

Parish Report – March 2025

Councillor Nicky Willshire
Rattlesden Ward

Email: Nicky.Willshire@Midsuffolk.gov.uk
Mobile: 07793610542

Devolution Update

Everyone will have differing views on the government's plans. The timetable is tight, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils would like to invite you to our next Town and Parish Liaison meetings to discuss updates related to devolution and local government reform. These meetings will be held virtually on Microsoft Teams on the following dates. Invites will follow shortly.

- Wednesday 5th March – 10am to 12pm
- Monday 10th March – 11am to 1pm

Attendance is only required at one of these meetings. If you, or your Chair, cannot make either meeting then these sessions will be recorded and available to circulate afterwards upon request.

If you have any queries, do not hesitate to get in touch at committees@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

Friday 21st March is the date by which any initial plans for local government reorganisation must be submitted to government. We have a council meeting on Wednesday 19th March where there will be an opportunity to debate the submission that will go in.

The County Council has come out in favour of creating a single unitary council for Suffolk. I can see why the County Council's administration would support this idea. As a Councillor I do not support it; and I know it is not supported by any of the district and borough leaders. This is a once in a generation opportunity to re-shape local government for Suffolk, so we need to get it right. My personal opinion is that we must strengthen the 'local' in 'local government', especially with a large Combined Authority and Mayor being created for the whole of Suffolk and Norfolk.

New unitary councils need to be the 'right' size to properly represent citizens, reflect local identities, and to most effectively deliver critical services, bespoke to the needs of local residents, businesses and communities.

I am sure that we can collectively agree to support our officers as they deliver the council's services during this extended period of uncertainty and then transition.

Planning Application Notifications

The Planning department are launching a consultation reviewing the way in which perspective planning permissions are communicated to the community in which they proposed. This would be for 'minor' planning applications (applications for planning for domestic changes and construction of less than 10 dwellings)

At present when a minor application is received the planning department

- Post a consultation letter to adjoining neighbours.
- Email a consultation letter to statutory consultees (including the Parish Council)
- Display a site notice.
- Place a statutory notice in the East Anglian Daily Times newspaper, where necessary (for example applications considered to be contrary to the local development plan, affecting a right of way, affecting the setting of or is a listed building)

Interested parties can also self-serve -

- Applications are published on our website (residents can register and then save searches for applications/their street/road, the parish. Email alerts are automatically sent when new applications are received or applications are updated/decided – based on their saved search)
- Applications are available to view electronically at Council Customer Access Points
- Applications are available for inspection through Town / Parish Councils (by agreement).

The Planning team are interested to know if posting of letters is still necessary. I have been assured that if it is (proven through the consultation) that this will remain in place.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk joint Development Scheme 2025-2029 (replacement of Joint Local Plan)

The Councils' Joint Local Plan Review will set the vision and objectives and the spatial development strategy for the districts. It will contain a set of planning policies to guide development to 2044, building on the planning policies set out in the adopted Joint Local Plan Part 1 Development Plan Document, and responding to national planning policy requirements.

The publication of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework in December 2024 introduced a revised standard method for calculating local housing need. This has resulted in the need to plan for 775 dwellings per annum in Babergh and 734 dwellings annum in Mid Suffolk. The current adopted housing requirement set in the Joint Local Plan Part 1, which is the Councils' position until November 2028 for decision-making purposes, is 416 dwellings per annum for Babergh and 535 dwellings per annum for Mid Suffolk.

Therefore, these new housing requirements represent a substantial uplift for the two Districts, 86% for Babergh and **37% for Mid Suffolk**.

In addition, the Councils are likely to need to consider accommodating housing needs from outside of the districts, and through the Plan will also consider delivering strategic infrastructure and building economic and climate resilience.

The formal stages of the Plan Review, which are subject to the detail arising from the provisions of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 is programmed as follows:

- Scoping and participation stage, including minimum four-month notification of Plan commencement – March 2026 to July 2026.
- Plan visioning and strategy development including first public consultation – August 2026 to March 2027.
- Evidence gathering and draft the Plan – April 2027 to December 2027.
- Second public consultation, proposing changes and submission of the Plan – January 2028 to June 2028.
- Examination of Plan including additional three months for Main Modifications – July 2028 to March 2029.
- Adoption – April 2029.

Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood Plans once made (adopted) following a 'yes' vote at a Referendum, are part of the District's Development Plan. There are currently 39 areas in Babergh and 29 areas in Mid Suffolk either with made Neighbourhood Plans or in the process of working towards this.

For an up-to-date position regarding Neighbourhood Plans, please visit:

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning>

Support for Residents – Stowmarket

From, Monday 24 February, we are extending our opening hours at our customer access point in Stowmarket – offering face-to-face support for residents, five days a week. Opening times for our access point, at 54 Ipswich Street, will be:

Monday: 9-5pm

Tuesday: 10-5pm

Wednesday: 9-5pm

Thursday: 9-5pm

Friday: 9-4.30pm

We will also be opening our first joint customer access point at Eye Library with Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice on Friday 28 March.

Staff will be on hand to help residents, alongside Citizens Advice, between 9.15am and 12pm every Friday.