

Our Joint Local Plan review

Part One of our Joint Local Plan was adopted in November 2023. Following the Government's new National Planning Policy Framework announcement in December 2024, we will be reviewing this. These questions explain the background and what happens next.

What is happening with Babergh and Mid Suffolk's Joint Local Plan?

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils formally adopted Part One of their Joint Local Plan – the blueprint for the districts' future development until 2037 – in November 2023.

This important document provides clarity for communities and developers about how the districts should develop.

A Local Plan is prepared by a local planning authority and includes policies to tackle key social, economic and environmental issues – providing a framework to guide future planning decisions, alongside national policy and Neighbourhood Plans.

When the plan was adopted, it set out annual housing requirements based on the Government's housing formula.

These figures were 416 new homes each year in Babergh, and 535 in Mid Suffolk.

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

Why is the Joint Local Plan now being reviewed?

In December 2024, the Government announced new housing requirements for every district and borough council in the country.

These increased the figure in Babergh to 775 homes a year (up 86%), and in Mid Suffolk up to 734 (up 37%).

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.

Using the figures in our Joint Local Plan, we have in excess of this.

But the new requirements will make this more challenging in future years and we cannot be confident that past oversupply of planning permissions will count towards future land supply calculations.

If we cannot 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.

The Councils are therefore acting promptly to respond to the governments new policy and to give our communities confidence that we want our decision making to be plan-led and delivering what government expects of us.

Why have housing requirements been raised by the Government?

The Government has set a target to build 1.5million homes across the country in this parliament, and has changed the formula on which is bases every council's house-building target. Most councils have seen an increase.

Have the Councils taken advice before deciding to review the Joint Local Plan?

Advice was taken from the Planning Inspectorate in December 2024, following the announcement of new housing figures.

How many homes have been built in recent years?

We publish an Annual Monitoring Report on our website containing yearly figures and our ability to meet housing targets. The figures for the last five years are:

Year	Mid Suffolk		Babergh	
	Housing requirement	Housing completions	Housing requirement	Housing completions
2023/24	535	1,014	416	604
2022/23	534	1,234	420	624
2021/22	529	862	417	758
2020/21	513	672	403	402
2019/20	535	451	416	293

What happens next?

There will be a full review of the Joint Local Plan, building on the work that has already taken place.

We will bring forward a timetable setting out the next steps for the Joint Local Plan. This revised timetable - our Local Development Scheme - must be agreed by full council. We expect this to be discussed at a council meeting in February.

Is the evidence produced for the Joint Local Plan still relevant?

A huge amount of work has gone into both Parts One and Two of our plan, and we are extremely grateful to all partners and individuals who have taken the time to make valued contributions.

This preparatory work is not wasted and will be considered when the plan is reviewed. But it is unavoidable that we will have to gather further evidence and carry out additional engagement ahead of the formal review process.

Does this mean the existing Joint Local Plan is no longer valid?

Part One of our Joint Local Plan remains very much in place and valid. It will continue to carry statutory weight when planning decisions are made in our districts.

However, we will now set about gathering the evidence required ahead of reviewing our Joint Local Plan to take into account the higher housing requirements.

What does this mean for Neighbourhood Plans?

We continue to work closely with towns and parishes as they develop their Neighbourhood Plans to take account these changes to national policy. There is more information available on both [Babergh](#) and [Mid Suffolk](#) webpages.

How might the restructure of local government impact on the plan review?

The Government announced in December 2024 its intention to create new mayoral authorities covering the entire country, with responsibilities including strategic planning.

It also wants to create unitary councils to replace county, district and borough councils. Its intention is for these to be in place by the end of this parliament in 2028.

While we don't know what the outcome of this will be in Suffolk, we need to ensure we retain a plan-led approach to guiding development in our communities.