

Babergh Development Framework: The new Plan for Babergh District 2011 – 2031

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: I have a piece of land that I want to develop but it is not included in the current (Local) Plan / not allowed for by current Local Plan policies, and I've been told that securing planning permission is unlikely. Can I have my land included (as an allocated site) in the new Plan please?

A: At this time, No; in future, Possibly. Further on, we will be willing to consider this (in principle), although cannot make any promises or offer any likelihood that your land will be included and allocated. Only when the current document stage (the Core Strategy) has been completed – and adopted can we get work started on a new document that will probably allocate new sites for development. Please remember that many other Babergh landowners are in a similar position, with land that they also wish to develop, and the choice of sites to take forward and allocate will, therefore, be very competitive.

This is likely to be several years down the line from now before this work gets seriously underway.

We aim to work up a programme for the production of this document in the near future, although the Council's staff integration with Mid Suffolk will make this task much more complex to do. Information will be posted on our website pages as soon as it is available; see www.babergh.gov.uk/babergh/ldf

Q2: I have an interest in land for development that is outside (or crossed by) a town / village development boundary. Can I apply to have the boundary changed to allow for this development?

A: As above, at this time, No. The current stage of work on new Plans is high level, non-site specific and is all about putting a new overall planning and growth strategy for the district in place for a 20-year period. It does not include any small-scale, localised or site-specific matters such as development boundaries and none of these are being considered at present.

Arrangements for any boundary reviews will be dealt with through a future site specific document. However, we will ensure that the process to respond to what we expect to be a very high volume of requests to change boundaries is both manageable and rational. Accordingly, we envisage devising a set of criteria by which to assess these in a fair and consistent way, using only limited staff resources. We would also start from a position that requires the demonstration of a clear, beneficial, and convincing justification to alter any current boundaries (this would generally not include reasons only to allow for a particular development).

Q3: I am thinking of buying a house and part of the reason for my choice is the open and attractive view that the property currently enjoys. Can I have any reassurances that this won't be altered or spoilt in future by new development?

A: No. Whilst we always aim to plan ahead with a long-term horizon and provide as much certainty as we can (for householders, land owners and developers alike) and you can always have an input by making comments on which sites are allocated for development, not all new development comes forward on sites that have been identified and allocated in advance through a Plan document. However, in such cases, you are still entitled to comment on any planning application for development that comes forward.

In addition, every development proposal has to be treated on its own particular merits. The granting or refusal of permission in one instance does not necessarily indicate how (what may appear to be) a similar case will be treated and the lapse of time may mean that circumstances have changed in-between (such as new policies being put in place). There is a need for consistency in approach and application of policy but the circumstances of any 2 development proposals are rarely (if ever) alike in practice.

Q4: I would like to have a look at the new Development Plans being produced for Babergh and see whether they may affect me or my interests in any way and I may wish to comment on them. How can I do that please?

A: For many people, the most convenient way is to use Babergh's website, since this can be done 24/7. See www.babergh.gov.uk/babergh/ldf for any new Plans currently under consideration or other forthcoming Plan documents. Paper copies to inspect within the building (that cannot be removed) are available to use at Babergh's HQ in Hadleigh. When on public consultation, the documents are also kept at all the libraries; including mobile library services serving the district (see the above web pages for full details. Or see this notice in respect of the current Core Strategy public consultation exercise: <http://www.babergh.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/4723559A-36AB-4263-A360-5AE5E0B7044B/0/Officialpublicationrepsnoticeregs2728v2.pdf>

Please note that the period for comments closes on Friday 2nd December and comments have to be made in writing.

Q5: If a site is identified and allocated in a new Plan document for Babergh is it then 'done and dusted' as far as planning considerations and decisions go?

A: Overall, No. The site's allocation in an adopted Plan document means that the principle of development is clearly established (and no longer up for debate – subject to some potential exceptions) and typically its form (e.g. housing), scale / other parameters and possibly some of its details. However, planning permission will still have to be obtained and planning application(s) to be made and determined in the usual ways.

Q6: What happens to the sites already identified and allocated in Babergh's current Local Plan (from 2006). Do these remain allocated or will the new Plans make them defunct?

A: The existing Plan is relatively new (at 5 years old) with a planned time horizon to 2016. Given these points it is likely that in most (possibly all) cases circumstances will not have changed sufficiently to require that those sites should no longer be allocated. Supportive evidence material is kept up-to-date and monitoring done routinely to ensure that we understand what is happening with regard to the district's future planning, growth and development needs. Put simply, businesses still need to operate and people still need to live in decent homes. We therefore have to maintain a continuous land supply for meeting development needs. This would be disrupted seriously, with certainty undermined completely, if allocated sites were to go through a fresh round of new Plan preparation (which inevitably involves years of work).

Q7: What about Localism and the Government's new National Planning Policy Framework? Don't these mean that a district's new Plan no longer matters or that there's no need or reason to produce one?

A: No, that is not what those new initiatives mean. Whilst wishing to reform the planning system, the government has made it clear not only that the UK planning system remains a Plan-led system, but also that this therefore relies upon all local planning authorities pulling out all the stops and pressing ahead with putting their own (locally responsive) new Plans in place as swiftly as possible. That is exactly what Babergh is working to achieve.

Q8: Will these new Plans mean new policies / requirements that will apply to smaller-scale, domestic or more detailed proposals and planning applications?

A: Yes. Although the Core Strategy will in the main, often not apply much to these. However, later Plan documents to follow, will provide a fuller coverage of new, up-to-date policies / guidance reflecting modern circumstances and the passage of time since last Plan was adopted back in 2006. These will include detailed sustainability considerations, for example. We will put these in place through new Plan documents as soon as possible.