

# **LAVENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVISION**



## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENT**

**July 2021**

## WELCOME

Our Neighbourhood Plan was issued in 2016, taking us through to 2031. Five years on and it is time to review and update our Plan and vision for Lavenham, to ensure our changing needs are reflected. The Questionnaire is a way of listening to the views of the Lavenham community, which are key to the future of the Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan (LNP2).

We encourage everyone over the age of 16 to take part.

A printed and illustrated Guide to the Questionnaire has been delivered to every household in Lavenham, together with a covering letter. The Questionnaire should be completed online, please type **bit.ly/LNPqu** into the address bar at the top of your browser page and use one of the Access Codes provided at the top of the covering letter.

Three codes are provided so that other members of your household can present their independent views. If you would be more comfortable completing a paper copy, or would like additional access codes, please follow the instructions in the letter.

The Access Code means that your response will be anonymous. However if you choose to email comments in response to the question at the end of each section, your details will be stored securely in accordance with the UK Data Protection Regulations 2018 and the Data Protection Act 2018. We will remove your data once the LNP2 work has been completed.

There are two levels of support to help you complete the questionnaire.

1. The Questionnaire Guide summarises the key statements in the Plan relevant to each question. As well as the copy that has been delivered to every household, the Guide is available on the LNP2 website to read or download (type [bit.ly/LNPhome](http://bit.ly/LNPhome) into your browser web address).
2. **More detailed and essential background information for each question can be found in this Supporting Document, which is similarly available on the LNP2 website to read or download (type [bit.ly/LNPhome](http://bit.ly/LNPhome) into your browser web address).**

The 2016 Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan is also on the LNP2 website.

### What is the purpose of this Questionnaire?

It is the **first stage** in the formal process of revising a Neighbourhood Plan. **The next step** will be to analyse the Questionnaire responses. Your responses may show that the Plan continues to reflect the views of Lavenham residents, or may indicate weaknesses in the Plan which could be addressed as we move forward with the revision. **The final step** is adoption by Babergh District Council.

Babergh District Council (jointly with Mid Suffolk District Council) is updating its district-level Local Plan and our revised 15-year Neighbourhood Plan will be prepared in the context of the emerging new Joint Local Plan (JLP). A revised and strengthened Neighbourhood Plan could have a bigger influence on future development. But to have that influence, it must reflect the views of local people.

### Closing date for Questionnaire submission:

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

## Our Neighbourhood Plan 2016 to 2031

The purpose of the Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan is to help us to shape our housing, educational, commercial and leisure needs for the future. Its stated objective is “to make Lavenham a more sustainable community and to formulate and define the policies that are required to achieve this.”

The 2016 Neighbourhood Plan describes Lavenham as a vibrant and self-reliant community of around 1,800 people fortunate to live in what has often been described as England’s finest medieval village. It is designated as one of 10 ‘core’ villages in the Suffolk district of Babergh.

The 2016 Plan says Lavenham has a good range of shops, services and facilities. It describes the village as an important tourist destination but adds that the environment of Lavenham’s special character needs protection. It recognises that the balance of our community is threatened by an ever-increasing divergence between young and older age groups.

Responding to these concerns, our 2016 Plan’s two key issues are:

1. *Achieving **sustainable development in Lavenham** – through policies that will enable a better balance between the age groups of residents, and that will allow more young people to live in the village.*
2. *Preserving **Lavenham’s unique qualities**, including our historic core and surrounding countryside, to maintain our position as an important tourism destination.*

Our Plan said that Lavenham was a community of about 1,800 people. But, over the years, a trend towards an increasingly ageing population had accelerated, and continued to do so. And the balance of our community was threatened by this ever-growing divergence between the age groups.

Suffolk Observatory reports that our population was 1,724 in 2011, and that this figure was estimated to have risen to 1,803 in 2016 and 1,838 in 2019 (using Office of National Statistics data) – which suggests that our population has been very slowly increasing, by about 1% per annum.

Suffolk Observatory additionally reports on our population by age group over time, and compared (in 2019) with the U.K. as a whole:

**Proportion of Population by Age Group**

	<b>Lavenham 2011</b>	<b>Lavenham 2016</b>	<b>Lavenham 2019</b>	<b>U.K. 2019</b>
Aged 0 to 19	15%	15%	13%	23%
Aged 20 to 64	51%	47%	47%	58%
Aged 65+	34%	38%	40%	19%

These figures show how much larger the proportion of people in Lavenham aged 65+ is, compared with the U.K. as a whole. And they confirm that this proportion has continued to grow.

Our Plan also said that we need to increase the proportion of young people living in the village. We will do this by seeking to ensure that future housing development puts an emphasis on affordable, smaller houses capable of meeting well established local needs. Such developments should also enable older residents, who wish to downsize, to stay in the village.

## Our Neighbourhood Plan 2016 to 2031 (continued)

As part of the preparatory work for our 2016 Plan, a survey of village residents was conducted in 2013. 76% of residents who took part in this survey disagreed with the statement that ‘too much emphasis was being placed on Lavenham’s historic environment’, while only 24% agreed with this statement.

Our Plan said as well that Lavenham’s economy was underpinned by tourism, based on the attractiveness as a destination of our historic core, set within the surrounding countryside. And tourism remains central to Babergh District Council’s JLP, which our Neighbourhood Plan must take into account.

Tourism statistics suggest that visitor numbers were falling very slowly over the period from 1998 to 2019, by about 1% per annum, and that this fall appears to have been greater in recent years – although numbers are difficult to assess, and easily affected by weather and the current pandemic:

Tourism Index	2016	2018	2019
1998 = 100	94.4	90.0	87.8

### Policies and Projects

Having identified key issues, our Plan made five statements about its objectives and aspirations (see next section). It then set out policies and projects, which were intended to respond to these key issues, and to achieve its objectives and aspirations. These policies and projects cover six topics:

- Housing
- Design and Heritage
- Community Facilities and Infrastructure
- Shopping
- Our Environment
- Employment and our local Economy

Neighbourhood Plan Policies are used to respond to various types of proposal relating to land or buildings, made by any person or organisation. The Policies set out how we should respond: should we support or resist? Should specific conditions be met when changes are made? Our Plan cannot decide what happens to proposals to make changes in Lavenham. But what it says should have a significant influence on decision-makers.

Neighbourhood Plan Projects are things we decide should be done – by Lavenham Parish Council, Babergh District Council, Suffolk County Council, or other organisations – in response to the key issues described in our Plan. Our Plan cannot make those organisations undertake these projects. But our Plan does set out our priorities for how they should use their money and other resources in our village.

## Questionnaire Section 1: Objectives and Aspirations

Our Plan described its purpose as identifying policies that are required to make Lavenham a more sustainable community. It made the following statements about its objectives and aspirations. Please tell us whether you think these statements continue to be as relevant as they were in 2016.

### **Statement One (please see question 1 in questionnaire)**

- *Investment in **affordable housing** for younger people would be the main driver in making Lavenham a more sustainable community. As the total population grew, the proportion of working age people with young families would increase. But the village infrastructure, particularly capacity at Lavenham Primary School, would need to improve.*

### **Statement Two (please see question 1 in questionnaire)**

- *Residents wanted **small mixed developments** (up to 24 houses) with an emphasis on 2 and 3 bedroomed homes. This type of development would also both appeal to those wishing to downsize, and improve the housing choice for older people.*

### **Statement Three (please see questions 1 and 2 in questionnaire)**

- ***New development** would be supported, so long as it contributed positively to Lavenham's unique character, and so long as continued enjoyment of the surrounding countryside was also ensured.*

### **Statement Four (please see question 1 in questionnaire)**

- ***Lavenham's economy** would continue to depend on tourism, central to which was the village's historic core. Heavy traffic was a problem. And downgrading the A1141 to B-road status with a weight limit was an aspiration. Additional car and coach parking facilities were also aspirations.*

### **Statement Five (please see question 1 in questionnaire)**

- ***Employment** in tourism was expected to grow, and additional jobs were expected in high-tech fields, education and care for older people. The importance of conservation would mean that jobs in building services were also likely to continue to flourish. An increase in affordable housing should enable more people both to live and to work in the village*

Since 2016:

- The A1141 main road (between Cockfield and Hadleigh via Bury Road, High Street, Water Street and Brent Eleigh Road in Lavenham) has not been downgraded, but a partial weight restriction has been introduced eastbound in Water Street.
- Some progress has been made in improving car and coach parking facilities

## Questionnaire Section 2: Housing

The current, but shortly to be superseded, Babergh District Local Plan said that villages within our part of Suffolk were together required to provide sites for 1,050 new homes over a 20-year period. Our 2016 Neighbourhood Plan recognised that some of these homes would be built in Lavenham.

As part of the preparatory work for our 2016 Plan, a survey of village residents was conducted in 2013. 68% of residents who took part in this survey said that more housing was needed in Lavenham, and 32% thought that no more housing was needed. 82% of residents said that no more than 100 new homes should be built here, and 18% thought that more than 100 should be built.

Babergh Council's planning records for Lavenham show that, in the 10 years since 2011, 146 homes have been built. This includes one development of 44 homes (predating our 2016 Neighbourhood Plan) and two of 25. As of May 2021, a further 36 have planning permission. Of the total 182, built or planned, 66 are designated as affordable.

Looking forward, five factors as regards housing development in Lavenham should be considered:

- The recently submitted Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils' Joint Local Plan (JLP), derived from wider Government targets
- The National Planning Policy Framework
- Completed developments, and those sites with planning permission and awaiting construction
- The time period to be covered by our revised Plan (15 years), and the possible planning applications that might arise over this period, of which we are currently unaware
- The identification of local housing needs, and our requirements for high standards of design

The recently submitted JLP includes the requirement for a minimum of 118 homes to be built in Lavenham. The JLP:

- Anticipates that 98 of these will come from sites with existing planning permissions (as at April 2018)
- Allocates a new site for about 20 more homes on land north west of Melford Road (although no proposals for development of this site have so far been put forward)

Affordable housing is for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market. This includes subsidised home ownership and/or housing for essential local workers. Affordable homes for rent are usually let to eligible households by registered providers of affordable housing. Affordable rents are at least 20% below local market rents.

Lavenham Community Land Trust was a product of our 2016 Plan. The Trust partnered with Hastoe Housing to deliver 18 rental and shared ownership homes at Peek Close (the site of a former Suffolk Highways depot).

A 2018 housing survey of residents (undertaken for Lavenham Parish Council) indicated a need for 75 additional units, including between 25 and 30 affordable homes. The need for affordable homes is supported by a ratio of house prices to earnings of 9.6, at Babergh District level, compared with an English average of 7.2.

## Section 2: Housing (continued)

When respondents to the 2018 housing survey were asked about the types of new home they would like to see in Lavenham, nearly two-thirds favoured small family homes, over half favoured properties for older people, and 44% favoured homes for couples. Conversely, homes for single people were favoured by less than 30% of respondents, and only just over 10% favoured large family homes.

***Our Plan's Housing Policies (in summary) are as follows (please see questions 4, 5 and 6 in the questionnaire):***

- *Strong preference for **small developments** (up to 24 or 25 homes), located inside the village built-up area, or at the edge of the built-up area – provided they respect Lavenham's landscape, townscape and views (see section 7 below) (policy H1; page 27)*
- *Developments must contribute to **meeting local housing needs**, both existing and future – this will require mixed developments, with 2 & 3 bedroom homes to cater for both young people, and older residents looking to downsize (policy H2; page 28)*
- *Developments should include 35% **affordable housing**, designed to be integral to the development, and to be offered first to people with a strong local connection (policies H3, H4 & H5; pages 31 & 32)*
- ***Homes specifically for elderly people** should be located within walking distance of the village centre, and should preferably be inside or at the edge of the village built-up area (policy H6; page 33)*

## Questionnaire Sections 3 and 4: Design and Heritage

One of our Neighbourhood Plan's key issues is preserving Lavenham's unique qualities. Our village's historical importance is fully recognised in the Plan. In 2016, our village had 201 listed buildings. A majority of buildings in High Street, Water Street and Market Place are listed. The historic core of our village is medieval and a designated conservation area.

Our Plan said the preservation of Lavenham's historic core was a pre-requisite to the village's continuing and future economic success, and its sustainability would assume increasing importance as time goes on.

The previous section of this document tells us that over 180 new homes have recently been (or have planning permission to be) built in Lavenham. They all have been (or will be) constructed in small or very small developments, and all are outside the historic core. But they are visible, and they do influence the feel of our village.

There has not been the same demand for non-residential development. And occasional sites have changed from a non-residential use to residential. Some improvements have been made to commercial sites, such as the business units on Brent Eleigh Road.

### Design

Our 2016 Plan did not include a Design Guide, but the policies below expressed our intention to preserve Lavenham's character, and our expectation that development proposals would be of high-quality design. These policies should also be seen in the context of the design principles set out in the (shortly to be superseded) Babergh Local Plan.

***Our Plan's Design Policies (in summary) are as follows (please see questions 7 and 8 in the questionnaire):***

- *All developments will be expected to preserve and enhance **Lavenham's distinctive character**, and proposals which are not designed to a high quality will be opposed (policies D1 & D2; pages 36 & 38)*
- ***Replacement dwellings and infill** development within the built-up area will be expected to incorporate good quality design (policy D3; page 39)*

*(These developments should not have an unacceptable impact on neighbouring occupiers, or impact significantly on the landscape setting or the conservation area)*

Our Neighbourhood Plan said that sustainable design and construction standards are a priority for the community of Lavenham. And a detailed Village Design Guide will be included when our Plan is revised. The Guide will aim to support the objectives of our Plan, and it is intended as a supplement to our Plan. It will promote what the community sees as best practice.



## Sections 3 and 4: Design and Heritage (continued)

### Heritage

***Our Plan's programme of Heritage Projects is as follows (please see questions 7 and 8 in the questionnaire):***

- ***Compile a **Local List of non-designated heritage assets** (project P14; page 61)***

Our 2016 Plan supported the compilation of a Local List, and new guidance on the process required has recently been issued by Historic England. Buildings, areas or landscapes that play a role in reinforcing a sense of local character, history and distinctiveness are to be included in the Local List. Inclusion enables entries to be taken into account in planning applications affecting them or their settings. It is hoped that we will complete our Local List by the end of 2022.

- ***Development of **educational facilities about Lavenham's heritage**, especially for younger visitors to the village (project P8; page 60)***

Our Primary School is intending to use Lavenham as a whole school geography and history study topic for summer term 2022. We hope that a legacy of this educational project will be material that can be accessed by younger visitors to our village.

- ***Limit access to the Lavenham's historic core by **Heavy Goods Vehicles** (project P1; page 59)***

A limited weight restriction has been introduced in one part of the historic core – eastbound in Water Street. Progress with further restrictions is hampered by resource constraint within Suffolk Country Council's Highways Team.

- ***Consult on the feasibility of Lavenham seeking **World Heritage Status**, and take steps to achieve this if appropriate (project P13; page 61)***

This project is no longer seen as feasible to pursue in the foreseeable future and is withdrawn.

## Questionnaire Section 5A: Community Facilities Policies

Individual expectation and use of community facilities means responses to and interest in these policies will vary. Many people will call on their own experience when answering this section and it is hoped that the Questionnaire response will identify their relative importance.

***Our Plan's Community Facilities Policies (in summary) are as follows (please see questions 11 and 12 in the questionnaire):***

- *Strong resistance to proposals that would damage **existing facilities and services**, unless equivalent facilities were re-provided and accessible to all users (policy C1; page 40)*

*(Proposals that would enhance facilities should be encouraged)*

- *Encouraging proposals that include the provision of **public allotments** (policy C4; page 45)*
- *Supporting developments that would result in the loss of a **health care facility** only if the facility is either replaced or moved to a suitable location (policy C5; page 46)*
- *Supporting suitable developments within the village built-up area that would meet local **retirement and care home needs** (policy C5; page 46)*
- *Supporting change of use of the **existing primary school site** (if the school is successfully relocated), preferably to meet local retirement and care home needs, or possibly to permit residential development (policy C6; page 47)*

As part of the preparatory work for our 2016 Plan, a survey of village residents was conducted in 2013. 80% of residents who took part in the survey said they would welcome provision of local retirement and care home facilities in the village. 76% of those taking part in this survey also agreed that Lavenham needs more public allotments.

### Existing Facilities

The Post Office provides vital services to village residents, businesses and visitors. The Post Office at 25 High Street closed in 2012, transferring to Lavenham Pharmacy. This in turn closed in 2016, and was replaced by a mobile post office, which visited the village for 12 hours each week.

The mobile post office was replaced by a 12 hours per week service in the Village Information Point (VIP), when it opened in 2019. (All VIP services have been disrupted since March 2020, because of Covid19.)

### Allotments

There are no allotments in Lavenham, but provision is included in the approved plans for housing development in Norman Way. Interest in acquiring allotments has also been shown recently, and the Parish Council has been lobbied to identify further allotment sites.

## **Section 5A: Community Facilities Policies (continued)**

### **Health Care Facilities**

The principal health care facility in Lavenham is the GP Surgery, which is a branch of the Long Melford GP Practice. The branch was closed in March 2020, because of Covid19, and all patient contacts transferred to Long Melford. Although it has been used since January 2021 by the GP Practice as a Covid19 Vaccination Centre. And some regular appointments have resumed since May 2021.

The surgery building is owned by GPs and is designated for health use only. Taking into account the submitted Babergh & Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan, it is very unlikely that change of use for this building would be permitted. But the term 'health use' can apply across a range of different health-related services, as well as a GP Surgery.

Under the Localism Act, Parish Councils have the right to apply to have property, which provides a social purpose, designated as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). The intention behind this right, is to protect local amenities and services. Designation means that Parish Councils must be given time to make realistic bids, if owners want to sell designated properties. It does not mean that Parish Councils must make bids.

Lavenham Parish Council is currently considering whether it should apply to have the GP Surgery designated as an ACV. This would be to minimise the possibility of Lavenham not continuing to have a GP Surgery.

### **Retirement and Care Homes**

As noted earlier, when Lavenham residents responded to a 2018 housing survey asking about the types of new home they would like to see in the village, over half favoured properties for older people.

### **Existing Primary School Site**

Our primary school has a physical capacity problem, in that it does not have enough classrooms to accommodate separately each year-group it teaches. In educational terms, there is a strong preference for separate year-group classrooms.

Our primary school is currently balancing its intake each year with its present physical capacity. But, if its physical capacity were to be expanded, it would be under pressure to increase its intake. This means that more children would need to be living in its catchment area, and to be wanting to attend primary school in Lavenham.

Our primary school is unlikely to be able to increase its physical capacity on its current site. Possible relocation sites with greater capacity have been thought about, and Policy C2 below offers the possibility of development of an open space, to achieve a successful relocation. But a viable proposal has not yet come forward.

If our school were to be successfully relocated, Policy C6 above permits a change to residential use, subject to retention of the existing building, and to small homes being provided for older people wishing to downsize.

## Questionnaire Section 5B: Policies for Infrastructure

Our 2016 Neighbourhood Plan said that Lavenham was well provided with a range of shops, services and open spaces – but the village did have some infrastructure issues. These included:

- Capacity problems at the primary school
- Limited public transport provision
- Patchy broadband speeds

Our Plan expected development proposals to ensure that appropriate facilities and infrastructure were already available, or would be provided, to serve the development.

***Our Plan's Policies for Infrastructure, including open spaces, (in summary) are as follows (please see questions 13 and 14 in the questionnaire):***

- *Supporting proposals to expand **electronic communications** networks, and to improve broadband speeds (policies C7 & C8; pages 47 & 48)*  
*(This includes expecting all new dwellings to have ducting for superfast broadband fibre)*
- *Protecting the existing network of **footpaths and bridleways**, and expecting development proposals to link into this network where appropriate (policy C3; page 44)*
- *Identified **open spaces should be safeguarded**, and identified recreation areas should be maintained or enhanced (policy C2; page 42) – Additional open space or green infrastructure will be a required as part of new developments*
- *Possibly allowing the development of an open space, to achieve the successful **relocation of the primary school** onto a larger site (policy C2; page 42)*

### Electronic Communications Infrastructure

Our 2016 Plan described Broadband speeds in Lavenham as patchy. Ofcom describes Broadband speeds of below 30Mb as 'regular' or 'fast'. 'Superfast' is between 30 and 300 Mb, and 'Ultrafast' is above 300 Mb.

The 2021 Ofcom Broadband Checker confirms that parts of Lavenham (in our south west quadrant) have Ultrafast Broadband, and that most remaining parts of the village have Superfast Broadband.

### Footpaths and Bridleways

Our Plan said that Lavenham has an excellent network of public footpaths and bridleways (map on page 44), including the Railway Walk. Views of the village, which include the dominant church tower, are a material element in the pleasure obtained by those using the paths. But their continuing maintenance is essential for the use and enjoyment of residents and visitors.

Proposals were announced in December 2020 for a new footpath to link Green Willows (off Melford Road) with the village footpath network.

## Section 5B: Policies for Infrastructure (continued)

### Open Spaces

19 open spaces and recreation areas were identified in our 2016 Plan (map on page 41, and list on page 42) – see the table below:

**Open Spaces (OS) and Recreation Areas (RA) 2016**

	Identified in 2016 Plan	Type	2021 Status
1	Bridge Street Road recreation ground	RA	Tennis courts and car park resurfaced
2	First Meadow on Brent Eleigh Road	RA	Zip wire, practice goal and table tennis added
3	Village Hall site	RA	Now also Pre-school site
4	Rectory meadow	RA	Maintained and grass cut
5	Meadow Close green space	OS	Maintained and grass cut
6	Harwood Place green space	OS	Maintained and grass cut, and play equipment added
7	The Glebe green space	OS	Maintained and grass cut
8	Spring Street green space	OS	Maintained and grass cut
9	Weavers Close green space	OS	Maintained and grass cut
10	Deacons Close green space	OS	Hedges and planted areas well maintained
11	Riverside opposite Prentice Street	RA	Maintained, grass cut and repairs to area around footbridge
13	The Lavenham (Railway) Walk	RA	Regular maintenance with wood chip surface
14	Dye House Field Wood	RA	Footpath surfaced with wood chips
15	Pond, junction of Bury & Preston Roads	RA	Maintained and perimeter hedge trimmed
16	The Common	RA	Maintained and grass cut
17	Prentice Street Car Park, green space	OS	Recent restoration of garden areas
18	Church Street Car Park, green space	OS	Maintained and grass cut
19	Permanent pasture, north of Park Road	OS	Pasture sometimes grazed
20	Permanent pasture, west of Potlands Rd	OS	Currently grazed by sheep

Since 2016, two new open areas have been created, as part of the Bears Lane and Indigo Fields of housing developments.

Our 2016 Plan sought to safeguard these open spaces. But its Policy C2 above does allow a possible exception to this safeguarding, to enable our school to be relocated. Although that exception is conditional on a new open space being provided, of equivalent or better type or quality. Policy C2 sits alongside Policy C6 above, which is about the possible change of use of the existing school site, if relocation is successfully achieved.

Communities with a Neighbourhood Plan receive 25% of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), raised by the local authority that approves development proposals (in our case Babergh District Council). Our Plan has enabled us to receive CIL funding for several local schemes, including our new Village Information Point and Post Office in Lady Street, and the Tenter Piece common room. In future years, funds from the CIL could be used to support schemes in our Plan, such as traffic management and environmental projects (see below), as well as the heritage projects listed above.

## Section 5C: Community Facilities & Infrastructure Projects

Our 2016 Neighbourhood Plan includes a programme of seven Community Facilities and Infrastructure projects. We would like to understand the relative importance of these projects.

***Our Plan's Programme of Community Facilities & Infrastructure Projects is as follows (please see questions 15 & 16 in the questionnaire):***

- *Adequately signpost, regularly inspect and maintain Lavenham's network of **statutory footpaths** (project P10; page 60)*

This project relates to the **footpaths and bridleways** policy (C3) outlined above

- *Extend or re-design **existing car parks** to accommodate more vehicles (project P2; page 59)*

The re-design of Prentice Street car park, in order to accommodate more vehicles and to provide two new electric car charging points, took place in early 2021. And electric charging points have recently been installed in Church Street car park. The re-design of Church Street car park, in order to accommodate more vehicles, is also planned for at a later date.

- *Create a **reserved parking area** for employees of Lavenham businesses (project P3; page 59)*

This project has so far received no support, and no reserved parking area has been provided

- *Support **proposals for coaches** to use existing bus stops and park outside the village (project P4; page 59)*

This project has been broadly successful. The number of tour coaches has also reduced.

- *Support **additional car park proposals**, but not on sites that could be used for affordable housing or to relocate the primary school (project P5; page 59)*

Plans for an additional car park, on the Water Street Gas Works site, were announced in December 2020.

- *Continuing support from Lavenham Parish Council for **maintenance and development of open spaces, public toilets, street cleaning and other services** (project P7; page 60)*

Plans to refurbish the public toilets, in both Prentice Street and Church Street car parks, were announced in December 2020. Work on these schemes is currently (May 2021) ongoing.

- *Resist any proposals to remove restrictions that **inhibit speeding along the main village roads** (project P6; page 59)*

On-street parking can inhibit speeding. So, any proposed further on-street parking restrictions, unless part of pedestrianisation or shared space schemes, would be resisted on safety grounds. And the recent approval of a 20mph speed limit in nearby Bildeston village suggests a more proactive approach, which could also be applied to inhibit speeding in Lavenham.

## **Section 5C: Community Facilities & Infrastructure Projects (contd)**

### **20mph Speed Limit**

***(please see question 16 in the questionnaire)***

The recent approval of a 20mph speed limit in nearby Bildeston village suggests a more pro-active approach, which could also be applied to inhibit speeding in Lavenham.

### **Public Transport and Private Vehicles**

***(please see questions 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 in the questionnaire)***

Several of our Plan's infrastructure projects listed above concern car parking and related matters, including the provision of charging points for electric vehicles. Please help us to think about future projects by giving us some information about your use of public transport and private vehicles.

Public transport provision in Lavenham is limited. Buses run roughly every hour between Sudbury and Bury St Edmunds via Lavenham, daytime on weekdays and Saturdays. And taxi and mini-cab services are also available. But, inevitably in these circumstances, many journeys are made by private vehicles.

As the number of electric vehicles on our roads rises (all new cars are expected to be electric from 2030), demand for charging points in car parks will also increase. But demand for car park charging points will depend as well on the proportion of owners who can charge up their vehicles elsewhere off-road – for example, at their homes or at commercial premises, with access to an electrical supply.

## Questionnaire Section 6: Shopping

Our Neighbourhood Plan said a key part of Lavenham’s attraction was the village’s historic core, within which some 50 retail businesses were concentrated. Most of these businesses were independently owned or operated, which provided for a vitality and interest that should be protected and enhanced. For this reason, developments involving large multiple retailers and fast-food chains should be resisted. Our Plan included a map (on page 48) identifying Lavenham’s Retail Core Area

As part of the preparatory work for our 2016 Plan, a survey of village residents was conducted in 2013. Residents who took part in this survey reported the following patterns of household spending within the village, compared with outside Lavenham:

**Proportion of Spending in Lavenham**

Spending On:	None at all	A Little	About Half	Most	All
Groceries/Food	3%	49%	29%	17%	2%
Gifts/Cards/Books	11%	58%	15%	14%	2%
Clothes	60%	36%	3%	1%	0%
Post Office	4%	35%	9%	26%	26%
Pubs/Restaurants	8%	42%	26%	21%	3%
Health and Beauty	37%	38%	9%	10%	6%
Galleries	56%	36%	3%	3%	2%

Covid19 has caused many sudden changes to the world of shopping. Some of these may be temporary. Although some are simply accelerations of earlier trends – these may or may not be partially reversed, but they are unlikely to be fully reversed.

Among these accelerated trends is the increase in online retail, at the expense of ‘traditional’ high street shops. The implications are:

- Many ‘high street’ retailers need rapidly to develop an ‘on-line presence’ in order to survive. In some cases, some limited high street presence may continue. In other cases, any high street presence may no longer be viable. Either way, many retail outlets are likely to close, and new occupants for empty premises may be much harder to find.
- The high street shops and services best placed to survive are ‘local convenience stores’ (because they are convenient, and as long as they remain so), and outlets where visiting the premises and having physical contact with the goods (or as part of the service) is a vital part of the shopping experience.
- Shopping traffic patterns are changing, with less visits to shops by customers and wholesale goods delivery vehicles, and more vans delivering on-line purchases to people’s homes.

These implications will put pressure on our Plan’s Shopping Policies summarised below. The changing traffic patterns will also have environmental and infrastructure implications.

**Listed in the questionnaire are various things that we spend money on – *please see questions 23 to 27*. Please think about your recent household spending since the Covid19 pandemic started, in each of the categories listed. What proportion of this spending took place within the village, compared with outside Lavenham?**

(These are similar questions to those asked in the 2013 Survey, and we would like to know how shopping habits have changed since then.)



## Questionnaire Section 6: Shopping (continued)

***Our 2016 Plan's Shopping Policies (in summary) are as follows:***

- ***Change of use of ground floor shops or services within the Core Area to residential should only be supported if the business has already been marketed diligently (policy C9; page 50)***

*(Marketing diligently means offering the shops at a fair market price, and continuously for at least one year)*

- ***Support for proposals that diversify and enhance the **range of shops and services** within the Core Area (policy C10; page 50)***

*(But such proposals would need to be in keeping with the Core Area, and not to have negative impacts on neighbouring properties or more widely)*

The policies above need to be reviewed as the 2016 Plan is updated. This is because the Government has relaxed some planning rules for changing the use of commercial, business and services premises to residential. And the Government is continuing to propose further relaxations.

## Questionnaire Section 7: Our Environment

Our Neighbourhood Plan said the landscape in which Lavenham is situated was of high visual and historic quality, and the countryside setting contributed to the village's amenity value. The views into and out of Lavenham are a very important part of Lavenham's historical appeal.

A Residents' Workshop in 2014 prioritised 12 defined views into and out of Lavenham, which were included in our Plan (pages 52 & 53). Our Plan said that development proposals needed to respect these defined views, and to have regard to the Landscape Character Assessment findings.

### Defined Views 2012

Key Views into and out of the historic core	Additional Valued Views
5. Bolton Street	1. Moneyhole Corner
8. Prentice Street	2. Brent Eleigh Road
6. The Common	3. Brights Lane
9. Nether Hall Farm	4. Bridge Street
10. Shilling Street	7. The Lolls
11. Church Street	12. River Brett

A Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of Lavenham was carried out in 2015, to assist in the preparation of our Plan. This included sensitivity to development assessments of seven land parcels, adjacent to the settlement boundary. In addition, land to the east and south of Lavenham had previously been designated as a Special Landscape Area, and our Plan carried this designation forward.

Our Plan acknowledged the need for future development in Lavenham, but it said this should be achieved with the least interference to the visual appeal of the village's historic core and surrounding landscape. Our Plan sought to provide a balance between development needs and the protection of key views.

Our 2016 Plan also said that, in order to maintain and improve the built environment, consideration needs to be given to removing overhead cables, poles and wires in the village's historic centre. Consideration needs to be given as well to formulating policies and/or projects to improve the street scene (which includes signage, road markings, car parking/traffic management, notice boards and enhancement of Market Place).

Our Plan included (in Appendix 3) an assessment of views into and out of the village, which has stood up to scrutiny since 2016. In this regard, it should be born in mind that planning of new trees and other landscape vegetation on recent housing developments may not have been completed, and almost certainly will not have matured.

As part of revising our Plan, the 2015 LCA will be updated. Most of the views assessed in 2016 are not expected to have changed. But additional important views may be identified by the LCA update. These and any other changes will be included in our revised Plan.

## Section 7: Our Environment (continued)

***Our Plan's Environmental Policies (in summary) are as follows (please see question 29 in the questionnaire):***

- *Resist development proposals that adversely affect the **defined views** (policy ENV1; page 54)*

*(Also resist proposals that do not have regard to the Landscape Character Assessment findings or the qualities of the Special Landscape Area)*

- *Support proposals to erect **solar panels, satellite dishes and aerials** that do not have an adverse impact on the historic setting of Lavenham, our conservation area or defined views (policy ENV2; page 54)*

This policy appears to have been reasonably effective, over the period since 2016.

- *Support proposals to **enhance Market Place's amenity value**, which do not create parking problems or an adverse impact on our conservation area (policy ENV3; page 55)*

Market Place is the focal point of Lavenham. Its open space has amenity value for community and leisure purposes. It is a hub of village retail activity. As such, it is not only busy with pedestrians, but also busy with traffic and car parking – which are contemporary consequences of retail activity.

In addition, Market Place is home to some of the most important listed buildings in Lavenham, for which an appropriate setting is desirable to complement their historic grandeur. A delicate balance is required, to reconcile that setting with the consequences of contemporary retail activity.

As part of the preparatory work for our 2016 Plan, a survey of village residents was conducted in 2013. 53% of residents who took part in this survey agreed that we needed to improve Market Place's image, although 47% disagreed.

- *Support **renewable energy** projects, providing they are located to avoid any significant adverse impact on our defined views (policy ENV4; page 55)*

### **Climate Change (please see question 30 in the questionnaire)**

Since 2016, the important subject of climate change has become a more prominent consideration in Local Plans, including the recently submitted Babergh & Mid Suffolk JLP. Our 2016 Plan included policies supporting both the erection of solar panels, and other renewable energy projects (with certain restrictions) – as local contributions to global aspirations of moving away from fossil fuels, and towards sustainable energy sources.

## Section 7: Our Environment (continued)

### **Water Management (*please see question 31 in the questionnaire*)**

Another aspect of climate change of particular concern in Suffolk is surface water management. This relates both to the challenges of potential water shortages, and (conversely) to issues of flooding. Surface water flooding occurs in some parts of Lavenham. And so surface water management – both to conserve water and to reduce flooding – is a potential matter for consideration in our revised Plan.

### ***Our Plan's Environmental Projects are as follows (please see question 32 in the questionnaire):***

- *Support for local action to conserve existing countryside **hedgerows and small areas of woodland**, to ensure that landscape quality is maintained (project P11; page 60)*

The Lavenham Woodland Project began in 2002, and now has its own woodland at Dye House Field. This is a freely accessible Open Space (number 14 – section 5 above), and home to a Forest School.

- *Engage with the Environment Agency, to encourage regular maintenance and conservation of the **River Brett** (project P12; page 60)*

Work has been undertaken around the footbridge in Open Space 11 (see section 5 above) at the bottom of Prentice Street.

## Questionnaire Section 8: Employment and our local Economy

Our Neighbourhood Plan said in 2016 that Lavenham's economy was largely driven by tourism, and that it was estimated to be worth between £20 and £25 million per annum. There was no sign that the village's popularity as a destination was diminishing, and several tourism-related developments were being undertaken. These developments were likely to increase the number of visitors, but this increase would impose additional strains on village infrastructure.

As well as our historic buildings and setting, our Plan commented on other Lavenham features: restaurants, visitor accommodation, galleries, lifestyle and gift shops. These were also attractive to visitors (and sometimes to residents). In addition, many day-to-day needs of residents (and some visitors) were met by the village's retailers.

A 2010 survey showed that Lavenham businesses employed nearly 550 people, 12% more than the previous survey in 2000. There was a general shift over these 10 years away from manufacturing and towards service industries, and an increase in the proportion of part-time work (both shifts reflecting national trends). The main sources of employment were building services, professional services (including consultancy, design, IT), printing, health, education and well-being services.

The 2011 census recorded nearly 750 Lavenham residents in employment. Although many of these residents travelled to work outside the village, while many of those employed in Lavenham travelled from outside to work in the village.

Our Plan said we should be taking steps to increase significantly the numbers living and working in Lavenham. This would create a better-balanced community by increasing the proportion of younger residents. It might also reduce (or mitigate the increase in) traffic flows into and out of the village.

### Covid19 Pandemic

In the same way that Covid19 has affected the world of shopping, it has also affected the world of work. Some of these may be temporary. Although some are simply accelerations of earlier trends – these may or may not be partially reversed, but they are unlikely to be fully reversed.

Among these accelerated trends is the increase in remote working: either literally working at home, or working close to home, and no longer travelling to/from a 'big workplace' remote from home. Some occupations do not lend themselves to remote working. But others do – and, while there are disadvantages, there are also significant advantages.

The implication for Lavenham is that modern technology could enable the number of residents working locally (at, or close to, home) to grow significantly over time. This trend would require home adaptations (for some residents literally working at home), and provision of suitable workspace in Lavenham (for local people working close to, but not at, home).

Our Plan's Policy E2 (below) for small businesses (including micro-businesses and sole traders) is fully compatible with these changes.

## Section 8: Employment and our local Economy (continued)

***Our Plan's Employment and Economy Policies (in summary) and Project are as follows (please see questions 34 & 35 in the questionnaire):***

- *Support proposals (consistent with other policies) to encourage the development of **small businesses** (policy E2; page 48)*

*(These proposals could include provision of workshops or small industrial units in building away from the village historic core, and the provision of infrastructure – including high-speed broadband – required by creative and similar businesses)*

- *Support proposals to improve **Tourist Information facilities** (policy E1; page 56)*

When Babergh District Council decided to close its Lavenham tourist information centre in 2018, the service was re-provided in the same premises as part of the new Village Information Point (VIP), which opened in 2019 (see Section 5 above)

- *Extend the **tourist and visitor season**, by encouraging a year-round programme of activities (project P9; page 60)*

Tourism statistics suggest that visitor numbers in Lavenham have been very slowly falling in recent years. But tourism continues to be of major importance to our local economy, and moves have been made to extend the visitor season. Before the pandemic, these included extending the Guildhall's period of opening, and development of the Lavenham Literary Festival in November of each year.

The pandemic has also encouraged a revival in British 'staycations', and this trend is expected to have a positive effect on visitor numbers in the short term. Although Covid19 restrictions may continue to constrain the ability of some businesses linked to tourism to satisfy increased demand.

## Questionnaire Section 9: Our Neighbourhood Plan's Overall Approach

Thank you for reading the eight previous sections of this document. Those sections together relate to all our 2016 Neighbourhood Plan's policies and projects.

***Taking all these parts of our Plan together, please tell us how well overall you think our Plan has done in dealing with the key issues we were facing in 2016 (please see question 36 in the questionnaire).***

***The key issues identified in 2016 are:***

- *To achieve **sustainable development in Lavenham** – through policies that will enable a better balance between the age groups of residents, and that will allow more young people to live in the village*
- *To **preserve Lavenham's unique qualities**, including our historic core and surrounding countryside, and to maintain our position as an important tourism destination*

***Thinking about each of the two key issues, please also tell us whether or not you agree that they remain key issues (please see question 37 in the questionnaire).***

## **Section 10: The Last Pages**

### **Now tell us a bit about yourself, please (see questions 39 to 46 in the questionnaire)**

In the last pages of the questionnaire, you are asked to tell us a bit about yourself. This information will help us to ensure that findings from the questionnaire fully represent the range of views in Lavenham. But, if you prefer, you can complete the other parts of the questionnaire and not provide this information.

### **Broadband (please see question 47 in the questionnaire)**

Our 2016 Plan described Broadband speeds in Lavenham as patchy. Ofcom describes Broadband speeds of below 30Mb as 'regular' or 'fast'. 'Superfast' is between 30 and 300 Mb, and 'Ultrafast' is above 300Mb. The 2021 Broadband checker indicates that parts of Lavenham (in our south west quadrant) have Ultrafast Broadband, and that most remaining parts of the village have Superfast Broadband.

### **Keeping in Touch (please see question 48 in the questionnaire)**

If you would like to receive emails regarding news updates on the Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan, you can provide your email address and formally give us consent to do this. You can withdraw your consent for us to contact you at any time by emailing [lavenhamnp2@aol.com](mailto:lavenhamnp2@aol.com).

### **What next?**

We hope to provide the findings from the Questionnaire in late summer, pandemic restrictions permitting, through a public meeting which everyone will be invited to attend.

Further village consultation may be needed before a revised Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan can be put through the required regulatory processes.

The Revision working group currently expect the revision to be completed by the end of 2022, and the Lavenham community will continue to be kept informed and consulted as the process moves on.

### **Note on Confidentiality:**

Any information you provide by completing our questionnaire, or by giving your contact details will be handled in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. Any reports we publish based on findings from the questionnaire will not contain personal identifiable information. They will only contain anonymously formatted results. These results may be shared publicly and included in our revised Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan. All information collected via the questionnaire will be held for a period of seven years from the date of survey closure. If you have any queries about your involvement with this questionnaire, please email [lavenhamnp2@aol.com](mailto:lavenhamnp2@aol.com).