

PAUL CLOVER/MARGARET MAYBURY DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT
FOR LAVENHAM PARISH MEETING 9th JANUARY 2025.

National Planning Policy Framework – Joint Local Plan review

In December, the Government announced its review of the National Planning Policy Framework, designed to meet its target of 1.5million new homes being built in this parliament and the new housing requirements for every district and borough council.

Part One of Babergh's Joint Local Plan was adopted in November 2023. It contained annual housing requirements based on the Government's previous housing formula. These figures are 416 new homes each year in Babergh.

Since then, work has proceeded on Part Two of the plan, which was set to make housing allocations, and address other matters include open space designations and Gypsy and Traveller provision.

These increased the figure in Babergh to 775 homes a year (up 86%).

To ensure housing figures can be met, councils must demonstrate there is a 'housing land supply' for the next five years. This is assessed every year, and the figures published in our Annual Monitoring Report.

If the council can't demonstrate a five-year land supply, there is a risk that national planning policies would start to take priority over the Joint Local Plan - and the councils may find themselves in a position where they are required to approve planning applications on sites contrary to the development plan.

Following advice from the Planning Inspectorate, there is to be a formal review of the Joint Local Plan, building on the work that has already taken place. A revised Local Development Scheme will be brought forward to the council in February.

In the meantime, Part One of Babergh's JLP remains very much in place and will continue to carry statutory weight when planning decisions are made in our districts, alongside Neighbourhood Plans and national policy.

Babergh	Housing requirement	Housing completions
2023/24	416	604
2022/23	420	624
2021/22	417	758
2020/21	403	402
2019/20	416	293

Council Tax Increase 2.99%

Babergh District Council's Cabinet is set to consider a 2.99% increase to the district's share of council tax bills - as councillors warn of a £10.9 million budget gap. Joint Council Mid Suffolk have stated they are not looking to increase Council Tax bills.

New Parking Charges

New parking charges are coming in for Lavenham, Sudbury and Hadleigh from 13th January and we await to see what impact this will have on local economies and residents. Both Lavenham Car Parks have been classified as 'Long Stay'. New charges as follows:

	Short stay	Long stay
Up to 1 hour	£1.00	n/a
Up to 2 hours	£1.50	£1.00
Up to 3 hours	£2.00	£1.50
Up to 4 hours	£2.50	£2.00
All day	n/a	£2.50

Home Energy efficiency assessment voucher scheme

The Suffolk Retrofit Assessment Voucher scheme is now live. Residents who own a home with an EPC band of below C can take up the offer of a voucher to claim an assessment from a qualified retrofit assessor. Property's Energy Certificates and EPC bands can be checked via the GOVUK website and applications can be made via the Suffolk Energy Efficiency Assessment website.

Devolution/Unitary Council update

Babergh and Mid Suffolk have expressed support for being part of the Devolution Priority programme to ensure that there is an East Anglian Mayoral voice. Our concern is that the rights of local residents' opinions to be heard and responded to should not be reduced in any way. Therefore, the local County Council elections in May should continue in order to preserve local democracy.

Suffolk County Council is meeting today to decide whether to be part of the priority programme. If they go ahead with the application, we should know about this and whether the May County Council elections will continue as planned, by the end of January.

The White paper also states the Govt. intention to replace two tier arrangements (District/County Council) with Unitary Councils. The Govt. intends to introduce Unitary Councils in two phases. The first being in April 2027 and the remainder in April 2028

Wishing you all a Happy New Year.