

# **Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Examination**

## **Matter 5 Local Housing Policies Question 5.1**

**May 2021**



Opus House  
Elm Farm Park  
Thurston  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
IP31 3SH

**T** 01359 233663  
**E** [enquiries@evolution-planning.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@evolution-planning.co.uk)  
**W** [evolution-planning.co.uk](http://evolution-planning.co.uk)

**Great Yarmouth Borough Council**  
**Local Plan Examination**

**Matter 5 Local Housing Policies Question 5.1**

**Client: David Black and Son**

Content Amendment Record

This report has been issued and amended as follows:

Issue	Revision	Description	Date	Signed
1	0	Draft	26.05.21	DB

**Ref: E374.C1.Rep10**

**Disclaimer**

The copyright in this report prepared by Evolution Town Planning Ltd is owned by them and no such report, plan or document may be reproduced, published or adapted without their written consent. Complete copies of this report may however be made and distributed by the Client in dealing with matters related to the brief.

The information given in this report is solely for the use of the Client noted above. Evolution Town Planning Ltd can accept no responsibility or liability to any third party. The benefit of this report is not transferable to any third party except with the written agreement of the original Client and of Evolution Town Planning Ltd. An extra fee will be payable for such a transfer.

## **1.0 Matter 5 – Question 5.1 - Policy LP01**

- 1.1 We object to the Local Plan because Policy 'LP01 – Windfall development in hamlets and dwelling clusters' is unsound as it is not the most appropriate strategy, it is not positively prepared, and it is not consentient with National Planning Policy.
- 2.1 The policy allows 'infill' development 'within' clusters or hamlets. To be sound the policy should be more flexible so that development is instead allowed in locations that are 'well related to clusters and hamlets.'
- 3.1 The principle of the policy is sensible, and is to allow development at hamlets and clusters as this reflects the requirements of National Planning Policy for development of houses in the countryside. However, requiring housing development to be within clusters is too restrictive. Instead, the policy should allow homes that are 'well related' to clusters/hamlets.
- 4.1 The policy has the aim of providing homes where they are needed and doing so in such a way that protects the character of the countryside. This could still be achieved if the policy had more flexibility. Instead of saying that homes should be 'within' clusters/hamlets or that homes should be 'infill' the policy should say that homes should be 'well related' to clusters/hamlets. For example, within a settlement boundary, homes are not only allowed as infill, homes are allowed within settlement boundaries whether this be at the end of a row of homes, or to the rear of a homes, or in some other arrangement within the settlement. Providing more flexibility in policy LP01 would allow homes in logical positions. For example, on a plot between a house and a road or other such boundary feature of the settlement such as a wood. The proposed change would allow homes where there may be a group of homes rather than a linear arrangement along a road.
- 5.1 Requiring new homes to be well related to the existing cluster or hamlet and also requiring the development to protect the character of the countryside would meet the requirements of National Planning Policy. The policy as drafted clearly and sensibly protects the character of the countryside so the changes proposed in these representations will not harm the character of the countryside.

- 6.1 Small infill development can often provide homes that meet the needs of local people. As a practice, we have carried out a number of such developments for David Black and Son around Bacton and Wyverstone. These homes have been designed for the local rental market and have been well received locally. They have been supported by Parish Councils and local Councillors. An additional criterion could be added to the policy in order to give weight to Parish Council views and to give weight to proposals for homes that meet local needs.
- 7.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) supports the amendment to policy LP01. It requires in paragraph 79 that planning policies should ‘avoid isolated homes in the countryside’ the amendment proposed would avoid isolated homes and would therefore comply with National Planning Policy.
- 8.1 The amendment proposed would mean that the policy would not be as restrictive as it is drafted and so would be sound. Restricting appropriate levels of housing in rural areas fails to support local services and facilities which are important to the sustainability of rural areas.
- 9.1 Paragraph 59 of The Framework sets out the Government’s objective to significantly boost the supply of homes. It states that *‘it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed.’*
- 10.1 The Framework states in paragraph 68 that *“small and medium sites can make an important contribution to the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly.”* Paragraph 68 goes on to state that *“local planning authorities should support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes.”* This paragraph provides support for windfall sites, and small sites which can be built quickly such as those which will be found around clusters and hamlets in rural areas, and gives *“great weight”* to using suitable sites within settlements which the Local Plan, as currently drafted, will not support in a wide range of rural settlements.
- 11.1 The (National Planning Policy Guidance) NPPG further supports the need to revise the

draft Local Plan. Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 67-009-20190722, Revision date: 22 07 2019 states: *"People living in rural areas can face particular challenges in terms of housing supply and affordability, while the location of new housing can also be important for the broader sustainability of rural communities..... A wide range of settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas, so blanket policies restricting housing development in some types of settlement will need to be supported by robust evidence of their appropriateness."*

- 12.1 The NPPG and paragraphs 77 and 78 of the Framework confirm the importance of rural housing. The role of rural housing is recognised as *"supporting the broader sustainability of rural communities"*.
- 13.1 The threshold for a dwelling cluster is set at 10 homes. There is not any clear rationale for this scale. A good infill site in a cluster of 9 homes could deliver appropriate housing. A better definition of a cluster would be 'around 10 homes or more.' This would give flexibility. If a site was unsuitable then criteria (a) and (b) of the policy could be used to restrict development. A cluster is defined as homes *'adjacent to or fronting an existing adopted highway.'* This requirement is unnecessary. This is because in many cases homes in clusters extend back from the highway and no clusters of housing are remote from the public highway. There is no requirement in National Planning Policy for houses in the countryside to be in groups of a minimum of 10 homes or adjacent to a highway so these two provisions are unsound and are not justified.
- 14.1 The scale of development allowed in part c is a single dwelling or a pair of semi detached dwellings. National Planning Policy does not restrict the development in the countryside in such a way. For example, the Waveney District Council Policy in the adopted 2019 Local Plan allows developments of 3 homes in a gap in a settlement in the countryside. East Suffolk Council has a similar policy. The Waveney policy is set out below. The full text of each policy is reproduced in the Appendix to this document.

*'Policy WLP8.7 – Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside*

*Small scale residential development in the Countryside of up to three dwellings will be permitted where:*

*The site constitutes a clearly identifiable gap within a built up area of a settlement within*

*the Countryside;*

*There are existing residential properties on two sides of the site; and*

*The development does not extend further into the undeveloped Countryside than the existing extent of the built up area surrounding the site.*

The policy goes on to state:

*For all small -scale development in the Countryside the design of the scheme will need to respect and reflect the character of the settlement and existing built up frontage including:*

*Housing density is reflective of the density in the village and surrounding built up area; and*

*The ratio of the building footprint to the plot area is consistent with existing properties nearby which characterise the village.'*

- 15.1 To meet the requirements of National Planning Policy which suggest no such restriction on the number of homes that can be developed in rural areas and so that the policy is Justified. The scale of development should be up to 3 homes as this accord with what has been allowed in other Suffolk Local Plans in rural areas.
- 16.1 The challenges of housing supply and affordability in rural areas are recognised in National Policy and guidance. These challenges include affordability and availability of suitable housing where local people want to live. The changes proposed meet the requirements of National Planning Policy to deliver rural homes and to deliver small sites. Without these changes, the draft Local Plan will not meet the housing needs of rural areas or deliver sustainable development by providing suitable housing where local people want to live. These changes are needed to make the policy comply with National Planning Policy, to be positively prepared by delivering the homes and small sites needed in rural areas, and by being Justified so that the policy proposes the most appropriate strategy.'

## **2.0 Summary and Conclusion**

- 2.1 Policy LP01 should be amended to create more flexibility for housing development

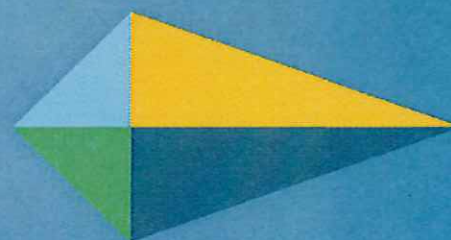
that is well related to clusters/hamlets. The references to housing being 'within' or 'infill' should be removed. The policy should be amended so that homes are allowed that are well related to hamlets/clusters. The remainder of the policy provides good protection for the character of the countryside. National Planning Policy seeks to avoid isolated homes in the countryside and does not say that homes should be 'within' clusters/hamlets or be 'infill'. This change will be sound as it will accord with National Planning Policy, be positive and justified.

- 2.2 There should be more flexibility in the definition of a dwelling cluster as there is no restriction in National Planning Policy that a cluster has to be 10 homes or adjacent to a road.
- 2.3 There should be more flexibility allowed in the scale of development allowed. It has been found sound to allow more flexibility in rural areas in other rural Suffolk Authorities.

**Appendix**



## **East Suffolk Council Local Plan**



**EASTSUFFOLK**  
COUNCIL

# Suffolk Coastal **LOCAL PLAN**

Covering the former Suffolk Coastal District area  
Adopted 23 September 2020



## Housing in Clusters in the Countryside

- 5.21 Clusters can vary in size, and can include those settlements in the countryside which do not have the range or amount of facilities to be classed as a Major Centre, Town, Large Village or Small Village. The geography of the former Suffolk Coastal District is such that there are many small, dispersed communities and clusters of houses outside of the Towns, Large Villages and Small Villages. Whilst they do not have the level of services and facilities to support larger scale new housing development, some locations where there are existing clusters of five or more dwellings may be suitable for a small amount of development. Such an approach will help to meet local housing needs by enabling people to stay within their communities, reflecting the aims of the Council's Housing Strategy as well as helping to sustain rural communities and the services within them. The policy therefore would support up to three new dwellings in clusters of at least five existing dwellings, or up to five new dwellings in clusters of at least ten existing dwellings which are well related to services and facilities.
- 5.22 The policy does not intend to support development which would have an adverse impact upon the natural or historic environment or the landscape, but that can integrate with an existing cluster of houses, and the scale and design of schemes will be expected to not cause harm to the character of the cluster or the surrounding landscape.
- 5.23 Alongside seeking to maintain and enhance the vitality of rural areas there is a need to protect sensitive environments and landscapes and to seek to minimise the need to travel and reliance on the private car as far as is possible. The National Planning Policy Framework states that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities, whilst also seeking to avoid isolated dwellings in the countryside except in special circumstances. The National Planning Policy Framework also states that in preparing Local Plans, local planning authorities should support a pattern of development which, where reasonable to do so, facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport.
- 5.24 Whilst it is acknowledged that within these more rural locations, there is likely to be dependency on the private car for transport, it is considered appropriate to recognise that this may be reduced in some locations which are closer to settlements with services and facilities. Therefore, in locations which are more accessible to services and facilities up to five dwellings would be supported. Consideration will be given to proximity to a Major Centre, Town, Large Village or Small Village and the accessibility to that location, for example through the existence of a continuous footpath.
- 5.25 A 'close group' of dwellings adjacent to an existing highway, is one where the dwellings are considered to be adjacent to each other, and not separated by extensive open areas. There may, for example, be garden space or other buildings between dwellings however separation by fields or open land would not constitute a close group. Criterion (c) in Policy SCLP5.4 sets out policy regarding the characteristics of the location of sites in relation to surrounding development. In considering whether a proposal would be acceptable under criterion (c), adjacent development on two sides can include circumstances where the site is separated from existing development by the highway. The adjacent development on two sides must extend along the entirety of the proposed site.
- 5.26 For development of four or five dwellings the Council would require applicants to demonstrate that meaningful and effective engagement has taken place with the community, including with the Parish Council, and that the submitted scheme addresses any planning issues raised and reflects needs identified

by the community. Applicants should submit a statement describing the consultation and engagement undertaken, the outcomes of the consultation and engagement and how this is reflected in the proposal.

- 5.27 In contributing to the provision of a mix of dwelling types across the plan area, proposals that are suitable under this policy may provide opportunities for custom and self build dwellings.
- 5.28 As the policy is intended to support limited new development in clusters, it is important that consideration is given to cumulative impacts. In this respect, consideration will be given to whether there is an extant permission or completed development permitted under this policy, and the cumulative impact on the character.



## Policy SCLP5.4: Housing in Clusters in the Countryside

Proposals for new dwellings within 'clusters' in the countryside will be supported where:

- a) The proposal is for up to three dwellings within a cluster of five or more dwellings;

Or

The proposal is for up to five dwellings within a cluster of at least ten existing dwellings which is well related to a Major Centre, Town, Large Village or Small Village;

And

- b) The development consists of infilling within a continuous built up frontage, is in a clearly identifiable gap within an existing cluster, or is otherwise located adjacent to existing development on two sides;
- c) The development does not represent an extension of the built up area into the surrounding countryside beyond the existing extent of the built up area surrounding, or adjacent to, the site; and
- d) It would not cause undue harm to the character and appearance of the cluster or, result in any harmful visual intrusion into the surrounding landscape.

Where more than three dwellings are proposed under criterion b) above, applicants must be able to demonstrate that meaningful and effective community engagement has taken place in the development of the scheme and that the mix of dwellings proposed would meet locally identified needs.

Particular care will be exercised in sensitive locations such as within or in the setting of Conservation Areas and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Consideration will also need to be given to the features of Landscape Character Areas in accordance with Policy SCLP10.4.

The cumulative impact of proposals will be a consideration in relation to the criteria above.

A 'cluster' in the context of this policy:

- Consists of a continuous line of existing dwellings or a close group of existing dwellings adjacent to an existing highway; and
- Contains 5 or more dwellings.

## Conversion of Rural Buildings in the Countryside for Housing

- 5.29 Rural buildings outside of settlements should ideally be used for the purposes for which they were constructed; however there are instances where commercial uses are no longer viable and a residential use may be appropriate. The National Planning Policy Framework supports the re-use of redundant or disused buildings in the countryside for residential purposes where this would enhance the immediate setting. Permitted Development rights now also allow for some conversions of agricultural buildings to residential use.

**Waveney Local Plan**

# Waveney Local Plan

Post Waveney District Council cover to be agreed

[www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/new/waveney/localplan](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/new/waveney/localplan)





## Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside

- 8.37 Approximately 10% of new housing to be delivered in the rural areas of the District is to be located in settlements within the Countryside. Small scale developments can support communities by delivering housing types and sizes that are needed locally and provide opportunities for members of the existing community to live nearby and retain their social connections. The National Planning Policy Framework advises against isolated dwellings in the Countryside. However, there are occasions where small scale development could occur which could provide social and economic benefits to the Countryside, with limited impacts on the environment or character of the area. Policy WLP8.7 therefore is intended to provide a limited amount of housing in the Countryside. However, it is not intended to enable development that will adversely affect the intrinsic character of a settlement or the surrounding landscape.
- 8.38 Policy WLP8.7 allows for small scale development of up to three homes within clearly identifiable small gaps in a built up frontage, on land which is surrounded by residential development (including its curtilage) on two sides (including the opposite side of the highway). This approach allows for development which does not encroach further into the countryside and is enclosed by surrounding residential dwellings, therefore limiting the effect on the landscape and character of the area.
- 8.39 The strategy set out in Policy WLP7.1 allows for small sites for housing to be developed in other rural settlements in the Countryside through Neighbourhood Plans or Neighbourhood Development Orders. For some small Parish Councils or Parish Meetings, Neighbourhood Plans or Development Orders may not be a feasible option due to lack of resources. Therefore, Policy WLP8.7 also allows for small scale development of up to five homes on the edge of these settlements where there is demonstrable public support.
- 8.40 In assessing whether there is demonstrable public support, planning applications should be supported by evidence of pre-application consultation which shows that there is genuine support from the local community and the Parish Council or Parish Meeting. Any relevant concerns raised by the community or the Parish Council or Parish Meeting should be addressed by the developer. If during the consultation stage of the planning application, planning objections are raised by the community, the application should be amended to address any relevant concerns. If all planning concerns raised by the community and the Parish Council or Parish Meeting have not been addressed the application will not be supported. To ensure the overall strategy for the District and the rural areas is met, the Council will not support development which cumulatively, when considered against other developments within the Countryside, would undermine the overall distribution of development set out in Policies WLP1.1 and WLP7.1.
- 8.41 Sites suitable for small scale development provide opportunities for custom and self build dwellings. Where these are of good design and in keeping with the surrounding properties and character of the area they will be supported.
- 8.42 The design of all small scale developments in the Countryside will need to respect and respond to the local context and character of the area as detailed in Design Policy WLP8.29. Proposals should take into consideration the impact on the character and setting of the existing settlement and the landscape in line with Policy WLP8.35.



## Policy WLP8.7 – Small Scale Residential Development in the Countryside

Small scale residential development in the Countryside of up to three dwellings will be permitted where:

- The site constitutes a clearly identifiable gap within a built up area of a settlement within the Countryside;
- There are existing residential properties on two sides of the site; and
- The development does not extend further into the undeveloped Countryside than the existing extent of the built up area surrounding the site.

Small scale residential development in the Countryside of up to and including five dwellings will also be permitted where:

- There is clear and demonstrable local support;
- The scheme demonstrates meaningful and robust consultation with the Parish Council, local community and other stakeholders;
- Following consultation, it can be demonstrated that any planning impacts identified by the local community have been fully addressed and therefore the scheme is supported by the community;
- The site is adjacent or within the built up area of the settlement within the Countryside; and
- The scheme when considered cumulatively with other developments in the Countryside would not result in a level of development which would be contrary to the strategy outlined in Policies WLP1.1 and WLP7.1.

For all small scale development in the Countryside the design of the scheme will need to respect and reflect the character of the settlement and existing built up frontage including:

- Housing density is reflective of the density in the village and surrounding built up area; and
- The ratio of the building footprint to the plot area is consistent with existing properties nearby which characterise the village.