



**Aldham Neighbourhood
Plan Review
Public Consultation
March 2024 Aldham Parish Council**

WE NEED YOUR COMMENTS

The Parish Council has decided to carry out a Focused Review of the 2020 Neighbourhood Plan to bring it in line with the new policies for the location of development across Babergh and with those in other neighbourhood plans.

In a nutshell, we are amending two of the eight chapters of the 2020 Neighbourhood Plan to bring it up-to-date and bring the policy that determines where new development can take place in line with national and district policies.

Drop-in Information Event

We're holding a drop-in information event at the Parish Church on Saturday 23 March between 10.00am and 3.00pm. It will provide you with an opportunity to find out more about the Focused Review. Refreshments will be available.

In 2020 the Parish Council completed the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for Aldham when 91% of residents that voted supported Babergh District Council adopting the Plan and using it when making planning decisions.

Four years on, there is now a need to update one of the key planning policies in the Plan, the policy that determines where development would be allowed to take place.

In November 2023, Babergh District Council adopted Part 1 of a new Joint Local Plan for Babergh and Mid Suffolk districts. Whereas the previous Local Plan allowed development, including housing, to take place outside of defined "Built-Up Area Boundaries" where a need could be demonstrated, the new Local Plan (Policy SP03) limits all but specific exceptions of development to take place within "Settlement Boundaries". However, the same policy states that "Outside of the settlement boundaries, development will normally only be permitted where... it is in accordance with a made Neighbourhood Plan..."

The current Aldham Neighbourhood Plan states that "Proposals for development located outside the Built-Up Area Boundary (BUAB) will only be permitted where it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that there is an identified local need for the proposal and that it cannot be satisfactorily located within the BUAB (Settlement Boundary)."

The consequence of the adoption of the Local Plan is that our Neighbourhood Plan policy is now "out of sync" with many other neighbourhood plans across Babergh. As a result, Aldham could come under pressure for further housing development outside the Settlement Boundary if a developer can demonstrate to the District Council that a "local need" exists.

THIS CONSULTATION

The Review effectively replaces Chapter 's 3 (Planning Policy Context) and 5 (Planning Strategy) of the 2020 Plan with new and up-to-date chapters that will, if approved, bring our neighbourhood plan in-line with the newly adopted Local Plan and reduce the pressure for speculative development outside our settlement boundaries.

In a nutshell, we are amending two of the eight chapters of the 2020 Neighbourhood Plan to bring it up-to-date and bring the policy that determines where new development can take place in line with national and district policies.

Elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan, reference is made to the 2018 version of the National Planning Policy Framework. The most recent version of this was published in December 2023 and the references will also be updated in the Review.

This leaflet sets out the current Chapters 3 and 5 and the proposed new Chapters.

**We are now consulting on the changes for a period of just over 6 weeks.
We need your comments by 13 May 2024.
The back page identifies how you can comment.**



Policy ALD1 – Spatial Strategy

The Neighbourhood Plan area will accommodate development commensurate Tom’s designation in the settlement hierarchy and taking into account the specific characteristics of the plan area including the availability of infrastructure, services and facilities and the local transport network. The focus for new development will be within the defined Built-Up Area Boundary, as defined on the Policies Map.

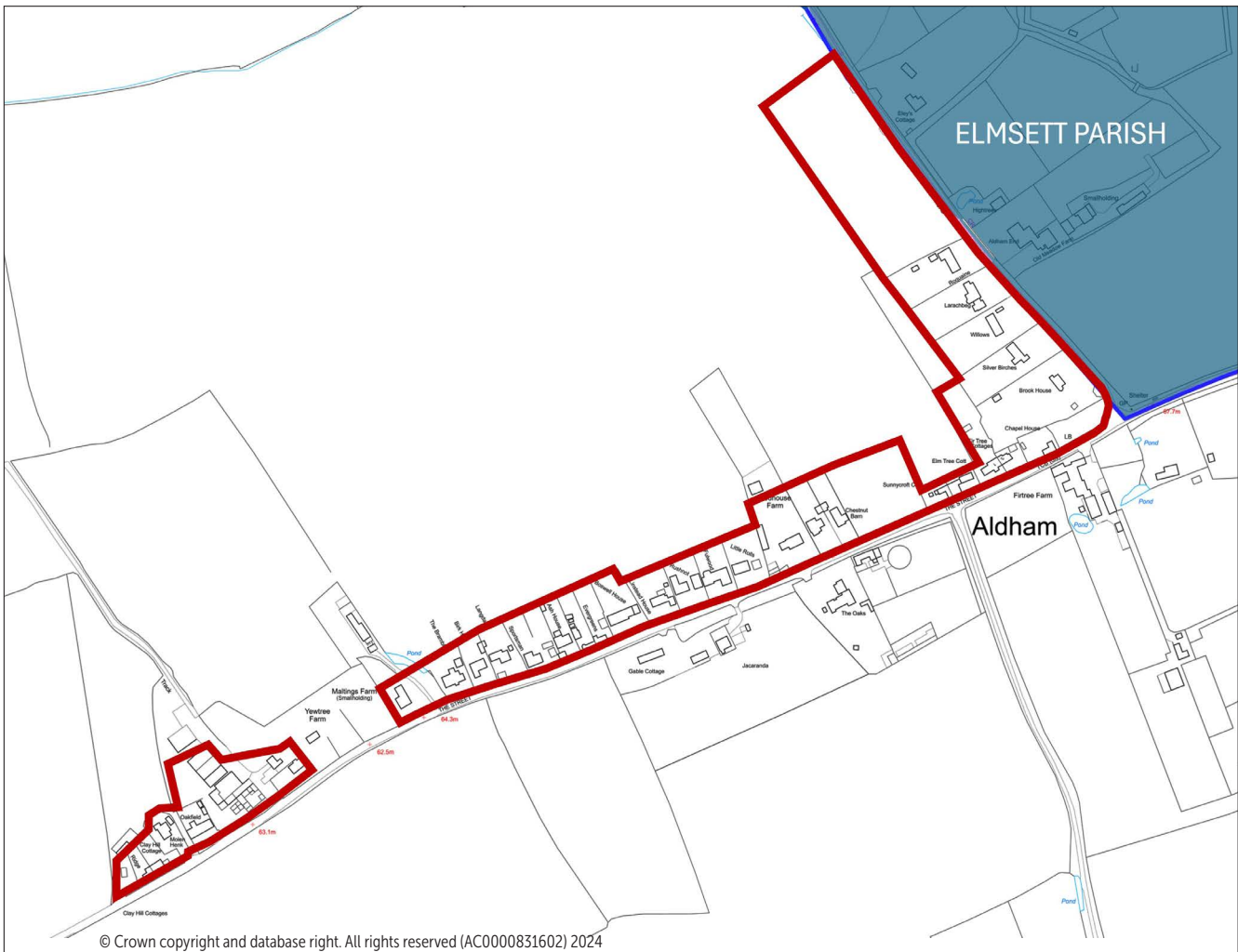
Proposals for development located outside the built up area boundary (BUAB) will only be permitted where it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that there is an identified local need for the proposal and that it cannot be satisfactorily located within the BUAB.

Revised Policy ALD1 – Spatial Strategy

The Neighbourhood Area will accommodate development commensurate with the policies of the adopted Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan - Part 1.

The focus for new development will be within the defined Settlement Boundaries, as shown on the Policies Map, where the principle of development is accepted.

Proposals for development located outside the Settlement Boundaries will only be permitted where they are in accordance with national, district and neighbourhood level policies and where they would not have a detrimental impact on infrastructure capacity, and heritage and landscape designations.



Settlement Boundaries as defined in the 2020 Plan

3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1** The regulations governing the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans require that they conform with the NPPF and the strategic policies of the local development plan. In July 2018 the Government published a Revised NPPF.
- 3.2** The NPPF requires that communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans should:
- Develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development.
 - Plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan.
- 3.3** At a more local level, the Plan has been prepared in the context of the current status of the Babergh Local Plan, which comprises the Core Strategy and the “saved policies” of the 2006 Babergh Local Plan. Babergh District Council adopted a Core Strategy in February 2014. It provides the current strategic planning framework for Aldham which this Neighbourhood Plan has had regard to. These documents are collectively referred to as “the local plan” in this document. In 2015 Babergh District Council announced their intention to produce a new Joint Local Plan (the emerging local plan) with Mid Suffolk District Council that would provide a planning framework for the management of growth across the two districts to 2036. In August 2017 a consultation document was published but as of January 2019 a draft Local Plan had yet to be published for consultation. It is considered unlikely that the emerging local plan will be adopted before the Neighbourhood Plan is “made” by the District Council. As such, the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to conform with the policies in the adopted local plan documents, while having regard to the status and content of the emerging local plan.
- 3.4** The adopted Core Strategy identifies a hierarchy of settlements ranked according to their size and the services they provide. The Core Strategy recognises that there are several larger villages (core villages) that provide a range of services and facilities for a cluster of villages around them. It identifies Aldham as a “hinterland village” within the “functional cluster” of Hadleigh, acknowledging that Hadleigh provides a range of services and facilities to meet many of the needs of Aldham’s residents, albeit that the only realistic way to get to Hadleigh is by car. In so far as Aldham is concerned, the saved policies of the 2006 Local Plan and the policies in the Core Strategy are those by which planning applications will be judged until replaced by a new local plan.
- 3.5** In 2015 the District Council commenced the preparation of a new joint local plan in conjunction with Mid Suffolk. In July 2019 the Preferred Options Draft Joint Local Plan was published for consultation. The Preferred Options document proposed designating Aldham as a Hamlet Village, a change from the proposed designation as a Hinterland Village in the previous (August 2017) Joint Local Plan consultation. The Hamlet Village designation reflects the lack of services and facilities in Aldham, the poor road links and the lack of public transport. The consultation document also identified a minimum requirement of 13 additional dwellings to be provided for in the Neighbourhood Plan between 2018 and 2036.

3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1** The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in the context of the content of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the relevant Local Plan documents that cover the parish. The Plan must have regard to the content of the NPPF and be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan. The paragraphs below identify how these are relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.2** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government’s high-level planning policies that must be taken into account in the preparation of development plan documents and when deciding planning applications. In December 2023 the Government published a Revised NPPF. The Framework sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states: “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that:
- a) all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;
 - b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”
- 3.3** Paragraph 29 of the NPPF states that: “Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies.”

The Local Plan

- 3.4** At a more local level, the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in the context of the current Babergh Local Plan, which comprises the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan - Part 1, adopted in November 2023 and referred to as JLP1 in this Neighbourhood Plan. It provides a set of strategic and local development management policies, which will be used to inform decisions on planning applications and appeals. These do not need to be repeated in the Neighbourhood Plan but which the Neighbourhood Plan can complement by adding locally based detail.
- 3.5** Part 2 of the Joint Local Plan is to be prepared during the coming years, with adoption currently scheduled for Autumn 2026. It will identify a settlement hierarchy for the two local authority areas, the distribution of any further housing growth

3.6 At this time the Joint Local Plan is at a very early stage of preparation and, therefore, is not a matter that has been given weight in the preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan.

3.7 Given the status of the Joint Local Plan and the fact that the Neighbourhood Plan has been completed before the Joint Local Plan is adopted, regard has been had to the adopted Babergh development plan documents in preparing this Plan while not seeking to contradict the emerging strategic policies of the Joint Local Plan.

2020 Neighbourhood Plan Chapter 5

5.1 As noted above, the planning policy framework for Babergh is currently evolving from that which is set out in the Core Strategy (2014) to a new Joint Local Plan for Babergh and Mid Suffolk districts. The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared ahead of the Joint Local Plan being adopted and the strategy for the village is based on the continuation of the Hinterland Village designation as designated in the current adopted Core Strategy.

5.2 Core Strategy Policy CS2 designates Aldham as a Hinterland Village which will: "accommodate some development to meet the needs within them" and where "All proposals will be assessed against Policy CS11."

5.3 Core Strategy Policy CS11 has three key strands to it that are relevant to setting the policy context to the Aldham Neighbourhood Plan. In summary, it states that development proposals will be approved where:

- proposals score positively when assessed against Policy CS15;
- a series of matters identified in the policy are addressed; and
- proposals are able to demonstrate a close functional relationship to the existing settlement sites.

The sites identified for development in this Neighbourhood Plan satisfy these criteria.

5.4 A central principle of the Neighbourhood Plan is to support only limited development in Aldham that:

- is consistent with the lack of services and facilities;
- takes account of the very narrow access roads to larger centres; and
- ensures that it will not have an irreversible impact on the characteristics of this small and remote village.

Aldham has been in receipt of a very limited amount of development in previous years and a continuation of this approach will ensure that the essential and distinct characteristics of the village are maintained. It is, however, essential that the growth is focused on the existing main built-up area of the village in order to avoid sporadic and isolated development that would be detrimental to the rural nature of the area.

5.5 A Built-Up Area Boundary (BUAB) is defined for the main built-up area of the village in order to manage the location of future development and limit unjustified development outside the boundary. The boundary is based on that contained in the 2006 Local Plan but has been reviewed to reflect recent changes and opportunities for new development that will arise during the Neighbourhood Plan period. In order to manage the

and identify any sites required to meet that growth. At the time of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, the District Council had commenced a "call for sites" that landowners/developers would like to be considered for allocation in Part 2.

3.6 In July 2020, Suffolk County Council adopted the Minerals and Waste Local Plan which is part of the strategic policy framework for the area. Much of the parish does fall within a Minerals Consultation Area and the District Council will consult the County Council on planning applications that fall within this area.

Proposed Replacement Chapter 5

Context

5.1 The planning policy framework for the Parish is established in the adopted Babergh Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Part 1 (November 2023) and the 2020 "made" Aldham Neighbourhood Plan. The latter defines Built Up Area Boundaries. The term "Built Up Area Boundary" has been superseded in the Joint Local Plan and they are now known as Settlement Boundaries.

5.2 The principle of development within Settlement Boundaries is accepted, in principle, while there is a general presumption against development outside them, unless this is allowed for by national or specific local policies. The level of services and facilities in the village as well as the limited accessibility to higher order settlements means that only limited housing growth is appropriate in the village over the period of the Plan. It is, however, essential that the growth is focused on the existing built-up area of the village where there is a close relationship with accessibility of the existing services and facilities.

5.3 Part 1 of the Joint Local Plan does not define a settlement hierarchy across Babergh nor allocate sites for development. These matters are being addressed in the emerging Part 2 of the Joint Local Plan, planned for completion in 2026. As such, there is no housing requirement for Aldham that the Neighbourhood Plan has to meet..

5.4 Policy SP03 of the Part 1 Joint Local Plan sets out where new development would be supported, but the approach is very high level with general references to windfall development in accordance with the policies in Neighbourhood Plans or elsewhere in the Joint Local Plan.

Settlement Boundaries

5.5 The Neighbourhood Plan Review confirms the Settlement Boundaries of the 2020 Plan.

5.6 In accordance with Policy SP03 of the Joint Local Plan, the spatial strategy for Aldham supports the principle of development within the defined settlement boundaries, including the sites allocated for housing in the 2020 Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the consideration of the impact of the proposal as assessed against other policies in the Joint Local Plan – Part 1 and Neighbourhood Plan, such as

- the presence of heritage assets;
- the landscape setting of the village;
- the capacity of services and infrastructure;
- the potential impact on the amenity of existing residents; and
- the impact of development on the wider area.

This approach will ensure that the largely undeveloped countryside will remain preserved.

5.7 There may be situations where it may be adequately

potential impacts of growth, new development will be focused within the BUAB. This will ensure that the undeveloped rural countryside is preserved and remains largely undeveloped.

5.6 Policy CS11 of the Babergh Core Strategy allows, subject to certain considerations, limited growth to take place adjoining but outside the BUAB. This was the case when the District council approved seven dwellings on Hadleigh Road despite the Parish council objections. However, given the lack of services and facilities in the village, and the fact that this Plan sets out how it meets the identified housing needs in full (as referred to in Paragraph 97 of the Government's Planning Practice Guidance) there will be no local identified need for further housing development outside the BUAB other than allowed for in this Plan.

5.7 Such development would only reinforce the ribbon nature of the village by extending the housing along the roads and would have a detrimental impact on the nature and form of the settlement. It could also erode the small but important gap that separates Aldham and Elmsett villages. There may be situations where it can be demonstrated that it is necessary for development to take place away from the BUAB, but this will be limited to that which can satisfactorily demonstrate that there is an identified need for the proposal and that it cannot be satisfactorily located within the BUAB. However, this approach does not restrict the conversion of agricultural buildings to new uses where proposals meet the government regulations and local planning policies for such conversions.

demonstrated that it is necessary for development to take place outside the Settlement Boundaries. However, this will be limited to that which is specifically supported by the NPPF, Joint Local Plan - Part 1 and the Neighbourhood Plan. Table 5 of the Joint Local Plan - Part 1 identifies the policies permitting development outside settlement boundaries, subject to the development's accordance with the other relevant policies of the Plan.

For the purposes of this consultation, market housing schemes outside the Settlement Boundary would not be supported by the Joint Local Plan.



What next?

Once this consultation is complete, the Parish Council will review the comments and submit the Review to Babergh District Council. The District Council will then carry out further consultation and submit the Review documents and comments to an Independent Examiner. The Examiner will decide whether any changes are required and whether the Review needs to be the subject of a Parish Referendum. At this stage the Parish Council feels that a further Referendum will not be necessary. When the Review is complete, the new policy will be used when planning applications in the parish are considered by Babergh District Council.



Don't forget that if you have any questions or want to find out more we are holding a drop-in event at the Parish Church on Saturday 23 March between 10.00am and 3.00pm.



HOW TO COMMENT

We welcome your comments on the Review, even if you fully support the proposed changes. Demonstrating support will help the Examiner know what the local feelings are. You can comment by either completing the slip below and returning it to Jonathan Ralph, Gable Cottage, The Street, Aldham IP7 6NH or, if you are able, by completing the response online at www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Aldham/



You can also respond on a mobile device by scanning this QR Code

Consultation Questions

1. Do you support Revised Policy ALD1 - Spatial Strategy? Yes No Unsure

Comments

2. Do you have any comments on the new Chapter 3? Yes No

Comments

3. Do you have any comments on the new Chapter 5? Yes No

Comments

Data Protection Notice: All information collected and processed by the Parish Council at this stage is by virtue of our requirement under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

Please note: All comments received will be made publicly available and will be identifiable by name / organisation. All other personal information provided will be protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Name

Address (optional)

EMAIL (optional).....

Would you like to be notified when the Parish Council submits the Review to Babergh District Council?

(if yes, please provide either address or email address above) Yes No

Would you be willing to have your contact details shared with Babergh District Council for the sole purpose of enabling that Council to keep you informed of further consultations on the Review? YES No

Data will be processed by Babergh District Council in accordance with their information security policies and Privacy Notice (available on their website).

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