

Planning for housing growth

1. Background

- 1.1 Stowupland grew significantly but steadily during the twentieth century – firstly between the two world wars, and then from the 1960s. Following a period of rapid growth in housing between 1961 and 1981 there is a visible slowing of growth following completion of The Heights and the first part of Reeds Way during the early 1980s. In the thirty-year period 1981 to 2011 there was a 25% increase in the number of houses from 718 to 900 homes. Between 2001 and 2016 95 new homes were completed in the parish.
- 1.2 Housing completions from 2008 to 2016 are set out below. All the development in this period has taken place inside the 1998 Local Plan Stowupland Settlement Boundary, with most development being individual properties and small groups in sub-divided large gardens or infill plots.

Table 1: Stowupland completions 2008/09 – 2015/16

2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
8	0	3	2	0	2	7	1

MSDC: Annual Monitoring Reports

2. Policy background

- 2.1 Over the plan preparation period policy has changed, and is soon to change again as Babergh and Mid Suffolk councils are preparing a joint Local Plan. The following paragraphs set out the policy background that give some context to the 2018 assessment of a housing growth figure for Stowupland.
- 2.1 Our starting point was the Mid Suffolk 2012 Core Strategy Focused Review (the most up to date development plan document). This set a requirement of 750 new homes in the Key Service Centres (KSC) between 2012 and 2027. Taking a straight division and sharing the allocation of least 750 homes between the KSCs is not appropriate given that each KSC is very different and differing needs and capacities. Across all KSCs 424 new homes were completed between 2012 and 2016 which leaves a minimum of 326 new homes to be built in the remaining 11 years of the plan. A number of sites will have planning permission in these villages, but have yet to be built. Although we do not have the totals for the combined KSCs we do know that 10 new homes were built in Stowupland between 2012 and 2016 (average of 2.5 per year), and that there was permission for a further 177 new homes in the village as at 1st April 2016. As the NP is planning through to 2036 there will be a need to make provision for longer term growth, effectively for a further 9 years over and above the Core Strategy projection.

- 2.3 The Babergh & Mid Suffolk Local Plan Consultation Document, August 2017 (B&MSLP) sets out the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for both authorities for 2014 – 2036. For Mid Suffolk this is 9,951 (annualised rate 452), and shows a residual requirement (i.e. the OAN minus completions and committed dwellings as at 1st April 2017) as 5,820.
- 2.4 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (formerly the Department for Communities and Local Government) published a consultation document, *Planning for the right homes in the right places*, on 14 September 2017 setting out new planning proposals on calculating local housing need and a common approach to calculating the five-year supply of housing land, and proposed transitional arrangements. At the same time, a spreadsheet was published that indicates Mid Suffolk’s annualised figure to be 573, based on the proposed formula (which covers the period 2016 to 2026, so not extending as far as the draft B&MSLP) set out in the consultation document. As Babergh & Mid Suffolk are at the early stages of producing their joint local plan they fall into the period where transitional arrangements will apply.
- 2.5 *Planning for the right homes in the right places* suggested a formula-based approach for councils to apportion the overall housing need figures to neighbourhood planning areas. However, the Government has published its response to the questions asked in the *Planning for the Right Homes for Right Places* consultation (this can be viewed at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685293/Government_response_to_Planning_for_the_right_homes_in_the_right_places_consultation.pdf and in response to the formula proposed for neighbourhood plans, this states “We have considered the responses received and have decided not to take forward a simple formula-based approach to apportion housing need to neighbourhood areas.”
- 2.6 In the absence of up to date housing figures from Mid Suffolk we considered the formula as originally set out in the *Planning for the Right Homes for Right Places* consultation. The 2011 population of Stowupland is 1,988, and for Mid Suffolk it is 96,731, so the population of the Stowupland Neighbourhood Plan area is 2.05% of the population of Mid Suffolk.
- 2.7 The revised and updated draft NPPF (published on 5 March 2018 for consultation) incorporates the new approach to calculating housing growth numbers (Objectively Assessed Need [OAN]) for district and borough councils, and requires (paragraph 66) strategic plans to set out a housing requirement figure for designated neighbourhood areas. Although Babergh and Mid Suffolk will be required to follow the new guidelines these figures are unlikely to be published for two to three months beyond the time we wish to start our pre-submission consultation with the community and stakeholders.

3. **A housing growth figure for Stowupland**

- 3.1 Housing growth is not simply about the quantity, it is also about the distribution of this growth, i.e. where in the district the growth should go. We have considered the August 2017 draft B&MSLP as this sets out the authority’s approach to the distribution of housing growth over the plan period. This document sets out different options for the two districts. Four options for spatial distribution are set out for Mid Suffolk: county town focused (MHD1), market town/rural area balance (MHD2), transport corridor focused (MHD3), and new settlement focused (MHD4), and no initial preference is expressed in the document. Distribution to the Core Villages in Mid Suffolk varies from 15% (new settlement option) to 30% (transport corridor option).
- 3.2 Given the varying sizes of Core Villages it doesn’t seem logical or reasonable to distribute the housing numbers evenly among them. So, we considered a reasonable approach is to distribute growth based on the current population in the Core Village parishes. The population of Stowupland is 5.05% of the population of Core Villages.
- 3.3 We recognise that Stowupland is one of the more accessible Core Villages with the railway station in Stowmarket close to the western part of the parish and the A1120 and A14 providing good road access. The following table sets out the four options contained in the August 2017 draft B&MSLP with a 5th “option” for more growth in Core Villages within 2km of an ‘A’ road junction with numbers raised by 12% while keeping the growth in the more remote Core Villages at 20%.

Table 2: The four Mid Suffolk options (B&MS Draft LP, August 2017) with a 5th Option

	2011 population	% population of Core Villages	Option MHD1 – Core Villages 20%	Option MHD2 – Core Villages 25%	Option MHD3 – Core Villages 30%	Option MHD3 + 12% for accessible villages	Option MHD4 – Core Villages 15%
Homes needed			2,292	2,865	3,438		1,719
Stow-upland	1,988	5.05	116	145	174	195	87

- 3.4 This “5th option” effectively gives a 12% weighting to the more accessible Core Villages in the transport corridor Option MHD3, and gives a total of **195 dwellings** to be planned for in Stowupland over the 20 years of the plan period (2016 – 2036).
- 3.5 We feel this approach reflects the number and variety of settlements along the main transport route in Mid Suffolk, the A14 corridor/railway lines: Claydon and Barham and Great Blakenham close to Ipswich, the town of Needham Market, Haughley, Woolpit, Elmswell and Thurston. Clearly some of these settlements are more

sustainable than others, have a different relationship with the nearest 'higher order' town (e.g. Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds), and will have differing capacity to absorb growth. In addition, some of these communities are producing their own Neighbourhood Plans including at least one Core Village that wishes to achieve a high level of growth to support infrastructure improvements. Appendix 1 is a table of extracted information from the Babergh & Mid Suffolk Strategic Housing and Employment Land Assessment (SHEALA) 2017, that indicates the number of dwellings permitted in the 'A14 corridor' and number of outstanding residential planning permissions. The published information did not include the outline planning permission for 175 dwellings in Stowupland.

4. **Capacity for growth in Stowupland –finding the right locations**

- 4.1 Had we been starting with a blank sheet we would have considered site allocations based on assessments of visual and character capacity, and physical and social infrastructure. However, apart from three individual plots, planning permission has been granted for a total of 185 dwellings on two sites. The largest site was granted outline planning permission for up to 175 dwellings on appeal on 26 May 2016 (after the Neighbourhood Plan start date, 1st April 2016). Detailed consent for the first phase of 75 dwellings was given in October 2017. A smaller site for ten dwellings was granted planning permission in 2017, so these two sites have been allocated.
- 4.2 A site that is included in Mid Suffolk's Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHEALA) is the subject of a *planning application for the erection of 18 dwellings, an extension to the cemetery and car park (for use as a staff car park for the primary school). This site is well located in terms of its capacity to accommodate the development in the landscape (as the topography, relationship with the contour line and field boundary mean that there are no plateau-edge extensive views out across the Gipping Valley) and is close to services and facilities. While the site is suitable in landscape and sustainability terms, and the proposal is of a size consistent with the expressed wishes of the community, it does have constraints relating to the access, footpath, and road crossing and its location opposite the primary school. These constraints need to be addressed and safe and suitable solutions provided to make development here acceptable. We have therefore allocated this site with criteria set out in the policy that will need to be met.
- 4.3 Two planning applications on adjoining parcels of land between Stowmarket Road and Thorney Green Road, for a total of 143 dwellings have been refused planning permission, and are the subject of **Appeal Hearings (on 24th and 25th April). The scale, location, indicative layout and access are all unsuitable for allocation in the neighbourhood plan. The site is the only parcel of farmland separating Stowupland from Stowmarket, and the appeal proposal would destroy the green gap between the

town and parish, and destroy the village character as well as the edge of plateau views across the Gipping Valley. The indicative plan shows an urban estate that would merge with the housing on the edge of Stowmarket visible across the A14 cutting that separates the parish from Stowmarket. One application relies on the other for access so at the time the neighbourhood plan was being prepared there was no flexibility to consider a smaller development on part of the site. Clearly if the appeals are allowed the permissions will add 143 dwellings to the total allocated in the neighbourhood plan.

- 4.4 The two sites with planning permission and the site referred to in paragraph 4.2 above for 18 dwellings gives a total of 203 dwellings on three allocated sites.
- 4.5 Planning permissions granted over the past few years indicate that proposals for individual infill sites will continue to come forward over the plan period. There may also be opportunities for small groups, and/or redevelopment of plots or buildings (brownfield development) that will contribute to growth in the parish. Indeed, as this paper was being finalised an application for three dwellings on a small site close to the settlement boundary has been submitted to Mid Suffolk.
- 4.6 The amount of growth planned for in the neighbourhood plan represents a 60% increase on the housing growth rate set out in section 1 above. If the growth rate of 95 dwellings over 15 years is extended to 20 years the total would be 127 dwellings. The 203 dwellings we have allocated over 20 years is 60% greater than this.
- 4.6 Areas for growth outside the three allocated sites should be considered using the evidence gathered during preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, principally the Landscape Appraisal, the Character Assessment, the feedback from residents of the parish through the questionnaires, and location/accessibility to services and facilities and sustainable means of transport. Planning history in the parish indicates that there are sufficient opportunities for growth through the site allocations and smaller, infill individual and small groups to provide a level of growth above the Mid Suffolk option MHD3 + 12% without compromising the green gaps between Stowupland village and Stowmarket and between Stowupland and Saxham Street and without using land that provides the upland views and contributes to the rural character of the parish.

* Note: On 23rd May 2018 Mid Suffolk's planning committee resolved to grant planning permission to the application for 18 dwellings described in paragraph 4.2 above.

** Note: both appeals referred to in paragraph 4.3 above were allowed and planning permission granted (Appeal references: APP/W3520/W/17/3184908 & APP/W3520/W/17/3184909) on 18th May 2018.

5. Monitoring and review

- 5.1 Local planning authorities are required to regularly review local plans, and it is clear that planning for a 20-year period at parish level is difficult if the plan is to remain current and relevant, especially if the local plan for the area is still emerging. The government intends that neighbourhood plans should be reviewed, and it is sensible to include provision for this in the plan. This is an additional reason for allocating the three sites now, providing for 203 dwellings to be built. They may all be delivered within the first 10 years of the plan, but we don't know that at this stage. When the plan is reviewed the parish will have a clearer idea of the rate of delivery of dwellings on the allocated sites, and will be able to consider allocating a further site or sites if the emerging local plan proposes a higher growth rate and/or if appropriate at that time.

Appendix 1

Babergh & Mid Suffolk SHEALA August 2017

Extract from Appendix E – Outstanding planning permissions as at 1st April 2017

Mid Suffolk – “A14 corridor”

Town/Core Village	Total no. of dwellings permitted (net)	No. of dwellings outstanding
Claydon	8	8
Barham	8	8
Great Blakenham	452	235
Needham Market	267	267
Stowmarket	533	449
*Stowupland	5	5
Haughley	7	7
Elmswell	200	200
Woolpit	8	8
Thurston	111	111
Total	1,599	1,298

*Note 1: this does not include the outline planning permission granted on appeal for 175 dwellings in 2016, allocated in the Stowupland Neighbourhood Plan as site SNP2.

Note 2: as at 30 May 2018 the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) for Babergh & Mid Suffolk for 2017 – 2018 was not available.