the process.

All submitted sites are assessed carefully against planning, environmental, infrastructure and sustainability considerations before any decisions are made.

What happens to sites after submission?

The councils assess all submitted sites using a range of planning and environmental criteria.

This information helps inform future decisions about potential site allocations in the Local Plan.

Will the public be able to comment on sites?

Yes. There will be opportunities for public consultation as the Local Plan progresses.

What is a SHLAA or SHELAA?

SHLAA

A **Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)** was historically used to:

- Identify **land suitable for housing development**
- Assess whether sites are:
 - **Available**
 - **Suitable**
 - **Achievable (viable)**
- Estimate how many homes could be delivered and when (housing trajectory)

Its purpose is to :

- **Inform** local plan housing supply and demonstrate deliverable housing land

SHELAA

A **Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA)** is the **modern successor** to the SHLAA.

It expands the scope to include:

- **Housing land**
- **Economic development land** (e.g. offices, industry, logistics, retail employment space)

Its purpose is to:

- Support **both housing needs and economic growth**
- Provide a comprehensive picture of land availability across multiple uses
- Inform Local Plans and spatial strategies

Inclusion in the assessment does not mean planning permission has been granted.

Housing and Growth

Why do councils need to plan for more housing?

National planning policy requires councils to plan for future housing needs.

The Local Plan helps ensure new homes are planned in the most sustainable locations alongside supporting infrastructure and services.

Will infrastructure be considered alongside development?

Yes. Infrastructure is a key part of plan-making.

The councils work with infrastructure providers and partner organisations to consider:

- roads and transport
 - schools
 - healthcare
 - utilities
 - green infrastructure
 - flood management
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What does “sustainable development” mean?

Sustainable development means balancing:

- economic growth
- social needs
- environmental protection

The aim is to support future communities while protecting the character and environment of the area.

Planning System Changes

Why is the planning system changing?

The government has introduced changes through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 and updated national planning policy.

These changes include:

- a faster plan-making timetable

- greater use of digital consultation
 - earlier community engagement
 - new “gateway” assessment stages
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What are the “gateway” stages?

Gateway stages are formal check points during plan preparation where progress and evidence are reviewed before the plan can move forward.

Local Government Reorganisation

Why are the councils continuing with a Joint Local Plan during Local Government Reorganisation?

Current government advice indicates that councils should continue progressing Local Plans using existing administrative boundaries at this stage.

The councils are continuing to work closely with neighbouring Suffolk authorities and government departments as arrangements evolve.

What will happen to neighbourhood plans?

Neighbourhood Plans that are sufficiently advanced are expected to continue through to adoption and remain part of the planning framework following local government reorganisation.

Further Information

Where can I find updates and documents?

Further information and updates are available at:

- [Babergh Joint Local Plan pages](#)
- [Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan pages](#)