

## **Appendix 1 – Landlord Performance Report (Babergh)**

Babergh District Council's Landlord Performance Report can be found here:

- <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/app/uploads/2025/09/Landlord-Report-Babergh-District-Council.pdf>

## **Appendix 2 – Summary of 202405744**

Link to case: [Housing Ombudsman Investigation - 202405744](#)

### The Complaint

The resident, a secure tenant with two children (one disabled), complained about Babergh District Council's handling of multiple repair issues in her home. These included problems with the boiler, immersion heater, bathroom drainage, damp and mould, external rendering, and the kitchen flooring. She also raised concerns about poor record keeping and the impact of these issues on her health and her ability to care for her children.

### The Findings

The Ombudsman found that Babergh District Council failed to carry out timely and effective repairs, with some issues remaining unresolved for over two years. Babergh District Council did not have a repairs policy in place and failed to maintain adequate records of inspections and repairs. Babergh District Council acknowledged delays and poor service but did not follow through on promised actions. The Ombudsman also found that Babergh District Council failed to consider the resident's vulnerabilities and did not communicate effectively. Babergh District Council's record keeping was inadequate, hindering the investigation and resolution of the complaint.

### The Outcome

The Ombudsman found maladministration in both the handling of the repairs and the landlord's record keeping. The landlord was ordered to pay £700 in compensation, compile a schedule of outstanding repairs, and ensure repairs are completed within a reasonable timeframe. The landlord was also instructed to improve its record keeping practices and provide evidence of compliance.

## **Appendix 3 – Summary of 202338266**

Link to case: [Housing Ombudsman Investigation - 202338266](#)

### The Complaint

The resident complained about Babergh District Council's handling of repairs to her living room window and the ventilation system. She also raised concerns about anti-social behaviour and noise disturbance from a neighbour, although this aspect was outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction. She reported delays in addressing the window seal issue and requested the disconnection of the ventilation system due to discomfort.

### The Findings

The Babergh District Council failed to complete the window repair in a timely manner and did not maintain adequate records of inspections or decisions. There was confusion over whether the resident refused the repair, and the landlord did not act on an occupational therapist's referral. Regarding the ventilation system, the Babergh District Council disconnected it without fully assessing the implications or providing the resident with guidance on managing airflow. The complaint handling was also poor, with significant delays and inadequate responses. The landlord acknowledged some failings and awarded compensation, but this was deemed insufficient.

### The Outcome

The Ombudsman found maladministration in the Babergh District Council's handling of the window repairs, the ventilation system, and the complaint process. Babergh District Council was ordered to pay £1,000 in total compensation, arrange an inspection of the living room window, and confirm its repair or replacement plan. It was also required to provide evidence of compliance with these orders.

## **Appendix 4 – Summary of 202318473**

Link to case: [Housing Ombudsman Investigation - 202318473](#)

### The Complaint

The resident complained about Babergh District Council's handling of repairs to her property and the installation of an electric shower. The tenant reported multiple outstanding repairs after moving into the property in March 2023 and expressed concern about the lack of a shower, which was essential for her child with additional needs. She also raised concerns about poor communication and delays in service delivery.

### The Findings

Babergh District Council failed to respond promptly to the resident's initial repair requests and did not adequately communicate about the status of the repairs. Although some repairs were eventually scheduled and completed, others were delayed significantly. The Housing Ombudsman found that Babergh District Council also lacked a clear policy on aids and adaptations, which contributed to confusion regarding the installation of the electric shower. Babergh District Council acknowledged its failings, apologised, and committed to improvements. It offered compensation and took steps to complete the outstanding work. However, its record keeping and information management were found to be inadequate, particularly in tracking vulnerabilities and maintaining accurate repair logs.

### The Outcome

The Ombudsman found that there was reasonable redress in Babergh District Council's handling of the repairs and the shower installation, but service failure in its record keeping. Babergh District Council was advised to pay the previously offered £500 compensation, contribute to the resident's increased energy costs, and consider developing an aids and adaptations policy. It was also recommended to reflect on its handling of repairs and improve its record keeping practices

## **Appendix 5 – Summary of 202314102**

Link to case: [Housing Ombudsman Investigation - 202314102](#)

### The Complaint

The applicant raised a complaint against Babergh District Council regarding its decision not to allow him to succeed his late mother's secure tenancy. His mother had been the sole tenant of the property, which she had received via a deed of assignment from her father in 2008. After her death in January 2023, the applicant, who lived elsewhere with his partner and two children in a property managed by a different landlord, contacted the council to request succession of the tenancy.

The council informed him that the tenancy had ended and that he had no legal right to succeed it. Dissatisfied with this response, the applicant pursued a formal complaint, which was reviewed at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the council's complaints process before being escalated to the Housing Ombudsman.

### The Findings

The Housing Ombudsman's investigation focused on whether Babergh District Council had acted fairly and in accordance with the law and its own policies. Key findings included:

- The applicant's mother became the tenant through a deed of assignment in 2008. Under the Housing Act 1985, this constituted a statutory succession.
- The Housing Act 1985 allows only one statutory succession for secure tenancies. Since the applicant's mother was already a successor, no further succession was legally permitted.
- Even if succession had been legally possible, the applicant did not meet the criteria:
- He had not lived in the property for the 12 months prior to his mother's death.
- He had a separate tenancy elsewhere, meaning the property was not his principal home.
- The council responded promptly and empathetically to the applicant's inquiries and complaints. It provided clear explanations and followed its internal procedures and relevant legislation throughout.

The Ombudsman also noted that the applicant raised concerns about the council's choice-based letting scheme. However, this aspect fell outside the Housing Ombudsman's jurisdiction and would need to be addressed by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

### The Outcome

The Ombudsman concluded that the council had acted lawfully and fairly. It had correctly interpreted and applied the Housing Act 1985 and its own tenancy policy. The applicant had no legal right to succeed the tenancy, and the council's decision was appropriate given the circumstances.

### Final Determination:

In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, the Ombudsman found no maladministration by the landlord in its decision not to allow the applicant to succeed his late mother's tenancy.

## **Appendix 6 – Summary of 202411317**

This complaint is yet to be displayed on the Housing Ombudsman's website.

### The Complaint

The tenant, a secure tenant of Mid Suffolk District Council, raised a complaint regarding the landlord's handling of a proposed extension to his overcrowded 3-bed parlour house, which he shares with his partner and nine children, one of whom has mental health issues. Initially, in response to a 2021 complaint about overcrowding, the landlord offered to build a two-storey extension. However, after two failed planning applications and citing financial constraints, the landlord informed the resident in January 2024 that the extension was no longer viable. The resident was dissatisfied with this decision and the alternative housing options provided, which he deemed unviable. He also expressed concern over the landlord's complaint handling process, including receiving two undated stage 1 responses without having formally submitted a complaint.

### The Findings

The Ombudsman found that Mid Suffolk District Council had made a commendable effort to address the overcrowding by proposing an extension, but there were significant delays and poor communication. The planning application was submitted 13 months after the initial decision to proceed, and the landlord failed to manage the resident's expectations appropriately. The landlord's complaint handling was also found to be deficient, with two undated stage 1 responses issued without a clear complaint being logged, and no proper acknowledgment or definition of the complaint. The Ombudsman noted that the landlord did not adequately consider or respond to the tenant's request to make his own improvements to the existing lean-to structure, which was already being used as a bedroom despite being uninhabitable due to damp and mould.

### The Outcome

The Ombudsman determined there was service failure in both the landlord's handling of the proposed extension and the complaint process. The landlord was ordered to provide a written apology and pay the resident £200 in compensation (£100 for project delays and £100 for complaint handling failures). Additionally, the landlord was instructed to meet with the resident to discuss his request to carry out improvement works to the existing extension and explore any viable options to make the space habitable. This order was upheld in the appeal decision, which emphasised the importance of meaningful engagement with the resident and the landlord's responsibility to manage overcrowding effectively.

## **Appendix 7 – Summary of 202338776**

Link to case: [Housing Ombudsman Investigation - 202338776](#)

### The Complaint

The tenant, living in a Mid Suffolk District Council property with her partner and six children, reported persistent damp and mould problems affecting several rooms. These issues had been raised for years, with significant complaints between January 2023 and April 2024. She said Mid Suffolk District Council failed to act promptly, citing delays in arranging a damp survey and poor communication. Later reports were dismissed as outside the complaints process, and although compensation offers were made, the resident remained dissatisfied and referred the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.

### The Findings

The Ombudsman found that Mid Suffolk District Council failed to meet its legal obligations under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, leaving the property in poor condition. A survey identified structural issues such as blocked gutters and faulty ventilation, yet follow-up was inadequate. Communication and record-keeping were poor, and responses often implied tenant responsibility despite evidence to the contrary. Complaint handling was also flawed, with delays, lack of clear timelines, and refusal to consider related complaints, which caused further distress.

### The Outcome

Mid Suffolk District Council were found to have acted with maladministration in both repairs and complaint handling. The Council were ordered to apologise and pay £1,550 compensation, arrange an independent survey within eight weeks, and start repairs promptly after receiving the report. The council must also provide insurer details or consider discretionary compensation for damaged belongings, review its repairs policy, and appoint a dedicated contact to improve communication.

## Appendix 8 – Compliance with the Complaints Handling Code

- Annual Self-Assessment

Each year, the Council are required to complete a self-assessment against the complaint handling code. The date for submission to the Housing Ombudsman this year was the 30th September 2025.

Landlords are required to submit a self-assessment to the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code to ensure accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement in how we are handling complaints.

The latest version can be found on our website linked under appendix 9.

- Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

This report provides our analysis of our complaint handling performance across Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council.

The Councils do not refuse to add or escalate complaints within our complaints process. If a customer, resident, or tenant wishes to raise a complaint, then this will be added to the complaints system on their behalf, or they are provided with information on how to raise the complaint. The Councils will then review the information and close the complaint in the appropriate manner, whether this be: Upheld, Not Upheld, or Not Considered to be a Complaint.

The Council have not refused to escalate complaints about a service that can be complained about. In the Councils' Complaints Policy there are several items that are not considered to be a complaint and when it falls into one of these categories, the customer will be provided with the relevant information prior to raising a complaint.

- Any Findings of Non-Compliance with the Code.

Since the new Complaint Handling Code was launched in 2024, the Councils have not received any findings of non-compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code.

Once the Annual Report for 2024/25 has been presented to Overview and Scrutiny and published with the response of our members responsible for complaints, we will be fully compliant with the Code.

- Service Improvements

Following the identification that some contractors were relying solely on telephone contact with tenants, the Housing Team collaborated with these contractors to ensure that all available contact methods such as email and text messaging were being utilised to ensure appointments were able to be scheduled.

It was also discovered that several contractors were operating with outdated tenant contact information. To address this, a process was introduced whereby contractors now receive monthly updates to ensure they have the most current contact details, improving the likelihood of successful communication.

An increase in complaints related to the fencing policy was also noted, particularly around contractors referring to it as a “no fencing policy.” To clarify the Council’s position, contract managers were instructed to re-circulate the fence policy and provide feedback to ensure consistent messaging across all contractor interactions.

To support clearer communication with tenants and improve understanding of roles and responsibilities, the Council launched a Tenant Handbook. This resource is designed to provide tenants with accessible information about their tenancy, services, and expectations.

It was identified that the sign-up process for new tenants was not sufficiently effective. This insight informed changes within the Housing Management restructure, with a renewed focus on improving the onboarding experience for tenants this will ensure that new tenants receive timely, accurate information and support from the outset, fostering stronger relationships and reducing early-stage complaints.

We have now produced a BER (Beyond Economical Repair) matrix for our contractors. This will stop multiple engineer visits to an ageing or faulty boiler to enact upgrades quicker to ensure that our tenants continue to have access to heating and hot water.

- Any report about performance

Babergh District Council were included in the Housing Ombudsman’s Annual Landlord Report which is referenced in this report.

- Any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman

Neither Babergh District Council nor Mid Suffolk District Council were included in any other reports produced by the Housing Ombudsman.

## **Appendix 9 – Annual HOS Self-Assessment**

The annual Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council can be found here:

- <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/documents/d/asset-library-54706/our-complaint-handling-code-self-assessment>
- <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/documents/d/asset-library-54706/our-complaint-handling-code-self-assessment>

## **Appendix 10 – Updated Complaints Policy**

Our Complaints Policy can be found on our website here:

- <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/documents/d/asset-library-54706/our-compliments-comments-and-complaints-policy>
- <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/documents/d/asset-library-54706/our-compliments-comments-and-complaints-policy>

## Appendix 11 – Babergh LGO Complaint – 23 003 839

Link to the complaint on the LGO website: [LGO: 23 003 839](#)

### The Complaint

The resident, on behalf of a local community group raised concerns about the Council's handling of a major planning application. They alleged that planning officers engaged in misconduct and made misrepresentations, which they believe prevented the Planning Committee from making a fully informed and considered decision before approving an energy development.

The resident stated that the development would negatively impact the amenity of local residents. They also reported that many members of the community had lost confidence in the Council's planning process due to the way the application was managed.

### The Findings

The resident complained that the Council failed to follow its Local List by not requiring the manufacturer's specification for equipment in a planning application. The Council explained that the Local List is applied at its discretion and that it is common practice to accept illustrative details for energy developments due to the evolving nature of the technology. Technical consultees were satisfied with the information provided. The Ombudsman found no fault in this approach, as it was for the Council to decide whether it had sufficient information to validate and assess the application.

The resident also raised concerns about a councillor's question during a public meeting regarding two previous energy developments that had been refused at appeal. The Council advised that each application should be considered on its own merits and that past appeals from different sites and times were not directly relevant. The Ombudsman agreed, noting that the previous appeals were over seven years old, involved different sites, and planning policies may have changed. Therefore, the Council's actions did not amount to fault.

The resident further argued that the officer's report misinterpreted the Council's Renewable/Low Carbon Energy policy by applying it to a standalone energy development, which they believed was outside the policy's intended scope. While the Ombudsman acknowledged the resident's disagreement with the Council's interpretation, it found that the Council had considered the policy and was entitled to interpret and apply it as it did. There was no fault in this aspect of the decision-making process.

The Ombudsman found that the officer's report to the Planning Committee was thorough and balanced, weighing competing policies and material considerations such as landscape impact, ecology, heritage, flood risk, and public amenity. The report acknowledged conflicts with some policies but explained why these did not outweigh the benefits of the proposal. The Committee had access to the planning file, could ask questions, and had the option to defer the decision if needed. It chose not to. The Ombudsman concluded that the Council had adequately considered relevant policies and was entitled to reach its decision.

The resident also raised concerns about a condition in the decision notice that stated the development was contrary to the Council's general policy but was permitted due to the specific situation. They believed this meant the Committee was not properly informed of the conflict with the

Local Development Plan. The Ombudsman disagreed, finding that the Council had acknowledged and discussed policy tensions and that the Committee was aware of these when making its decision. While the wording of the condition could have been clearer, it did not amount to significant misdirection or fault.

However, the Ombudsman did find fault in the Council's handling of the resident's complaint. The Council failed to send a formal response and did not clearly address their concerns about the independence of the officer assigned to investigate. Although the officer in question did not ultimately investigate the complaint, the lack of communication caused the resident avoidable frustration and denied them a timely and fair response. They had to spend additional time and effort pursuing the matter before bringing it to the Ombudsman.

### **The Remedy**

To remedy the injustice identified, the Council agreed to take the following action within one month of the final decision:

- Issue an apology to the resident and the group, in accordance with the LGO's guidance on making an effective apology, for the injustice caused by the way the Council handled the complaint and for failing to provide a formal response.

## Appendix 12 – Babergh LGO Complaint – 23 016 115

Link to the complaint on the LGO website: [23 016 115](#)

### **The Complaint**

The resident, a former councillor, complained about the Council's handling of his code of conduct complaint against a Councillor. He reported experiencing significant delays and poor communication throughout the process. He also raised concerns about the Council's refusal to accept a self-referral complaint after the Councillor made accusations against him. The resident says the situation has caused him distress, uncertainty, and harm to his reputation.

### **The Findings**

The resident, a former councillor, made a code of conduct complaint in 2022 against a councillor, which was upheld, and the councillor was advised to undergo re-training. Following this, the resident says the councillor made allegations suggesting he had influenced the outcome, which he felt damaged his reputation and contributed to his decision not to seek re-election. In February 2023, the resident submitted a second complaint about similar conduct by the same councillor. Due to internal issues, the Council delegated the investigation to the legal department from another council. Although responses were received by March 2023, delays followed due to staffing and election-related issues. A decision notice confirming a breach was issued in July 2023, and the matter was referred to the Standards Board in August. The informal investigation exceeded the Council's 50-day target by 57 days.

In January 2024, the resident submitted a self-referral complaint regarding the allegations made against him. The Council declined to accept it, citing its policy and the fact that the resident was no longer a councillor. Informal advice was given to the councillor. The Standards Board met in April 2024, issued no further sanctions, and approved publication of the decision notice. It deferred judgment on the monitoring officer's handling of the case to a higher committee. The resident complained to the Ombudsman in February 2024 about delays and the refusal to accept his self-referral.

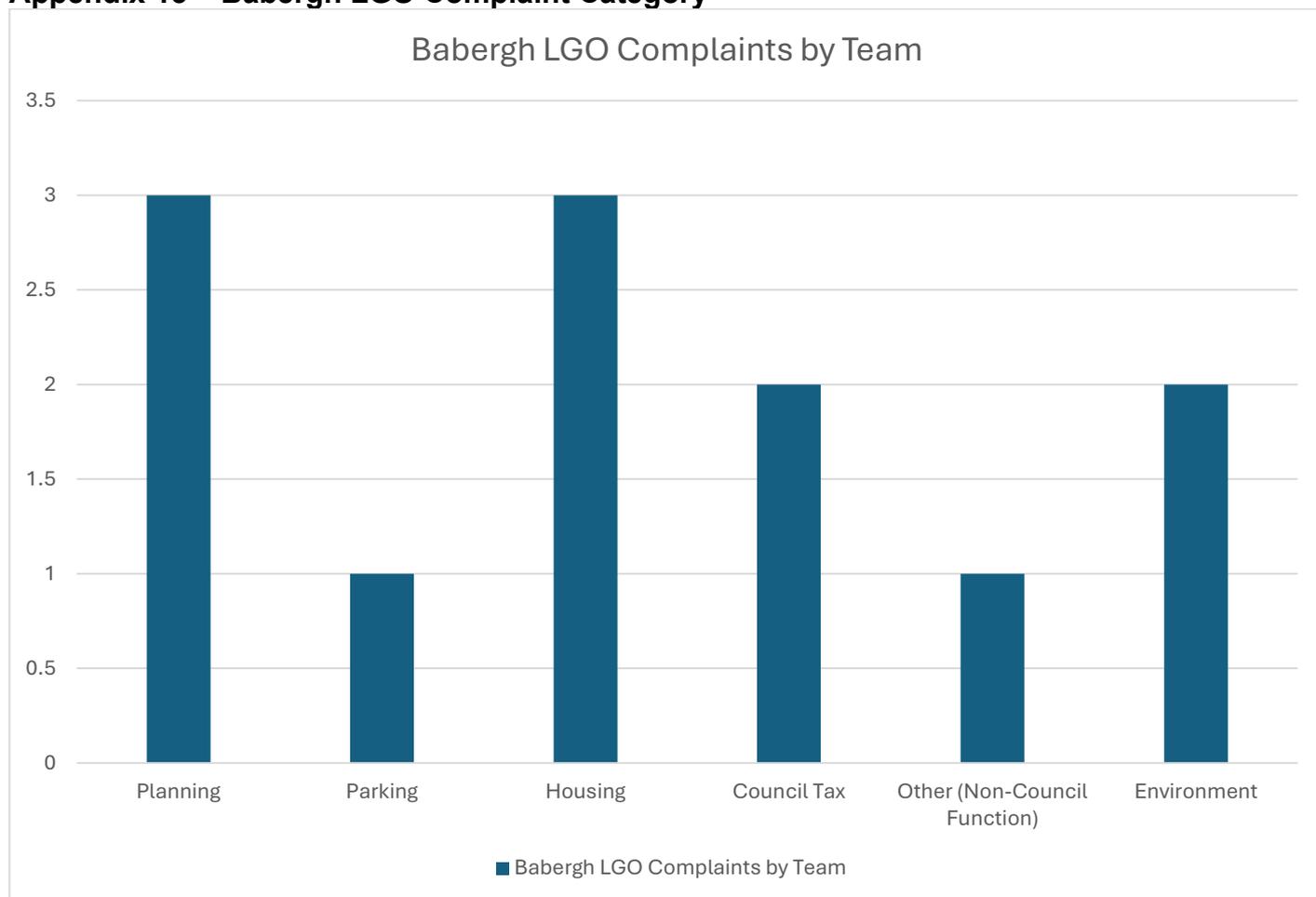
The Council followed proper procedures in handling the code of conduct complaints and was entitled to reject the self-referral. These actions were not fault. However, the investigation took 14 months instead of the expected 50 working days, and communication with the resident was poor. This delay was fault and caused the resident frustration and uncertainty.

### **Agreed Action**

Within one month of the final decision, the Council agreed to apologise to the resident and pay him £100 to acknowledge the distress and frustration caused by the delays in handling his code of conduct complaint.

Within two months of the final decision, the Council also agreed to provide the Ombudsman with the outcome of the review of the monitoring officer's handling of the case. Additionally, the Council should outline what actions it intends to take to prevent similar delays in future code of conduct complaints.

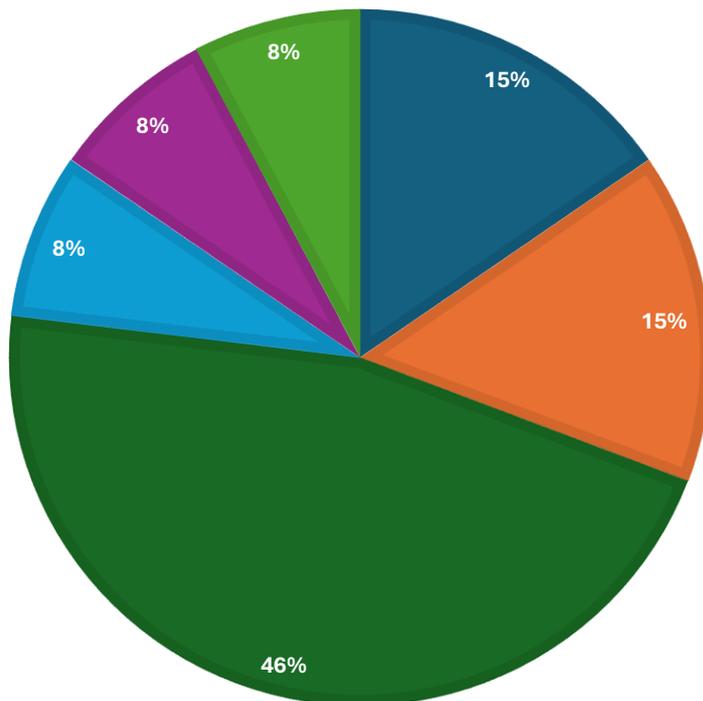
## Appendix 13 – Babergh LGO Complaint Category



## Appendix 14 – Babergh LGO Complaint Outcomes

### BABERGH LGO COMPLAINT OUTCOMES

- Upheld
- Not Upheld
- Closed after initial enquiries
- Advice given to complainant
- Referred to Council for Local Resolution
- Insufficient information to proceed



## Appendix 15 – Mid Suffolk LGO Complaint – 23 014 947

Link to the complaint on the LGO website: [LGO: 23 014 947](#)

### **The Complaint**

The resident complained to the LGO that the Council failed to protect a hedgerow, part of which was removed causing damage to public visual amenity and the environment.

### **The Findings**

The resident lived near a site that had been subject to several planning applications and approvals in recent years, including an outline approval and a more recent full application approval. Although not living close enough to be personally affected, the resident raised concerns about the environmental and public impact of the latest approval, which did not protect a long boundary hedge. The resident regularly walked along the footpath next to the hedge.

They believed the hedge had been protected by a condition in the earlier outline approval, which required its retention to preserve the visual amenity and character of the area. However, following the full application's approval, the developer removed a large section of the hedge to provide views over open countryside for the new development's occupants. The resident felt this caused harm to the environment and public amenity.

After the removal, the resident complained to the Council, believing the earlier planning condition had been breached. The Council's planning enforcement officer explained there was no breach, as the full application did not include a condition protecting the hedge.

The Council's tree officer confirmed they had advised the planning officer during the outline stage that they had no objection, provided the boundary hedge and trees were retained to protect the area's visual character. They were unaware why this condition had not been carried forward to the full application and were surprised, given the hedge's value to public visual amenity. They had not recommended a condition during the full application stage, assuming a standard landscaping condition would cover it. After the hedge was partially removed, they applied for a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) to protect the remaining sections, and this process was ongoing. When asked why the condition from the outline approval had not been included in the full application, the planning officer said they did not know.

The site's planning history indicated that the Council had previously recognised the importance of protecting the boundary hedge, as shown by a condition included in the earlier outline approval. However, this condition was omitted in the subsequent full planning approval, with no explanation provided in the case officer's report. This represented a fault.

Had this fault not occurred, it was likely the Council would have imposed a condition to safeguard the hedge. Although the resident had not suffered a personal injustice, they were understandably upset by the loss of a significant portion of the hedgerow, which the Council had been unable to prevent due to a lack of planning control.

## **The Remedy**

The Council acknowledged the confusion and disappointment caused and issued an apology. It was recognised that the loss of the hedgerow had negatively impacted the natural environment and the visual amenity from public viewpoints. To help prevent similar issues in future, the Council agreed to review its practices and procedures, as recommended.

The Council agreed to:

- Apologise to the resident for its failure to properly consider the protection of the hedgerow before making its decision on the full planning application.
- Review the circumstances of the case and determine whether any changes to policy, guidance, practice, or working procedures are necessary to prevent similar faults in future. This review will be completed within three months from the date of the final decision.

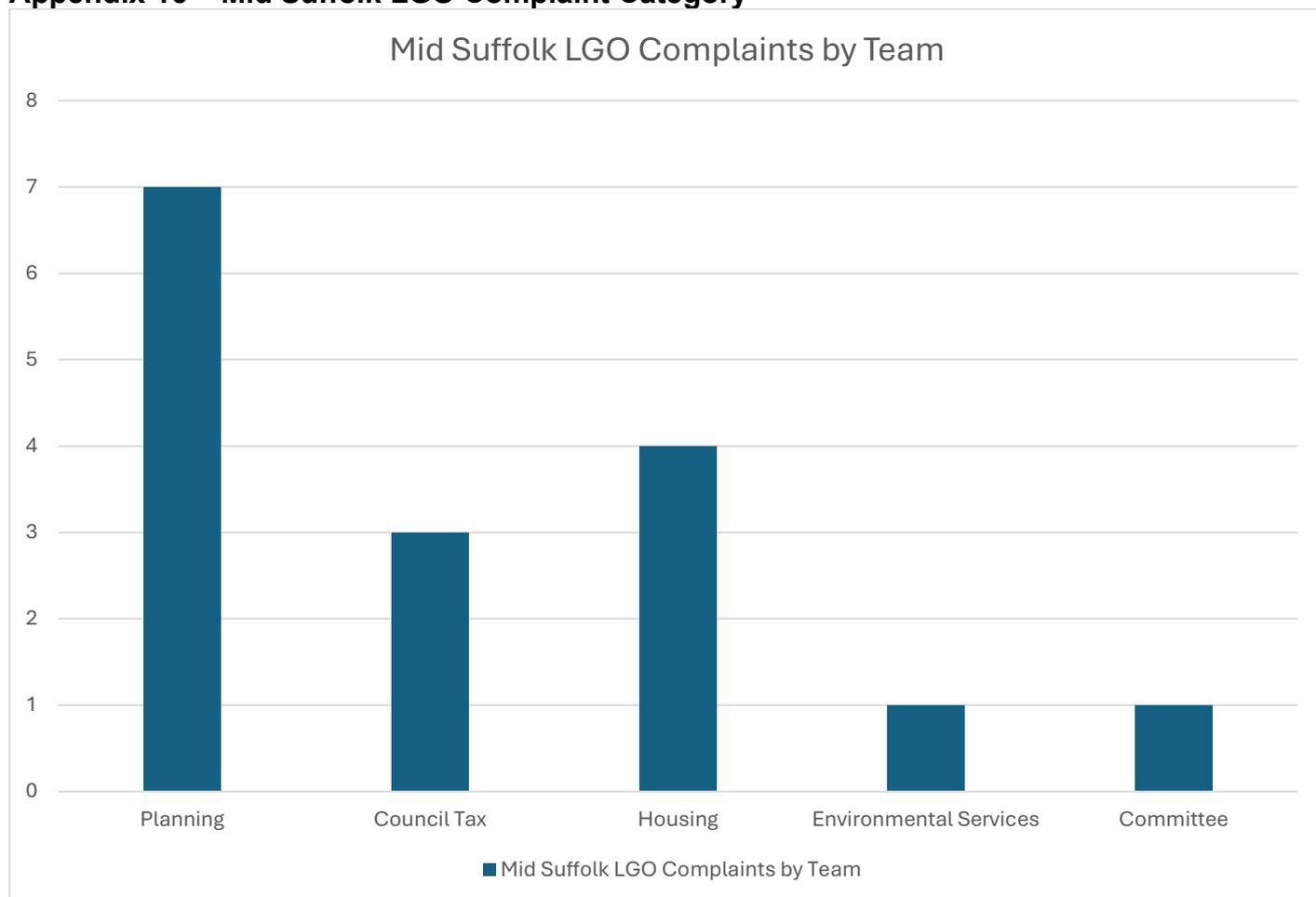
## **The Implemented Changes**

Following the decision issued to Mid Suffolk District Council on 3 June 2024 regarding case 23014947, the Councils took steps to implement the recommendation:

“b) Review what has happened and decide whether any changes to policy, guidance, practice or working procedures are necessary to avoid similar fault happening again. It will complete its review within three months from the date of my final decision.”

In response, the Councils planning department conducted a review of internal processes and have since updated the *Report Writing and Procedure: Development Management Guide*. This guide, used by planning officers when assessing applications, was finalised at the end of July 2024 and sent to the Ombudsman to demonstrate compliance with their recommendation.

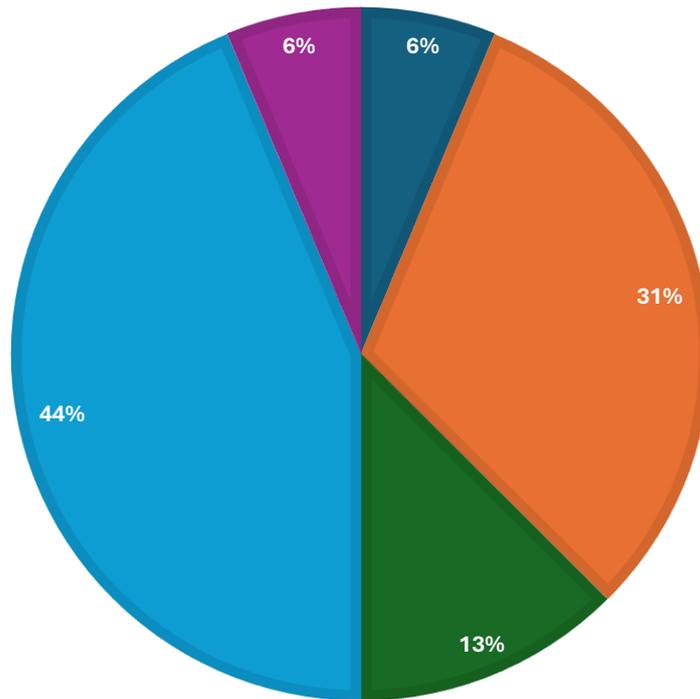
## Appendix 16 – Mid Suffolk LGO Complaint Category



## Appendix 17 – Mid Suffolk LGO Complaint Outcomes

### MID SUFFOLK LGO COMPLAINT OUTCOMES

- Upheld
- Insufficient information to proceed
- Advice provided to complainant
- Closed after initial enquiries
- Referred to Council for local resolution



## **Appendix 18 – User Stories**

### User Story – Assisted Waste Collection

The customer contacted us to raise concerns about the placement of their bins during waste collection. They explained that the front of their property has no suitable location for bins to be left other than directly in front of the driveway. This causes significant inconvenience, especially when collections are delayed, as it blocks access to the property for longer periods.

The customer informed us that they are a Blue Badge holder and already face challenges walking, making it difficult to move the bins themselves. While their wife can assist, they shared that there had previously been an agreement about placing the bins in a more suitable location, but this arrangement had ceased without explanation.

In response, we acknowledged the impact this was having and suggested the Council's assisted collection service as a potential solution. Initially, the customer was hesitant to pursue this due to their wife's ability to move the bins but ultimately agreed that assisted collection would be the ideal resolution.

We liaised with the waste services team and confirmed that assisted collections could be arranged as part of the complaint. We confirmed that the bins would be collected from the front of the house where they are stored. This service commenced in the week beginning Monday 31st March 2025. However, on 3rd April 2025, the customer contacted us again to report that although the bin had been emptied, it had been left across the driveway. We followed up with the waste services team, who confirmed that the crew responsible had received and viewed the updated instructions. Upon reviewing dustcart footage, it was evident that the bin had not been returned to the agreed location. The Council subsequently contacted Serco to request that the crew be reminded of the importance of adhering to assisted collection protocols.

Further, on Thursday 17th April 2025, the customer informed us that their bin had not been collected at all. We sincerely apologised for this oversight and requested an urgent collection via the waste team. We were informed that the bin would be collected on Saturday 19th April 2025. As part of the complaints process, and as a lesson learned the Council has reinforced the importance of assisted collections with the relevant crew and will continue to monitor compliance. The customer's property remains on the assisted collection list, and bins will be collected from and returned to the front of the house.

We received confirmation prior that the assisted waste collection was now taking place.

### User Story – Leaseholder Repair

The customer contacted us to raise concerns about a long-standing and unresolved repair issue at their leasehold property, which had resulted in significant damp and mould damage, stress, and financial loss. The customer reported that a structural defect, an unsealed external vent, had been left untreated for nearly 300 days, despite repeated attempts to engage the Council. They also raised concerns about miscommunication, misinterpretation of lease responsibilities, and the lack of support in addressing the damage caused.

The customer explained that the vent hole, originally intended for a kitchen extractor fan, had been covered by kitchen cabinets and was inadequately sealed with a plastic bag. This allowed water

ingress, which led to damp and mould forming behind the kitchen units. The customer provided a RICS Property Survey and Valuation Report from when they purchased the property in January 2023, which clearly identified the defect and recommended that the hole be properly sealed to prevent rainwater ingress.

Despite reporting the issue in March 2024, the Council's initial repair was insufficient. The customer re-reported the problem in May 2024, stating that birds may have begun nesting in the unprotected vent. Unfortunately, this repair request was not logged, and no action was taken. It wasn't until October 2024 that a damp and mould survey was conducted, which confirmed the presence of an unsealed hole and recommended urgent repairs, including scaffolding to access the vent safely. The customer expressed frustration at the delay and the Council's initial stance that they were not responsible for the damage due to the kitchen cupboards being installed over the vent. However, further investigation revealed that the cupboards had likely been installed as part of a Council-approved alteration in 2005, long before the property was sold under Right to Buy. The Council acknowledged that the customer had not made any alterations themselves and that fault should not have been apportioned to them.

The Council's damp and mould manager confirmed that the unsealed vent had directly contributed to increased moisture levels and that the placement of cupboards over the vent had exacerbated the issue by trapping moisture. The Council accepted that the failure to properly repair the vent in the first instance had led to avoidable damage and distress. Following the investigation into the customer's complaint, the Council took steps to resolve the matter and ensure the property was made safe and habitable.

A full survey of the property was arranged and completed within the agreed timeframe. The survey confirmed the presence of damp and mould behind the kitchen cabinets and the need to properly seal the external vent. Based on the findings, a comprehensive schedule of works was carried out. The Council removed the kitchen cabinets to access the affected area, treated the damp and mould, and sealed the external vent to prevent further water ingress. Once the repairs were completed, the cabinets were reinstalled at no cost to the customer. These works were undertaken by the Council's contractors and overseen by the Housing Repairs team to ensure quality and compliance.

In recognition of the inconvenience and distress caused, the Council awarded the customer compensation and additionally, the customer was provided with a full decorating kit, including Dulux paint of their choice, brushes, rollers, and other materials to redecorate the entire kitchen.

### User Story – Broken Boiler 1

The customer contacted us to raise concerns about persistent and unresolved issues with their boiler system, which had been affecting their ability to access reliable heating and hot water. Shortly after moving into the property, the customer began experiencing problems with the boiler that gradually worsened over time. They reported that the boiler required attention two to three times per week and that they had repeatedly lost hot water, forcing them to manually repressurise the system to maintain basic functionality.

Despite multiple visits from contractors, the issue remained unresolved. The customer expressed frustration that each time someone attended, no meaningful progress was made. Appointments

were frequently cancelled at short notice, and on several occasions, the Council's gas contractor failed to attend without notifying the customer. This led to wasted time, inconvenience, and a growing sense of dissatisfaction.

The root cause of the issue was eventually identified as a faulty pressure release valve (PRV), which required replacement. However, the part needed was non-standard and had not been correctly ordered or delivered. The customer was informed that the part would arrive in March 2025, but this did not happen. Instead, a series of missed appointments and miscommunications followed:

- On 12th March, the contractor attended but did not have the correct part.
- On 28th March, the appointment was cancelled again due to the part not arriving.
- On 31st March, the customer waited in all day, but the contractor failed to attend or notify them.
- On 14th April, a different part (an automatic air vent) was replaced, which did not resolve the issue.
- On 17th April, the contractor claimed to have visited and left a calling card, but no follow-up was made.
- On 15th and 20th May, further appointments were scheduled and then rescheduled due to delays and availability issues.
- By 2nd June, the customer confirmed that the issue was still unresolved and that the engineer had suggested a full review of the boiler system.

Throughout this period, the customer continued to experience unreliable heating and hot water, with no clear resolution in sight. The delays, lack of communication, and repeated inconvenience had a significant impact on the customer and their family. The Council recognised that the situation had caused undue stress and disruption and acknowledged that the handling of the repair had fallen short of expectations.

Following the escalation of the complaint, the Council took immediate and coordinated action to bring the matter to a close. Recognising the repeated delays, missed appointments, and the impact on the customer's daily life, the Council liaised directly with its Housing Head of Service, contract managers, and compliance team to ensure a resolution was prioritised.

A joint visit was arranged for Friday 6th June 2025, during which both the Council's gas contractor and a member of Council staff attended the property. This was done to ensure accountability and to provide the customer with reassurance that the issue would be resolved on the day. During the visit, a full review of the boiler system was carried out. The engineer confirmed that the previously identified pressure release valve (PRV) had not been properly addressed in earlier appointments. The correct part was finally fitted, and the boiler was tested thoroughly to ensure it was functioning as intended. The system was confirmed to be holding pressure without the need for manual intervention, and hot water was restored reliably.

The Council maintained communication with the customer throughout the process, checking in after the visit to confirm that the issue had been resolved and that no further action was required. The customer was kept informed of each step, and the Council acknowledged the importance of transparency and follow-through in cases involving essential services.

In recognition of the prolonged inconvenience, missed appointments, and the emotional and practical impact on the customer and their family, the Council awarded compensation under its Housing Compensation Policy. This high-impact payment was offered as a gesture of goodwill and accountability.

## User Story – Broken Boiler 2

The customer contacted us to raise concerns about the lack of heating in their new home, which had persisted since the day they moved in on 15th January 2025. Despite reporting the issue early on, the customer experienced weeks without heating or hot water during the winter months, which had a significant impact on their health and wellbeing. They expressed frustration with the Council's handling of the situation, citing poor communication, missed appointments, and delays in resolving the issue.

The customer explained that they had contacted the Council on 20th January to report that the heating system was not working. Contractors attended on 22nd January and advised that flushing the system would resolve the issue. However, the problem persisted, and the customer continued to report no heating or hot water. On 27th January, they submitted a stage one complaint, describing the situation as a disregard for their family's wellbeing and highlighting the lack of temporary accommodation or heating support.

The Council's contractors later confirmed that the heating system, an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP), was not covered by the manufacturer's warranty and needed to be replaced. A quote for a full replacement was approved on 14th February, including a new ASHP, control unit, and radiators. However, the customer had already endured weeks of cold conditions, and temporary oil heaters that were promised never arrived. The customer only received electric heaters by chance, after being asked if they had any at home.

Throughout this period, the customer had spent considerable time and money redecorating and carpeting their new home. They were concerned that the installation of a new heating system might damage their efforts and requested compensation for any resulting impact. They also felt that the initial compensation offer did not reflect the severity of the situation.

Following the stage two complaint, the Council undertook a full review of the case and acknowledged that the customer had not been provided with a working heating system upon moving in. The Council recognised that the heating system had not been serviced prior to the tenancy start date, despite a job being raised in November 2024, and that multiple opportunities to resolve the issue had been missed.

On 27th February 2025, the new heating system was successfully installed. The customer confirmed that the works had been completed, and while there was minor damage caused during installation, such as small holes in the walls from radiator brackets, there were no defects to the carpets, and dustsheets had been used throughout. The customer was able to fix a leak in the kitchen radiator themselves and confirmed that contractors had filled the holes, although they felt more care could have been taken.

In recognition of the delays, disruption, and the impact on the customer's health and home, the Council revised its compensation offer.

## Appendix 19 – Sample of Compliments Received

“I just wanted to say a big thank you for all your help with sorting out these two issues. I have received confirmation that the street sign will be replaced, then yesterday the street cleaners did a wonderful job of clearing the mud and debris in X Road. We don't often get acknowledged for sorting out these issues but I have received numerous messages of thanks including a "Wow, and double wow" regarding the pavement and thought I would share this gratitude with you. “

“Just wanted to send an email to thank you for sorting out the bin problem. I appreciate it was a tricky situation for you and not easy to deal with. You kept me up to far with what you were doing and I felt my concerns were being taken seriously. I have waited a few weeks to send this, but the house is now regularly taking their bins in leaving the path clear. Thank you so much”

“I would like to compliment Suffolk Door and Windows (fitted whole bungalow yesterday) please on outstanding service and quality of the product was brilliant - they were polite and punctual and efficient - everything one could wish for actually.”

“Had repairs ops come to fit handrails within the property and would like to thank them for their hard work and enabling me to get about the house without fear of falling”

“I would like to what a wonderful way in which your staff from housing solutions helped me and support my way into a flat after my homelessness”

“I have been in temporary accommodation, waiting to be housed, I phoned the council as not having the best time, for help. A lady called Vicky, was the most wonderful understanding person I've spoken to, she helped me with all my enquires and put my mind at rest. So, I would really like to say a big thankyou to Vicky and Babergh council for helping me after I was made homeless.”

“I was incredibly impressed as I rang to report my ground floor window wasn't locking and within 40mins of me raising the issue I had an engineer out, he had fixed the issue and had left.”

“To thank you for being proactive, and having a 'designated meadow' policy, in particular, for the wildflower area at Needham Lake. Every such area is vital, and biodiversity is inextricably linked to climate change.”

“i just spoke to Rob from the customer service team and I just want to say how helpful and how lovely he was to speak to! A really lovely person. It's not always nice having to ring the council as it's never normally for a good reason but Rob was absolutely lovely and super helpful”

“I wish to thank you so much for helping my daughter and I with our homelessness situation, we now have a home that I could not even of dreamed of ever getting, it is truly amazing and for this I will be eternally grateful to you.”

“I would like to compliment the people who changed my side door to a upvc door. I can definitely tell the difference with heat not escaping.”

## Appendix 20 – TSM Complaints Data

Theme	Babergh 24/25	Babergh 23/24	Mid Suffolk 24/25	Mid Suffolk 23/24	Sector benchmarking 23/24
Number of stage 1 complaints received per 1,000 homes	79.48 ↓	104.49	65.45 ↓	90.6	22.3 35.2 65.1
Stage 1 complaints responded to within Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales (10 working days)	52.32% ↑	24.06%	49.77% ↑	28.7%	62.5 73.2 87.4
Stage 1 complaints responded to with 10-day extension permitted in code	9.67%	-	5.82%	-	-
Number of stage 2 complaints received per 1,000 homes	11.39 ↓	12.01	9.39 ↓	14.23	4.8 9.0 13.7
Stage 2 complaints responded to within Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales (20 working days)	67.5% ↑	30.2%	84.37% ↑	34.6%	63.6 78.6 94.1
Stage 2 complaints responded to with 20-day extension permitted in code	17.5%	-	3.12%	-	-
Satisfaction with our approach to handling complaints	31% ↑	26%	35% ↑	26%	27.5 34.5 41.1

## Appendix 21 – TSM Complaints Survey Comments



### Complaints – comments

- 153 tenants made a comment due to being dissatisfied
- Recurring theme is **lack of effective communication**, with many expressing **frustration over delayed responses** and **unresolved issues**.
- Some respondents highlighted that complaints are acknowledged but not acted upon i.e. damp and mould, incomplete repairs, and out of date properties that affect health and well-being.
- Tenants feel that concerns are often dismissed or met with excuses.
- Several respondents noted that when attempting to contact us, they are frequently passed from one department to another without resolution.
- Some said they were also not kept up-to-date with status of complaint.
- Mentions of rushed repairs and a perceived lack of urgency in addressing urgent issues such as safety concerns relating to broken locks/structural damage.
- Impression that **tenants feel undervalued and unheard**, which affects level of satisfaction.
- Improvements on proactive communication, simplify contact process would drive tenant satisfaction with handling of complaints.

## Appendix 22 – Satisfaction Scores

**Satisfaction with Measures 2024/25**



**Dissatisfaction with Measures 2024/25**



## Annual satisfaction and dissatisfaction

Measures with high satisfaction also have low dissatisfaction, and vice versa.

In terms of dissatisfaction, generally three out of 10 tenants are dissatisfied with range of services with exception of:

- Listening to views
- Time taken (repairs)
- Complaints handling

**Appendix 23 – Repeat Complainant Data**

**TOTAL REPEAT COMPLAINANT COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY DEPARTMENT**

■ Housing ■ Operations ■ SRP ■ Planning

