

DEDHAM VALE SOCIETY

Registered Charity No 246007

President: Robert Erith TD DL Chairman: Charles Clover

RESPONSE BY THE SOCIETY TO BABERGH DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: CORE STRATEGY THE FUTURE GROWTH OF BABERGH DISTRICT TO 2031

The Society supports the basic spatial strategy in principle but has definite reservations on any development in the Dedham Vale AONB, in Key Service Centres (KSC), “other villages” or the open countryside. Even marginal encroachments beyond village envelopes can be damaging both to the landscape of the AONB and to the adjacent conservation areas of villages (where there is one). We will oppose outright any “Rural Exception” site proposals for affordable housing in the AONB – we do not consider that housing constructed on such sites remains “affordable” in even the medium term and that there is therefore no justification for overriding the normal planning constraints in such cases.

The Society also continues to argue that development in Babergh District as a whole should be minimal. It is inherent in our approach that we do not favour the adoption of Growth Targets and settlement hierarchies. This is relevant to the AONB because it is already clear that the more development in Babergh as a whole the more resistance there will be from, particularly, Sudbury to the strategy of confining development to the towns. The “sustainability”, “climate change”, “carbon footprint” agendas are required to be central to LDFs. The crucial carbon footprint objective of spatial planning is locating development of every kind, industrial, commercial, public sector and residential, so as to minimize transport mileage. In northeast Essex and southeast Suffolk this requires that all significant development should be located in Colchester or Ipswich, at Felixstowe or Harwich, by an A12 or A14 junction or alongside the Great Eastern railway main lines. Significant development in Sudbury for example would further overload the already inadequate A134.

While it may be laudable to seek to reduce commuting the idea that this can be achieved by creating more jobs within Babergh District is very dubious. Very few of the jobs to which people commute can be replicated in Babergh – a substantial number of the commuters work in London offices – and even if they were replicated it must be doubtful if people would give up an established and familiar job in say Ipswich for one in Hadleigh.

We are not arguing for no development, merely that it should be as little as possible and site specific. The LDF should focus on the criteria to be applied to development proposals that are specific to the site or the locality. Generally, but particularly in KSC, “other villages” and the open countryside, there should only be development that is “...appropriate in scale and character **and** supported by the local community” (main document para 1.37).