



## **TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER**

July 2013

**Welcome to our joint newsletter aimed at keeping all the town and parish councils, across both Babergh and Mid Suffolk, informed about our plans to meet the financial and other challenges facing us.**

### **Contentious Planning Proposals affecting Babergh and Mid Suffolk**

We want to explain to communities what the Councils can and cannot take into consideration on planning applications, especially contentious ones.

These contentious major proposals can take a wide variety of forms and often generate a lot of public interest and typically public opposition. For example, large-scale wind turbines and other large scale energy generation proposals (whether using fossil fuels, like gas, or renewable energy sources).

Every Council has a responsibility to consider each planning application on its own merits and to treat all applicants for planning permission equitably and fairly. Planning decisions have to be arrived at in a balanced way and one of the purposes of the planning system is to balance and reconcile, where possible, conflicting interests. These are fundamental planning principles.

Determining planning applications on their own merits therefore means considering planning proposals with an open mind and not falling foul of what is known as 'predetermination', which carries with it a known, serious risk of legal challenge. While the UK Planning system remains a Plan-led system (relying upon the timely preparation of up-to-date Local Plans), it is very important to note the following points:

1. The planning system is also an evidence-based system meaning that both new planning policy and major planning proposals / applications have to be backed by, and determined against, objective and reliable evidence.
2. The content and approach of new planning policies and the determination of planning applications also need to have careful regard to the terms of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/making-the-planning-system-work-more-efficiently-and-effectively/supporting-pages/national-planning-policy-framework>

Local Plans need to be 'positively prepared' and to have regard to (among other things) climate change and renewable / low carbon energy, as a result of the requirements of the NPPF (see paragraphs 93 – 99).

The preparation, content and form of new Local Planning Policies need to be objectively and rigorously undertaken, rather than any particular planning policy stance being pre-empted and predetermined through expressions of public opposition to a particular issue or type of development.

The considerations outlined briefly above also have the effect that new local planning policies have to be developed robustly and through various consultation stages, while grounded on solid evidence. They have to be tested and scrutinised rigorously by means of the independent Planning Inspectorate, as well as local authorities' own political systems and democratic procedures. Further information is available at: <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/plans/plans>

This also means that developing formally adopted, new planning policy documents tends to require substantial timescales and adequate, skilled, planning staff resources. Along with all other staff structures, the Planning service to serve Babergh and Mid Suffolk (as two sovereign districts) is currently being combined and therefore in a state of transition. However it is intended that a better overall, single service will be achieved as a result.

### **Public Consultation Arrangements**

Please note the following:

Due to the high level of interest and volume of submissions made by the public (and others) on planning matters, the Councils are unable to enter into correspondence or discussions with individuals or other parties on proposals, planning applications, or the merits of Local Plan policies or proposals. Neither can we provide individual feedback on representations made on Local Plan related matters. Instead, written representations or letters on planning applications and Local Plan proposals / policies will be summarised (and where required copies made available) for the benefit of elected members' consideration at the relevant committee meeting(s) and copies provided in full for the benefit of Planning Inspectors for Local Plan examinations.

Anyone writing to the Councils on a planning matter for the purposes of developing new Local Plans, will have their letter (and views expressed) held on file and considered in the preparation of the relevant Local Plan document(s).

Anyone that has written to the Councils on a planning matter for the purposes of considering an anticipated development or planning proposal / application, will need to provide a written response at the time when the applicable planning application is 'live' and under consideration, quoting the relevant, unique planning application reference number.

Please note that the submission of all comments has to be in written form and the submission of comments / representations in electronic form is welcomed and encouraged.

## **Councils win highly-coveted award at The MJ Awards**

Babergh & Mid Suffolk won an award in the 'Shared Services' category at the 2013 MJ Awards in June.

Chief Executive Charlie Adan said: "This is good news for two reasons. Firstly, it is a clear recognition by the local government peer group of everyone's contribution to our achievements over the last two years or so as we integrate and transform.

"Secondly, the positive publicity associated with this achievement will further help us build up our credibility and the seriousness with which we are taken by ministers and senior civil servants. This 'voice' has already helped us secure some slight concessions from government in the last grant settlement and I am pretty sure that this achievement will do us no harm in this regard whatsoever."

## **Moving Forward – The Next Steps for Babergh and Mid Suffolk**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have virtually completed the integration of staff and structures that will enable us to deliver services for both sovereign Councils from a single staff establishment. This has been a very difficult process for the staff involved, many of whom have been living with enormous uncertainty about their futures. We have continued to deliver services through this difficult time, with relatively little disruption.

Further change is ahead and as we complete the last parts of our integration process our next phase has already started. This next phase moves us from integration to transformation – a fundamental review of what we do, why we do it and how we ensure that we can work to deliver the outcomes our communities want and need in the face of enormous financial challenges. Over the next three years Babergh and Mid Suffolk will face severe cuts in central government grant. In the face of such a challenge we need to go beyond just tightening our belts and look for more innovative ways of reducing our dependency on central government grants. We are calling our next phase of change, *Transformational Enquiries*.

There are six enquiry groups that will focus on the outcomes that Councillors have set as the strategic objectives for both Councils. By focussing on outcomes, rather than service areas, the groups can go beyond our organisational boundaries, reaching out to parishes, community groups in general, and other organisations (public and private sector). The six groups will look at:

- Promoting Economic Growth
- Enhancing The Environment
- Increasing the supply, mix and economic impact of Housing
- Supporting and Facilitating Healthy, Safe and Active Communities
- Transforming Public Access
- Transforming Corporate Organisation and Resources

One of the key goals of the Transformational Enquiry approach is to gain ideas so that we can work together with our communities in the co-design and if feasible the co-delivery of services. Parish councils will be an important part of that and we are in the process of setting up specific communication channels that will flow out of the initial stages of the Transformational Enquiry process. In the meantime we would welcome new ideas on how to engage with parishes, please let us know by emailing us at [bmi.transformation@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:bmi.transformation@babergh.gov.uk)

## **Future Councils' Programme**

You will be aware of how Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are embracing new ways of working together so as to be better able to meet the financial and other challenges facing us while contributing to positive outcomes for our communities.

There is also some work going on among councillor and managerial colleagues across the Suffolk public sector 'family' to establish support for a Suffolk-wide approach to joint working.

This is a strategic response to the relentless resource squeeze affecting us all as our core grants are reduced.

Therefore, the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders' group (comprising leaders and chief executives of councils, the Police and other organisations) has been participating in the Local Government Association's (LGA) Future Councils' programme, supported by the LGA and the New Local Government Network (NLGN).

The programme has been examining both current collaborative working in Suffolk and the opportunities for expanding and deepening such approaches over the longer-term.

Essentially, this model of working offers a shared vision that "collaboration and better alignment between organisations is key to the transformation and delivery of effective and efficient public services which provide better outcomes for individuals and communities".

This shared vision allows for different types of collaboration between any number of public sector (and other) partners. There is no 'one size fits all' approach; rather there is a presumption in favour of joint working but not one particular template.

This model underpins the sovereignty of each organisation (i.e. it is not unitary local government by the back door) with any of these able to opt out of an initiative if it does not suit them. However, no organisation can veto such collaborative initiatives.

## **HRH The Duke of Kent visit to Poplar Road, Gt Cornard.**

HRH The Duke of Kent is to be the guest of honour unveiling the final phase of Applegate Mews – a development of revamped flats & shops in Poplar Road, Great Cornard on Wednesday 31 July.

This regeneration project comprises 44 new homes and six new shops, providing much needed affordable housing and local shopping facilities.

A partnership approach has contributed to the success of this project with involvement and support from Great Cornard Parish Council, the North Cornard Regeneration Group\*, Babergh District Council and housing provider Flagship. Babergh donated the land to Flagship at 100 per cent discount.

As part of the tour, the Duke will meet two families in their homes including the family of Mr and Mrs Heritage. After unfortunate events affected their housing situation, the opportunity to live back in Great Cornard with their three children has come as a huge lifeline. Mrs Nichola Heritage said, "This home is such a huge deal for us. Having a second chance is just amazing."

The tour will conclude with a tree planting ceremony.

Babergh District Council Chairman Nick Ridley said: "We are extremely pleased to welcome HRH The Duke of Kent to Applegate Mews, particularly as he opened the previous Anglia Estate improvement in Great Cornard in 1998. Before the development of the brand new shops and housing, many of the maisonettes and shops had become rather run-down and dilapidated and there was a lot of anti-social behaviour. Thanks to a partnership with Flagship, the area has been redeveloped and a lot of investment put into this area, driving up the standard of residential housing and meaning that residents now have a much more attractive place to live. The development has benefitted the whole area and we hope it will serve the residents for many years to come."

### **Council Offering Tenants the Opportunity to Exchange properties**

Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils are to hold two events where those wishing to either downsize or move to a larger property can meet with others in a similar situation who they might like to mutually exchange properties with.

The first event is on Wednesday 14 August at the John Peel Centre in Stowmarket\* and the other is on Wednesday 21 August at the Delphi Centre in Sudbury\*\*. Both are drop-in events and will run from 1pm to 5pm.

Mutual Exchange has helped thousands of people across the country to move to properties more suited to their housing needs. It works through people in social housing finding someone who is also looking to move home, and if they like each other's properties then they can exchange with their landlord's approval.

The Council's Corporate Manager for Housing Assessments and Allocations Heather Sparrow, said: "This is the first time we have held an event like this. This event will enable anyone who is thinking about moving to find out more. For example, mutual exchange can be a good option for a family requiring a larger property, and a couple or single person who want to move to somewhere smaller and more manageable, or in a different location, due to a change in personal or financial circumstances e.g. arising

from welfare reforms. Alternatively some people may be living in a rural area but would prefer to live nearer to shops and other amenities. This is an opportunity for all these different groups to exchange their properties.”

These events are open to all social housing tenants either living in the Babergh or Mid Suffolk area or wishing to move to the area. If you would like your property to be featured at the event, then please contact Vicky Smy on 01449 724781 or email: [tenant.involvement@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.involvement@midsuffolk.gov.uk) for a registration form.

\* and \*\* The John Peel Centre for Creative Arts, Church Walk, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 1ET. Tel: 01449 774 678. The Delphi Club is just outside Sudbury Town centre between Chilton and Gt. Cornard. It is situated just off the A131, Newton Road, with access via Alexandra Road, CO10 2RR.

### **Textile Recycling**

To reduce the thousands of tonnes of clothes and textiles being sent to landfill in Suffolk each year, Suffolk councils are hoping local people will sign up to the clothes and textile recycling scheme.

Anyone wishing to participate just needs to pop their old and worn out clothes and shoes into the council textile recycling bag, tie it securely and then place it into the recycling bin on top of the other loose recycling. This will ensure your textiles remain clean and dry. (No loose textiles are accepted).

Textile recycling bags are available from most council offices and all Suffolk libraries. Alternatively ring 0845 603 9412 or email [textiles@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:textiles@suffolk.gov.uk)



### **What do you think?**

We value the comments of our town and parish council colleagues on how we plan to meet the financial and other challenges facing us.

If your council has any comments about our plans then please email us – and we will reply as quickly as possible.

For Babergh                    [workingtogether@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:workingtogether@babergh.gov.uk)  
For Mid Suffolk            [workingtogether@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:workingtogether@midsuffolk.gov.uk)

### **Keeping you informed**

Our councils have set aside a section on both our websites where town and parish councils as well as other key stakeholders can access information of particular relevance to them, including these newsletters.

These can be found at either:

[www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/workingtogether/keypartnersarea](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/workingtogether/keypartnersarea)

or:

[www.babergh.gov.uk/babergh/KeyPartnersArea](http://www.babergh.gov.uk/babergh/KeyPartnersArea)

Thanks for reading this.