

PARISH REPORT DECEMBER 2024

ORWELL & VILLAGES

National Planning Policy Framework briefing.

A new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was issued by the Government on 12th December 2024 which will have major implications for our area and how planning decisions may be made in future. Below are the main points from the new NPPF and the individual requirements being imposed on East Suffolk Council.

The NPPF is the Government's main planning policy document, and whilst it does not have the same legal status as the "development plan" i.e. policies in the Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans, it will be a highly important material consideration in decision taking.

Sufficient Supply of Homes

The standard method for calculating housing need has changed resulting in significant increases in many places including East Suffolk. The new government has now set the housing need figure for East Suffolk at 1,644 homes each year which is significantly higher than the 916 homes per year within the current Local Plans and the average actual delivery of 830 homes per year over the past three years.

Preparation of the new East Suffolk Local Plan is due to commence this year with adoption anticipated in 2029. Both the current Waveney Local Plan and the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan had sufficient housing supply criteria for more than 5 years – Waveney about 5.5 years and Suffolk Coastal over six.

Given the increase in government requirements- which are mandatory- it seems very unlikely that we could demonstrate a five-year supply against the current Waveney Local Plan and not in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan after last quarter of 2025. Until the next Local Plan is in place this does mean that unplanned housing development is likely to be brought forward by developers. Whilst this may not lead to a free for all much greater weight must be given to the supply of housing in decision taking – a presumption in favour sustainable development.

Where unplanned sites are brought forward, they would still be required to be in suitable locations for development and follow local plan design and environmental policies. Protections will remain available for "Neighbourhood Plans" if they include enough site allocations to meet their new housing requirements.

Affordable Housing

The requirement to deliver 25% of affordable homes on sites as First Homes has been removed under the NPPF so a greater proportion of social rented housing will now apply.

Requirement to build in industrial needs

There is now a requirement to meet the needs of the economy and identify locations for uses such as gigafactories, data centres and, importantly for our area, freight and logistics. This new requirement might well lead to planning applications for port activities to spread across the A14.

There are many other points made including a statutory obligation to consult with neighbouring authorities in relation to delivery of infrastructure and in meeting any unmet housing needs from neighbouring areas. This could have a real impact on East Suffolk from Ipswich.

The requirements of the new NPPF came into effect on the date of publication and so apply to all new planning applications moving forward.

Devolution & Local Govt Re-organisation

At the time of writing, we are still awaiting confirmation from Suffolk County Council that they intend to sign-up for the fast-track devolution deal which would mean a single elected Mayor covering both Suffolk and Norfolk, the abolition of District and County Councils and their replacement by a unitary authority, taking on the responsibilities of both the district and county council. If SCC accept the fast track this would mean the cancellation of May's County Council elections and the present administration would remain until 2027 when a new unitary would be elected.

The Government has indicated that they expect unitary authorities to take in a minimum of 500,000 residents. As the population of Suffolk is currently around 780,000 this would rule out more than one unitary authority.

This would suggest that each councillor may represent between 8,000 to 10,000 residents each compared with the current district level of 3,500 – 4,000.

A single authority controlled by an elected Mayor across both Suffolk & Norfolk will centralise decision-making and it remains unclear how parish and town councils would be able to influence any decisions relating to their communities.

Jet-Ski Consultation

The consultation closed at the end of November and a total of 377 responses were received. A decision on whether to license commercial operators hiring jet-skis will be made at the full Licensing Committee on 20th January. It should be noted that any decision will not affect privately owned jet-skis.

If parish councillors need to contact either of us, please feel free to do so.

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