



## **Planning Policy**

### **Preamble**

P1. This document is adopted to help councillors respond to planning consultations consistently, fairly and transparently, and to help residents understand how the Council approaches planning matters.

P2. The Parish Council is a statutory consultee. It is not the decision-maker for planning applications; decisions are made by the Local Planning Authority and other statutory bodies as appropriate.

P3. The Council does not provide planning or pre-planning advice and will not express a view on the merits of a proposal prior to a formal application being received and considered at a properly convened meeting. Applicants will be signposted to the Local Planning Authority and the Planning Portal for definitive guidance.

P4. Notwithstanding the above, the Council encourages early engagement so it can understand proposals and relevant local context; however, it will only form a view once the application has been received via the Local Planning Authority and considered at Full Council.

### **1. Purpose**

1.1. This Policy & Protocol sets out how the Council will consider and respond to:

- Planning applications and related consultations;
- Planning policy consultations (e.g., Local Plan updates, supplementary guidance);
- Neighbourhood planning matters.

1.2. It aims to ensure the Council's planning work is:

- Consistent, evidence-led and focused on material planning considerations;
- Transparent and properly recorded;
- Timely, so residents' views can be represented effectively.

### **2. Status and role of the Parish Council**

2.1. The Council is a statutory consultee. Decisions are made by the Local Planning Authority (currently Babergh District Council) and relevant statutory consultees such as the Highway Authority (Suffolk County Council).

2.2. The Council will provide comments/support/objection and/or request conditions where justified by policy and material considerations.

2.3. Councillors are not planning professionals. The Council's role is to represent local interests and provide local knowledge, ensuring comments are planning-based and capable of carrying weight.

### **3. Scope**

This protocol applies to:

- Householder and minor applications;
- Major development;
- Reserved matters, amendments/variations, and prior approvals (where consulted);
- Listed building / heritage-related applications where relevant;
- Tree matters where consulted and material to planning considerations;
- Appeals and policy consultations relevant to Brantham.

#### **4. Principles**

The Council will:

- Treat applicants and residents with respect and impartiality;
- Avoid predetermination and keep an open mind until matters are considered formally;
- Focus on planning merits, not individuals;
- Declare interests properly and follow the Code of Conduct;
- Record clear planning reasons for any objection and for any requested mitigation/conditions.

#### **5. Overarching aims**

5.1. In responding to planning consultations, the Council seeks to protect and enhance Brantham's character and quality of life by supporting development that:

- is proportionate and well-designed, responding positively to local character;
- avoids unacceptable impacts on amenity, highway safety and infrastructure;
- safeguards biodiversity and green infrastructure and supports measurable ecological enhancement;
- addresses flood risk and surface-water management through appropriate SuDS; and
- supports sustainability (including energy and water efficiency), while respecting local context.

#### **6. How planning items are managed (Full Council)**

6.1. Planning applications and consultations will be considered by Full Council, unless delegated under section 11.

6.2. The Clerk will:

- maintain a planning log (reference, address, proposal, consultation deadline, Council resolution, date submitted);
- circulate applications promptly on receipt;
- place applications on the next suitable agenda where the consultation deadline permits;
- submit the Council's agreed response to the Local Planning Authority within the consultation deadline; and
- retain copies/links to submissions and decisions.

6.3. The Council may appoint a Planning Lead (Councillor) to support consistent handling and timely briefing. The Planning Lead role is advisory/supportive and does not replace Full Council decision-making.

#### **7. What the Council will comment on (material planning considerations)**

7.1. The Council will comment only on material planning considerations, including (where relevant):

- principle of development and policy compliance;
- design, scale, massing, layout, materials, character, and street scene impact;
- residential amenity (privacy, overlooking, noise, disturbance, daylight/sunlight);
- highways/access/parking/servicing/visibility and pedestrian/cycle safety;
- flood risk and drainage (including SuDS and surface water management);
- biodiversity, trees/hedgerows, ecological impacts and opportunities for enhancement;
- heritage impacts (including the setting of heritage assets);
- landscape and visual impacts, including important public views;
- sustainability and climate resilience measures.

7.2. Cumulative impact / incremental change: the Council will consider whether repeated minor developments or incremental change (boundary treatments, domestication of edges, hardstanding's, outbuildings, external lighting, etc.) may, collectively, erode character, tranquillity, biodiversity or amenity.

7.3. Lighting: where external lighting is proposed, the Council will seek the minimum necessary lighting, appropriately shielded and directed downward, on timers/sensors where possible, with measures to minimise glare, spill and ecological impacts.

7.4. Style of response: the Council will normally respond as “No objection” (with comments/conditions where appropriate) or “Object” (with clear planning reasons). Explicit endorsement/support will be used sparingly and only where the planning merits are clear.

## **8. Non-material considerations (the Council will avoid relying on these)**

Non-material matters include:

- loss of private view / effect on property value;
- private covenants, land ownership, boundary disputes, private rights of access;
- party wall matters;
- commercial competition / loss of trade;
- matters controlled under Building Regulations or other non-planning regimes;
- construction nuisance (dust/noise/working hours) unless it can reasonably be addressed via planning conditions;
- moral objections or personal circumstances (unless directly relevant to a planning policy test);
- the fact that development has already been carried out (enforcement is for the Local Planning Authority).

## **9. Public engagement and participation**

9.1. Residents are encouraged to submit comments directly to the Local Planning Authority via the online planning portal.

9.2. Public participation at meetings will follow the Council's standing orders/public participation scheme. The Chair may set time limits to ensure the agenda is managed fairly.

## **10. Site visits**

10.1. Site visits are fact-finding only. No decisions are made during site visits.

10.2. Councillors will respect privacy and not enter land/buildings without permission. Photographs may be taken from public viewpoints where appropriate.

## **11. Delegation and urgent decisions between meetings**

11.1. Where consultation deadlines cannot reasonably be met by waiting for the next Full Council meeting, the Council may use delegated arrangements.

11.2. Delegated authority: The Council delegates to the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Planning Lead (or, if unavailable, the Vice Chair), authority to submit a response consistent with this protocol.

11.3. Any delegated response must:

- be circulated to councillors when submitted (and beforehand where practicable);
- be reported to the next meeting for ratification/record in the minutes; and
- be logged with submission date and content.

11.4. For significant proposals (e.g., major development or high local interest), the Chair may call an extraordinary meeting if time allows.

## **12. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and planning consultations**

12.1. The Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and has established a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group operating under adopted Terms of Reference.

12.2. The Steering Group leads and supports Neighbourhood Plan preparation (evidence, engagement, drafting policies). It is not a decision-making body for planning applications.

12.3. The Council's formal planning responses are agreed at Full Council and submitted by the Clerk.

12.4. For major or locally sensitive proposals, the Council may request the Steering Group to provide factual input or relevant evidence (including emerging policy direction) to inform Full Council discussion. Any such input is advisory and recorded as such.

12.5. When referencing the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, the Council will make clear that policies are "emerging" and attribute weight consistent with the plan's stage and supporting evidence.

## **13. Planning enforcement**

13.1. Enforcement is the responsibility of the Local Planning Authority. The Council may signpost residents to the enforcement process and/or provide factual information to the Local Planning Authority where appropriate.

13.2. The Council will avoid making determinations on enforcement merits; it will focus on ensuring concerns are passed to the appropriate authority.

## **14. Training and continuous improvement**

14.1. Councillors involved in planning will be encouraged to undertake periodic training (material considerations, probity, heritage, drainage).

14.2. The Council may periodically review outcomes (Local Planning Authority decisions on key applications) to improve the quality and usefulness of its representations.

## **Appendix A — Useful links (Babergh)**

- A1. Planning, heritage and building control (service home page).
- A2. Search for and comment on a planning application (Simple Search).
- A3. Planning enforcement (including how to submit an enforcement report).
- A4. Planning service hub (includes enforcement, CIL, listed buildings/conservation areas and related links).
- A5. Joint Local Plan review and adoption information (including access to the policies map).

*(Note: web links change occasionally. Appendix A can be updated by the Clerk at review without altering the intent of this protocol.)*

## **Appendix B — Babergh & Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan policy signposting**

### **B1. Source and review (audit trail)**

This appendix signposts policies from the Babergh & Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan – Part 1 (adopted November 2023) and is intended as a quick reference only. Policy titles/numbering and any remaining saved policies will be checked at each annual review against the Councils’ published “Live Policies” list.

#### **B1a. Development Plan context**

The Council will have regard to the full Development Plan in force for the area when commenting on applications. This may include the Joint Local Plan (and any remaining “saved” policies), any made Neighbourhood Plan covering Brantham, and other adopted planning documents that form part of the Development Plan, alongside relevant national policy.

#### **B2. How to use this appendix**

This appendix does not replace reading the full policy wording or any relevant supplementary guidance. The Parish Council will reference only those policies/material considerations that are relevant to the specific proposal and site context.

#### **B3. Strategic policies (SP) often relevant to most proposals**

- SP01 Housing Needs
- SP02 Affordable Housing
- SP03 The sustainable location of new development
- SP04 Provision for Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople
- SP05 Employment Land
- SP06 Retail and Main Town Centre Uses
- SP07 Tourism
- SP08 Strategic Infrastructure Provision
- SP09 Enhancement and Management of the Environment
- SP10 Climate Change

#### **B4. Local policies (LP) commonly relevant**

Housing / countryside / domestic proposals

LP01, LP02, LP03, LP04, LP05, LP06, LP07, LP08

Economy / employment  
LP09, LP10

Retail, tourism and leisure  
LP11, LP12, LP13, LP14

Environment, heritage, landscape  
LP15, LP16, LP17, LP18, LP19

Rural land uses  
LP20, LP21, LP22

Design, climate and resources  
LP23, LP24, LP25, LP26, LP27

Community, transport and infrastructure  
LP28, LP29, LP30, LP31, LP32

B5. "Most used by Brantham" shortlist (recommended)

For many Brantham applications, the Parish Council will commonly consider (where relevant): SP03, SP09, SP10 and LP24, and where applicable LP27/LP26 (flood/drainage), LP16/LP15 (biodiversity/environment), LP19 (heritage), LP29 (transport) and LP32 (developer contributions).