

BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILS

Statement of Community Involvement Consultation

Monday 17 March 2025 to Monday 12 May 2025 (8 weeks)

Please see our latest consultation on the 'Statement of Community Involvement' below. This concerns a proposal to stop sending neighbour letters for certain types of planning applications, as most of our neighbour comments are received electronically. There is a statutory requirement that we notify neighbouring residents about a planning application by sending a letter, or by placing a site notice on display in the relevant location. **Currently, we go above and beyond this, and do both.**

Consultation FAQs

Can you explain the purpose of this consultation?

We need our services to run in the most effective way possible, whilst prioritising our spending.

We are proposing to stop sending neighbour letters to let people know about certain types of planning application being considered in their community and we need to know what people think of this.

What type of planning applications will be affected?

We will still send letters where the planning application involves 10 or more homes (Major applications) but not for other types. These are:

- Minor applications which are developments of between 1 and 9 homes
- Householder applications, which include extensions, loft conversions, doors and windows, fences, gates and garden walls or outbuildings
- Others, which include Listed Building Consents, changes of use, advertisements.

Why are you considering these changes?

There are two reasons.

The first reason is we don't think this approach is especially efficient. For instance, in the financial year 2023/24, we sent 22,515 letters and we only received 1,352 replies. This is a 6.0% response rate which is very low. The bulk of our neighbour comments are coming electronically.

The second reason is the cost. We spend £2.80 on each letter (this includes not only postage but officer time to prepare the letters, envelope cost, printing etc). If we look at how many letters we sent in the financial year 2023/24, the cost to us is £63,042. We don't think this is the best way for people to know about planning applications in their area and **we don't think this provides value for money for our council taxpayers.**

I thought you had to notify people affected by new developments.

Our current 'Statement of Community Involvement' requires us to let people know, by posting letters to neighbours whose boundary is closest the site and by placing a notice on site. We must also advertise certain new planning applications in the local press. What the Council does exceeds the statutory duty.

We do inform our Town and Parish Councils; their meetings tend to have an item on their Agenda to discuss local planning matters and members of the public can attend to provide their views.

We also have a [Public Access webpage](#) people can access on their computer, mobile phone or tablet device. This online system tells people about applications in their areas as well as allowing them to submit their comments or find historical applications. Our experience is that use of this system is increasing year on year, with more than 1.5 million searches being done in 2024 alone.

If you send me a letter, do I have to reply?

No, the letter simply tells you what is being proposed. It also explains where you can get more answers and how to tell us what you think. It doesn't make your comments any more important than anyone else's.

Most smaller scale development tends to be straightforward. Often it won't have a big impact on neighbours so some people may very well receive our letters but decide there is nothing they want to say.

I don't have a computer, so I won't be able to access your system

We know that people without a computer will not be able to access our [Public Access](#) system and this will place them at a disadvantage over people who do have a computer. You can however use the [Public Access](#) system on most modern mobile phone and tablet devices. You can also use computers at most libraries to access our planning system.

The Planning department is also keen to support anyone to use our [Public Access](#) system. Please contact us at planning@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk or call us on 0300 123 4000 (option 5 then option 3).

How do I provide my view on these changes?

By completing the survey via the link below. The consultation will run for the next eight weeks and closes on 12 May 2025.

When will these changes come into effect?

We will wait for the consultation to close and then carefully examine what people have told us. Any possible changes should be adopted by early Summer 2025.

Survey Link: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/bmsdcSCI/>

QR Code (Scan with your mobile phone camera):



Should you need to discuss any part of this consultation please contact:

David Clarke - Service Improvement Advisor (Sustainable Communities)

Email: david.clarke@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

Mobile: 07799 515774

<https://www.babergh.gov.uk/w/planning-consultations>

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/planning-consultations>