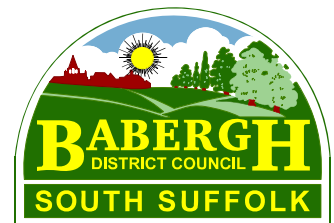


# Strategic Plan 2008-2018



## Introduction

Babergh is a great place to live and everyone wants to make sure it remains so. This document is a ten year strategic plan for the Council based on the results of a range of research and public consultation. It sets out a long term ambition for Babergh:

*A great environment in which to live, work and visit, where people have the opportunity to develop their potential and feel they belong to strong and vibrant communities*

The plan links into the themes and outcomes of the 20 year county wide Community Strategy and also to the work being carried out by the local strategic partnerships of Babergh East and West Suffolk. It sets the direction for the Council and the way we will work and will be supported by detailed medium term (three year) plans, focused on the priority themes. These will set out, in the first instance, what is to be achieved in the three-year lifetime of the Council's financial strategy and county-wide Local Area Agreement which runs until 2011.

The organisation of local government in Suffolk is about to be reviewed (2008/9). However, the issues facing Babergh and its people remain regardless of the results of that review.

This plan focuses on the issues facing the Babergh area, not just Babergh District Council, and highlights the key outcomes that need to be achieved to help address them. It does not concentrate solely on what Babergh District Council can do on its own but also how we can work with individuals, communities and partners to build the right legacy for this beautiful area and its people. It will be the framework upon which we develop that legacy together.

Cllr Nick Ridley  
Chair of Strategy Committee

Pat Rockall  
Chief Executive

April 2008

## The Babergh area

Babergh is a predominantly rural area in south Suffolk covering some 240 square miles. It has two main centres of population, the market towns of Hadleigh and Sudbury, but over half its 76 parishes have less than 1000 residents.

The 2005 mid census estimates shows Babergh's population as 86,100<sup>1</sup> with about 20,000 people living in Sudbury and its neighbouring parish of Great Cornard and over 8,000 living in Hadleigh. 2.7% of the population are estimated to be from black and ethnic minority communities. There is a higher proportion of older people within the population than the UK average (14% over 70 compared with 11.5% nationally) and a lower proportion of people in their twenties<sup>2</sup>.

Babergh has a small local economy, with much of the workforce commuting outside the district. Many local jobs are less skilled and lower waged and gross earnings are below the average for the county. House prices are high compared with wages and affordable homes are an important issue.

Babergh's geographical position means it is subject to a number of regional pressures and opportunities. These include the potential effects of growth areas around Cambridge and the Stansted corridor, port expansions on the east coast and the development of Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and other towns as designated centres for development. Pressures on housing, transport and other infrastructure are likely to increase.

Babergh's countryside includes parts of Constable Country, the Stour Valley and some highly attractive river valleys. It has two designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and thousands of listed buildings providing a rich architectural heritage particularly in historic villages such as Lavenham, Long Melford and Kersey.

The need to balance development opportunities and protection of the natural environment is a key issue for the area.

# Babergh District Council

Babergh District Council was formed in 1974 from the amalgamation of five former local councils. It has 43 Councillors and since its formation no one party has held overall control. It does not have a Cabinet but operates a Committee system with key issues being decided by all members of the Council. Its governance has been built on effective co-operation between its councillors, both those belonging to political parties and those operating as Independents.

The Council employs the equivalent of 288 full time staff (2008/09 budget papers). It provides a range of district council services either directly, through contractors and in partnership with other councils, the private sector and the third sector. Its Council Tax has consistently been one of the lowest in Suffolk.

In 2004 the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment rated the Council as 'Good' and has received three 'Beacon' awards from Central Government in recognition of innovative work. The Beacons were awarded to the Council for: neighbourhood renewal and working in partnership with community groups, its 'Supporting People' services and its 'Be Active' scheme, which aims to improve opportunities for participation in leisure activities for disadvantaged people. The Council also received a national award along with Mid Suffolk District Council for the joint procurement of refuse collection services.

## The Council's Role

The Council's role is to:

- Work with the people of Babergh and partner organisations to maintain a shared vision for the future of the area.
- Help to deliver this shared vision through;
  - Responsible community leadership and the effective use of its influence
  - Supporting the appropriate social, economic and environmental conditions needed for delivery
  - Encouraging the development of, and contributing effectively to, partnerships
  - Providing, procuring and supporting efficient, flexible, accessible public services of good quality
- Make decisions that fairly reflect and balance the differing needs of individuals and communities in the area.

## Council pledges

We will:

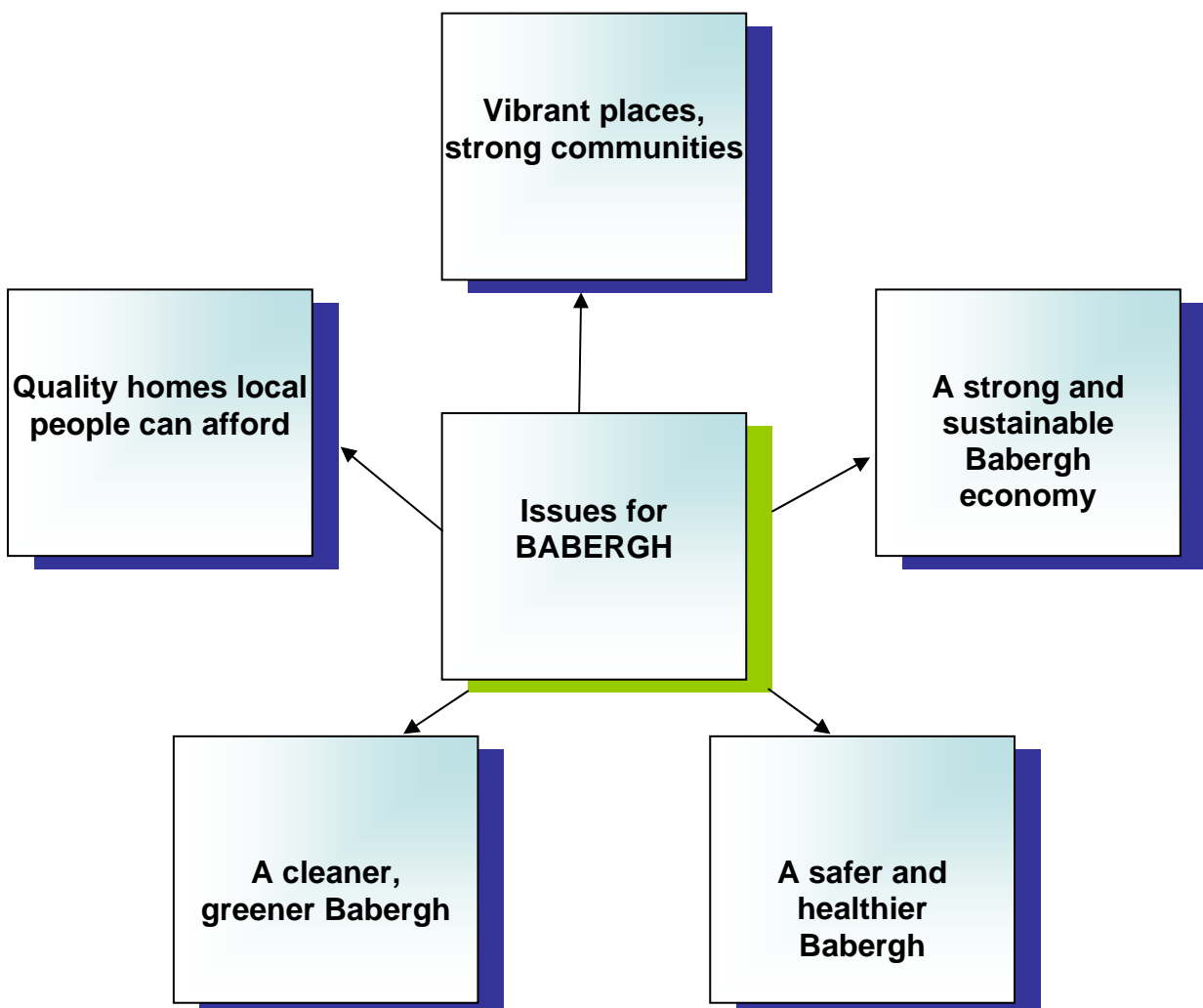
- Listen to and seek the views of individuals and communities and recognise their differing needs.
- Consider these needs in the formulation of our policies and the way we plan and deliver services.
- Treat everyone with fairness, dignity and respect.
- Make our decisions openly and be accountable for them.
- Deal responsibly with the public money and resources entrusted to the Council in order to fulfill its role.

## Babergh: the issues for the next ten years

This section sets out many of the issues facing Babergh over the next ten years. The organisation of local government in Suffolk is about to be reviewed (2008/09). However, the issues facing the Babergh area will remain regardless of the results of this review. This assessment is based on a wide range of research and consultation, some of which has been carried out directly by the Council and others by or on behalf of partner organisations and regional and national bodies.

Central to the assessment have been the views of local people and partners gathered by a variety of consultation methods over 2006 and 2007. These have included surveys of residents and service user opinions, focus groups with residents and specific groups such as young people and migrant workers and the views expressed by partners and stakeholders at the annual State of the District event. Links have also been made with the Suffolk Community Strategy and the work of the Local Strategic Partnerships of West Suffolk and Babergh East.

From this we have drawn up a picture of people's current concerns and their views on the future and set these alongside various pieces of statistical and predictive research to assess the particular risks and opportunities that face Babergh. A number of clear themes have emerged:



# What do we want to achieve by 2018?

## Quality homes local people can afford

Babergh has a large proportion of detached, and hence more expensive houses and prices are amongst the highest in Suffolk. Whilst unemployment is low many jobs are relatively low paid and this allied to the high cost of housing, meant that it cost nine times the average income to buy a house in Babergh in April 2008. As such buying a house in the district is beyond the means of many local people and having enough affordable homes to buy or rent is a key issue for Babergh<sup>3</sup>.

Further concerns are that new housing and other developments are supported by adequate infrastructure ranging from traffic management to flood protection.

By 2018 the outcomes we are aiming for are:

- There are enough good quality homes, which meet high environmental and sustainability standards to meet the needs of the people of Babergh.
- There are enough affordable homes to meet the needs of the people of Babergh.
- New housing developments are supported by adequate infrastructure improvements
- Fewer people are homeless.

## A greener and cleaner Babergh

Many people are concerned about the effects of climate change and in addition to the individual actions they can take are looking for clear community leadership on the issue. Transportation is a key issue, both in terms of contribution to climate change and the risk of isolation for people if they do not have private transport.

The people of Babergh recognise the area is a great place to live (in 2006 over 88% of residents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live)<sup>4</sup>. The countryside and the many historic buildings and villages play a key role in peoples' appreciation of the area. They want the area to remain beautiful and kept clean and free from environmental vandalism such as fly tipping.

However, people also recognise the need to effectively balance the quality of the environment with sustainable growth. For example, there is a need to ensure our market towns remain vibrant and that people have affordable homes to live in.

In common with many other areas of the country there is a need to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill as space rapidly runs out in Suffolk and other parts of the region. Traffic congestion and air pollution due to traffic is also an issue in some parts of the district.

By 2018 the outcomes we are aiming for are:

- The right balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting development opportunities for the area and its people.
- A smaller carbon footprint for the area.
- Babergh's environment is clean, with little environmental vandalism such as fly tipping and is recognised as such by residents.
- Less waste sent to landfill.
- Better traffic management, air quality, improved road infrastructure and more effective public transport.

## **A safer and healthier Babergh**

Babergh is one of the safest places to live in England (ranked 343 out of 376 areas)<sup>5</sup>. However, crime and disorder is still an important issue for many local people and fear of crime is disproportionate to the levels of crime in the area<sup>6</sup>. Local people are concerned about certain aspects of crime and anti social behaviour particularly associated with alcohol.

Access to health services is seen as important in Babergh with particular emphasis on services such as dentistry and mental health. While life expectancy<sup>7</sup> is generally high across the district (one to two years higher than the average for England) it is significantly lower (four to five years for men and three to four years for women) in some of the more income deprived parts of the area. Teenage pregnancy rates across the district are generally low (well below the average for England) but there are several wards where the rates are 50% -100% higher than the England average<sup>8</sup>.

One specific area of concern is that compared with its population there are a high number of people killed or seriously injured on Babergh's roads (28% higher than the average for England)<sup>9</sup>.

By 2018 the outcomes we are aiming for are:

- People living, working and visiting Babergh are safer and feel safer from crime and its effects.
- A more active population with healthier lifestyles
- Improved health and life expectancy for residents, particularly in the most income deprived areas, with reduced levels of cancer, coronary heart disease and obesity.
- Improved access to all aspects of public healthcare services to better meet the needs of individuals and communities.
- Reduced levels of teenage pregnancies where they currently exceed the national average.
- It is safer to travel on Babergh's roads.
- The area is ready to respond effectively to emergency situations arising from environmental or other causes.

## **A strong and sustainable Babergh economy.**

Babergh has a small local economy less than half the size of the average for Britain<sup>10</sup>. Unemployment is low, generally between 1 and 2%, but many of the jobs in Babergh are less skilled and low waged. The average gross earnings are slightly below the Suffolk average (£7 per week less in 2007) and well below the national average (£75 a week less)<sup>11</sup>.

70% of workers are employed in the service sector<sup>12</sup>, 25% in manufacturing and construction and 5% in agriculture. There are relatively high levels of small businesses, in 2005 about 12% of the working population were self employed<sup>13</sup>.

There are gaps in the skills and education base. Whilst Babergh performs better than the GB average up to and including GCSE level (NVQ2) it performs lower at A level (NVQ3) and above. In 2005, 22.3% Babergh's working population were qualified to NVQ4 and above (degree equivalent) compared with 26.5% nationally. There are parts of the district with high levels (35% to 40%) of working age people with no qualifications (England average 29%)<sup>14</sup>.

Many young adults move out of the area seeking higher education, higher paid employment and, sometimes, housing opportunities. Babergh has 8.6% of its population in their twenties compared with 13% nationally. The continued loss of young people from the area could lead to skills shortages in the future and affect the local economy<sup>2</sup>.

By 2018 the outcomes we are aiming for are:

- Babergh's economy has grown sustainably, with more small and medium sized enterprises situated here.
- More skilled and higher paid jobs in the Babergh area with a higher proportion being taken up by Babergh residents
- Increased local educational opportunities and improved attainment and skill levels among Babergh's children, young people and working population - particularly in the more income deprived areas.
- Improved infrastructure in our market towns to increase vitality and viability

### **Vibrant places and strong communities**

Babergh residents feel that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together (84% agreed in 2006)<sup>4</sup>.

The district is sparsely populated and the very rurality of some areas can lead to people becoming isolated from services and opportunities, particularly those without private transport. Some areas of eastern Babergh are ranked in the worst 10% in the country for access to housing and other services. Local facilities such as shops and post offices are under threat in a number of areas and villages are under pressure to maintain their viability<sup>15</sup>.

Babergh does not have any areas in the most income deprived 25% in the country<sup>15</sup> and there are many relatively prosperous communities enjoying a high quality environment. However, some areas of the district have much lower levels of income than the rest, this tends to coincide with lower levels of educational qualifications, lower life expectancy and higher rates of teenage pregnancy.

Babergh's population has an older age profile than the UK average, in 2005 about 26% people were over 60 compared with 21.1% nationally<sup>2</sup>. The proportion of older people is projected to increase further (by over 70% between 2004 and 2029)<sup>16</sup>. This is of particular significance when assessing the potential implications of greater numbers of older people in respect of jobs, housing, leisure, health and social care.

The proportion of children and people aged under 20 is about the same as the UK average<sup>2</sup>. Residents see facilities and activities for children and young people as being very important<sup>4</sup>.

The proportion of the population from black and ethnic minority communities is low but recent years have seen increased numbers of migrant workers particularly from eastern Europe<sup>1</sup>.

By 2018 the outcomes we are aiming for are:

- A reduction in the impact of rural isolation on parts of the district particularly limited access to affordable housing, transport and jobs.
- Active local villages and communities
- Increased take up of developmental opportunities and activities by children and young people particularly from isolated or income deprived areas
- People have effective and convenient access to the public services they need by physical, telecommunications or other electronic means.
- Public services appropriately reflect the needs, aspirations and choices of individuals from different groups, such as older people, in their design, resourcing and delivery.
- Individuals have a sense of belonging within cohesive communities where everyone is valued.
- Vulnerable people are supported to live in the community.
- More people are involved in local decision making and participate in democratic processes which appropriately reflect the diversity of local communities.

## **How we will work towards these goals**

### **Through our own policies and services**

The Council will be able to take action itself to help to achieve a number of these outcomes through its services and policies such as the Local Development Framework. We will ensure that public services provided by or procured by the Council are efficient, effective and of good quality.

### **Working with others**

Effective partnership working is key to making progress against many of the wider ranging outcomes. We will work with others to secure the provision of quality public services (by whatever route) that provide value for money and better meet people's needs.

We will work with our partners in the public, private and third sector to help to deliver our shared aims. These partners include the Suffolk Strategic Partnership (delivering the Suffolk Community Strategy), the Local Strategic Partnerships for Babergh East and West Suffolk, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and the Haven Gateway Partnership.

### **By listening to people**

We are committed to listening to local people and involving them in the achievement of these outcomes. We will draw up a three year consultation plan which sets out how we will do this. We will seek views on the medium term plans and the progress made in achieving them as well as investigating new issues which may be coming to the fore.

## **Monitoring progress**

We need to ensure that we are clear what progress is being made in achieving these outcomes. We will construct medium term plans, focused on the priority themes and setting out what is to be achieved, in the first instance, over a three year period. These plans will contain specific targets, actions and timescales against which progress can be monitored along with the resources allocated to their achievement.

We will report progress against the medium term plans to Councillors regularly. These will be public reports available on our website. We will look to include a summary of the progress made each year in the Council's Annual Report.

We will undertake an annual 'stock take' of the issues and outcomes in this Strategic Plan to check they are still current and will undertake a full review in the first year of a new Council or if there has been a substantial change in circumstances.

## **Managing risk**

We will identify those issues that may prevent us achieving our priorities and put plans in place to address them through our risk management strategy.

## **Effective Resource Management**

The Council's resources are limited and we will target them effectively to help achieve the outcomes highlighted in this plan. We will plan and manage the Council's finances in line with our financial strategy and ensure there is strong resource management throughout the organisation.

## **INDEX OF DATA SOURCES**

- 1 Office of National Statistics (ONS), Resident Population Estimates - 2005
- 2 ONS, Experimental Statistics, Resident Population Estimates – 2005
- 3 HM Land Registry and Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings – 2008
- 4 Best Value User Satisfaction Survey for Babergh – 2006/07
- 5 Home Office Ranking based on 2003/04 crime statistics
- 6 British Crime Survey 2007
- 7 ONS, Life Expectancy 2002-04 and 2004-06 and experimental statistics 1999-2003
- 8 ONS and Suffolk PCT 2007
- 9 NHS Babergh Health Profile 2007. APHO and DOH – 2007
- 10 ONS Annual Business Inquiry – 2003
- 11 ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings – 2007
- 12 ONS Annual Business Inquiry – 2006
- 13 Local knowledge/local futures – 2005
- 14 ONS Annual Labour Force Survey – 2006
- 15 CLG Indices of Multiple Deprivation – 2007
- 16 ONS Subnational Population Projects – 2007

Source of ONS material: [www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk)