LAVENHAM PARISH COUNCIL:

Agenda Item 10 **Report to Council: 5th November 2026**

Report concerning changes in the NPPF: The National Planning Policy Framework and the revised JLP timetable.

On 20th October 2026 the Clerk and the Chair on behalf of the Parish Council attended the Babergh Town and Parish Council Liaison Meeting.

Item 10 Appendix is the presentation made by Babergh Officers previously distributed to all Councillors.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published on 17 August 2026

- Replaces the December 2024 NPPF and took effect immediately.
- There are now separate national policies for:
  - **making plans**, including Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans;
  - **making decisions** on planning applications.
- The Government's aim is a clearer, more consistent and genuinely plan-led planning system.

What has changed?

The new NPPF changes the relationship between national and local planning policy

- National policy now plays a greater role in determining planning applications;
- Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans remain important, but they need to work within the new national framework;
- Local policies should not duplicate or conflict with national decision-making policies;
- Where an existing local policy is inconsistent with new national policy, the national policy may carry greater weight;
- There is an increased emphasis on planning positively for housing and other development.

What stays the same?

Our Development Plan remains in place

The Development Plan for Babergh and Mid Suffolk currently includes:

- Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Part 1 (November 2023)
- Saved policies from older Local Plan documents
- Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan (July 2020)
- Adopted (made) Neighbourhood Plans

These documents remain the starting point for planning decisions. However, they now need to be considered alongside the new national planning policies.

What is a settlement?

The new NPPF introduces a national definition of a settlement

A settlement can include:

- towns and villages;
- other predominantly built-up areas;
- land allocated for development; and
- land with planning permission which will become part of the built-up area once developed.

Hamlets and scattered groups of houses outside predominantly built-up areas are not generally considered settlements.

What does this mean locally?

- Existing settlement boundaries remain relevant.
- Some of these boundaries are based on older Local Plans and have not been reviewed for many years.
- Settlement boundaries and the settlement hierarchy will be reviewed through the new Joint Local Plan.

Development in & outside settlements

The new NPPF takes a different approach depending on where development is proposed

Within settlements

There is a strong presumption in favour of sustainable development.

- Development should generally be supported unless its benefits are substantially outweighed by adverse effects.
- Other relevant national and local planning policies will still apply.

Outside settlements

Development may be supported in certain circumstances, including:

- rural businesses and services;
- redevelopment of previously developed land;
- limited infill within groups of houses; and
- development that meets an identified unmet need, where it is well-related to a settlement and can be supported by infrastructure.

What does this mean for Neighbourhood Plans?

Neighbourhood Plans remain an important part of the planning system

They can continue to:

- address local priorities;
- identify land for development;
- plan for infrastructure and community facilities;
- influence design and placemaking;
- support environmental improvements; and
- protect and enhance local heritage.

Under the new NPPF, Neighbourhood Plans are expected to plan positively for housing development.

They should not duplicate or conflict with national decision-making policies and cannot provide for less development than required by the wider Development Plan.

Neighbourhood Plans & Housing

The new NPPF strengthens the link between Neighbourhood Plans and housing delivery

- Neighbourhood Plans should allocate land for development where appropriate.
- They cannot reduce the amount of development required by the wider Development Plan.
- Communities will need to take account of their identified housing requirement, which is currently that set out in indicative numbers shared in March 2025.
- Neighbourhood Plans which allocate sufficient land to meet their housing requirement can receive stronger protection in planning decisions.
- Plans which do not make sufficient provision may face difficulties at examination and may carry less weight in decision-making.

What happens next?

We will work with communities as the new Joint Local Plan develops, including further discussion about indicative housing requirements.

What can we still decide locally?

National policy sets the framework – but important decisions will still be made locally

Through the Joint Local Plan, Babergh and Mid Suffolk will still need to make choices about:

- the vision for the future of our districts;
- the overall spatial strategy;
- the settlement hierarchy and settlement boundaries;
- where new homes and other development should be located;
- which sites should be allocated for development;
- infrastructure needed to support growth;
- affordable housing and developer contributions; and
- locally specific policies and standards where these are justified.

Communities will continue to have opportunities to help shape these choices as the Local Plan develops.

JLP - where are we now?

Work on the new Joint Local Plan is underway

Completed

- Call for Sites and early evidence gathering
- Sustainability Appraisal Scoping
- Joint Local Plan Scoping Consultation – June to July 2026
- Feedback received from residents, communities, businesses and other stakeholders

Now

- Reviewing feedback from the Scoping Consultation
- Developing and updating the evidence base
- Considering the implications of the new NPPF
- Developing the vision, objectives, spatial strategy and scope of local policies
- Preparing for the next stage of consultation

Where are we now?

Work on the new Joint Local Plan is already underway

Next Steps

21 October 2026 – Gateway 1

- Publication of a summary document to formally commence the 30-month plan-making process and publication of an updated Local Plan Timetable to reflect the alignment with other Local Plans being prepared in Suffolk

June-July 2027 – consultation on proposed Local Plan content and evidence

What happens next – and how can you be involved?

There will be further opportunities to help shape the new Joint Local Plan

- **Winter/Spring 2026/27**
  Further development of the Plan and evidence
- **June-July 2027**
  Consultation on proposed Local Plan content and evidence, including the emerging **vision, objectives, spatial strategy, scope of local policies**
- **February–March 2028**
  Consultation on the proposed Joint Local Plan
- **September 2028–March 2029**
  Independent examination
- **April 2029**
  Planned adoption of the new Joint Local Plan