



Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan 2026 Revision

Feed-back from the Household Survey – June 2026

Introduction

As part of gathering evidence to draw up a Revised Neighbourhood Plan a questionnaire was distributed to all households. These were distributed by hand by on 23rd March 2026, to be completed by 13th April and were supported by two drop-in events on Sunday 29th March and Wednesday 1st April. All 1,147 properties in the village received a paper copy and were given the option of completing the questionnaire on line. In total 620 questionnaires were completed. Some households may have completed more than one. In addition, we have 90 properties in the village that are either second-homes or rental properties. Thus, we cannot come to an exact return rate, but can safely assume to have achieved a completion rate in excess of 50%.

The report on the results may be viewed on the Lavenham Parish Council website xx

Below is a synopsis of the comments made by Lavenham residents. These have been organised into clusters. As we explain below some areas of concern are outside the remit of any Neighbourhood Plan. This is largely due to the constraint of needing to comply with central and local government policies and plans.

1. Strong concern about overdevelopment

Typical summarised comment:

- “Lavenham is a small historic village and should not be significantly expanded; development should be minimal, carefully controlled, and preferably limited to brownfield or infill sites.”

Evidence:

- Repeated objections to large housing estates, especially on greenfield land.
- Calls to “leave Lavenham alone” or avoid turning it into a town.

2. Protect the historic character and setting

Typical summarised comment:

- “The village’s medieval character and heritage are its greatest assets and must be protected; new development should be in keeping with existing style.”

Evidence:

- Emphasis on Lavenham as a “unique medieval village”.
- Concern that modern building styles or expansion will erode character.

3. Infrastructure cannot support more housing

Typical summarised comment:

- “Existing infrastructure (roads, schools, healthcare, drainage) is already under pressure and cannot support further development without major improvements.”

Evidence:

- Concerns about school capacity, flooding, roads, and services.
 - Statements that infrastructure “cannot support more” housing.
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4. Traffic, parking, and congestion are major issues

Typical summarised comment:

- “Traffic congestion, poor parking, and heavy vehicles are already serious problems and would worsen with additional housing.”

Evidence:

- Complaints about High Street congestion and pavement parking.
 - Calls for better parking management and traffic control.
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5. Desire for affordable housing for local/younger people

Typical summarised comment:

- “Some new housing is needed, particularly affordable homes for young people and local families, but not large-scale developments.”

Evidence:

- Concern village will become “retirement-only” without affordable housing.
 - Requests for smaller, 2–3 bed homes.
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6. Split opinion: need for housing vs opposition

Typical summarised comment:

- “While many oppose new housing, some residents accept or support limited development, especially if it meets local needs and includes infrastructure.”

Evidence:

- Some comments explicitly say “we do need housing”.
 - Others strongly oppose any expansion .
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7. Need for better facilities (especially leisure & wellbeing)

Typical summarised comment:

- “The village lacks leisure, fitness, and wellbeing facilities (e.g., gym, swimming pool, wellness centre), especially for working-age residents.”

Evidence:

- Repeated calls for gym, pool, or leisure centre.
 - Complaints about having to travel to Sudbury.
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8. Lack of focus on working-age population

Typical summarised comment:

- “The survey and planning focus too much on retirees and children, neglecting the needs of working-age residents.”

Evidence:

- Explicit frustration from people in their 30s–50s .
 - Comments that this group “keeps the village running.”
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9. Need for jobs and local businesses

Typical summarised comment:

- “There are insufficient employment opportunities; more support for local businesses and job creation is needed.”

Evidence:

- Statements that lack of jobs drives people away.
- Suggestions for business growth or small industrial space.

10. Environmental and countryside protection

Typical summarised comment:

- “Open countryside, wildlife, and green spaces are vital and should not be lost to development.”

Evidence:

- Strong objections to building on fields and green spaces.
- Emphasis on walks, wildlife, and views.

11. Tourism is important but adds pressure

Typical summarised comment:

- “Tourism is vital to the local economy but increases traffic and pressure on infrastructure.”

Evidence:

- Tourism described as “lifeblood”.
- Concerns about congestion during busy periods.

12. Dissatisfaction with Parish Council / governance

Typical summarised comment:

- “There is a lack of trust in the Parish Council, with concerns about transparency, decision-making, and responsiveness.”

Evidence:

- Direct criticism of Parish Council actions and decisions.
- Calls for better engagement and leadership.

13. Survey design criticised

Typical summarised comment:

- “The survey is too simplistic, outdated, or poorly structured, and does not allow residents to express nuanced views.”

Evidence:

- Complaints about “tick-box” format.
- Concerns it ignores key issues like heritage, business, and wellbeing.

14. Desire for better maintenance and basic services

Typical summarised comment:

- “Roads, pavements, signage, lighting, and cleanliness need improvement.”

Evidence:

- Complaints about potholes, signage, and maintenance.

15. Community, cohesion, and volunteering

Typical summarised comment:

- “There is a need to strengthen community life, volunteering, and communication within the village.”

Evidence:

- Calls for better coordination and central information hub.
 - Concern about declining community cohesion.
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In summary

Residents value Lavenham's historic character and rural setting and are deeply concerned that overdevelopment, traffic, and inadequate infrastructure will damage it; while some support limited, well-planned housing (especially for younger people), there is strong demand for better facilities, local jobs, and more responsive governance.

Constraints

The survey document and Newsletters sought to set-out the need, scope and parameters of any Neighbourhood Plan and the drop-in events gave the opportunity for residents to learn more.

Some Lavenham residents for many of the reasons highlighted above reflect on our heritage, an inadequate infrastructure and would much prefer that the target set by Babergh be significantly reduced. Responses emphasise the lack of provision of schooling, traffic management, road maintenance, car parks and on-street parking, street lighting cleaning etc services provided by the county the district and the parish. All need to be addressed, but many fall outside the Neighbourhood Plan process.

Neighbourhood Plans as defined by central government are concerned with land usage and housing and we are constrained by these rules and regulations. Without a Neighbourhood Plan we would have very little influence as to the future development of our village.

Central government policy is to build more houses across the country. District Councils, like Babergh, must set housing targets within that scheme. Babergh has been instructed that it must significantly increase its target for building houses over the next twenty years. In the case of Lavenham our quota is provisionally 367 new homes during the next two decades.

What we can do through the Neighbourhood Plan is to influence the decision-making process. We can emphasise the concerns expressed and help determine what kinds of houses are built, for whom and where.

Moreover, a housing target and policy that does not take into account local priorities for new homes could undermine the uniqueness of our village and its main source of employment, tourism.

Drop-in events to discuss the way forward have therefore been booked for xx in the Guildhall from 4:30 until 7 pm and in the village hall on between 10:30 and 1 o'clock.

Michael Sherman and Alison Bourne,
Chair and Vice-Chair Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan Revision Group