

District Council Report

Council loses Five-year housing land supply.

As a result of National Planning Policy Framework changes, the Councils have had to apply a 20% buffer to their five-year housing land supply requirement rather than the 5% buffer previously applied.

The annual housing requirements set out in Policy SP01 of the adopted Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Part 1 are 416 homes for Babergh and 535 homes for Mid Suffolk. These figures are less than 80% of the most up to date local housing need figure calculated using the standard method as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, which are 790 homes for Babergh and 757 homes for Mid Suffolk.

Since the start of July this results in Babergh having a 4.68-year housing land supply figure and Mid Suffolk having a 6.73-year housing land supply figure.

What this means is that Babergh's local housing policies are treated as out-of-date under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), triggering the "tilted balance" and a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means the default stance for new planning applications shifts heavily toward approval, weakening the council's control over where homes are built.

Community Investment

Community infrastructure payments have been used to upgrade play areas in Sudbury and Hadleigh.

In Sudbury money went to Belle Vue Park and the Aubrey Drive play area, while £76k was used for improving the play area at the Calais Street recreation ground in Hadleigh.

In each case, proposals include upgrading facilities to create more inclusive play equipment that is designed to support children with disabilities, incorporating sensory play features and ground level activities as well as features to ensure safe and accessible fun for all.

Meanwhile, Hadleigh Leisure Centre also received £101k towards a project to increase the capacity of the fitness suite and repurpose a ground-floor room into a community space.

Help to replace ageing heating systems with heat pumps.

Suffolk's public sector organisations are partnering with Switch Together to help residents in Suffolk move away from ageing and inefficient heating systems.

Through the government's Boiler Upgrade Scheme, eligible homeowners in England can receive a grant of £7,500 toward an air source heat pump, or £9,000 for households currently heating with oil or LPG. The grant is applied for upfront by the installer, so residents do not need to claim it back or repay it.

The Boiler Upgrade Scheme is open to homeowners and small business owners in England who are replacing a fossil fuel heating system and hold a valid Energy Performance Certificate with no outstanding major insulation recommendations. It is not means-tested, so there is no income threshold to qualify. The scheme is currently scheduled to run until 31 December 2027.

Silver award for Councils' armed forces commitment

This summer, the councils received their Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award, acknowledging their outstanding support of the armed forces community.

The award is given to organisations that have made tangible changes to their workplace policies and culture, helping to ensure that reservists, veterans, cadet force adult volunteers, and their families feel genuinely valued.

Council reiterates opposition to pylons.

Although negotiations with National Grid have secured some improvements to planned construction practice and ecological management, last month the councils said that there were still too many questions unanswered regarding the significant and devastating impacts of the scheme on the districts.

The councils repeated their objection to the proposal and the call they made during public hearings earlier this year for a delay to the project so other options – such as an undersea route or underground cabling – can be fully considered and costed.

In the event of the scheme being given the go-ahead despite their opposition, the councils have also requested a final opportunity to 'check and challenge' as required, with the addition of a compliance monitoring, reporting and enforcement strategy within the development consent order – meaning developers working more closely with local authorities and greater transparency for local communities.

Councils recognised as Menopause Friendly employers.

The accreditation certifies high standards and proven practices that embrace menopause in the workplace. It is assessed and awarded by an independent panel who described the councils' application as "excellent", demonstrating evidence of effectiveness in the five key areas of culture, policies and practices, training, engagement, and working environment.