

LAVENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVISION 2021



The Lavenham Newsletter in December 2020 included information on the Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan that is currently being revised. This newsletter is to tell you about the revision process and the village questionnaire to be sent out in the Spring.

Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan Revision Committee

What is the Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan?

The Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan sets the village's ambitions for its development over 25 years. It was developed as a result of extensive consultation with you, the local community. Some may remember the displays in the village hall to help identify the issues important to local residents and many will remember completing the big survey that asked specific questions around these topics. The final stage was a referendum to confirm that the finalised plan, based on the survey responses, was acceptable. **The village voted in favour by a resounding 91.25%**, so in 2016 the Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan became the first to be formally adopted by Babergh District Council. **The plan has a legal status as a reference point in decisions which affect the village's future.** It is a source of information to be consulted by developers and planners. It should ensure any proposed development meets local needs. It must be used to inform local Councils when they decide on local planning applications.

The Plan itself can be found on the Lavenham Parish Council website together with the survey results and much of the background information. If you type ***bit.ly/LNPone*** into your browser this will take you straight to the Plan and all the supporting documents. Together these capture the spirit of Lavenham and are well worth exploring to remind all residents, long established or newcomers, about what the Plan is designed to protect.

An independent opinion of our Plan

Before acceptance by Babergh the Plan had to be assessed by an independent examiner, whose report opened with the following statement:

This is an extremely well written Neighbourhood Development Plan with clear explanation of objectives and logical justifiable explanation of many of the policies. Those involved in its production should feel proud of their achievement.

Why the need for revision?

Our Neighbourhood Plan has now been in place for 5 years so needs to be reviewed to make sure that it still reflects the needs of our community. It also has to fit in with the planning layer above, Babergh and Mid Suffolk's Joint Local Plan, which in turn has to reflect changes in central government guidance – for example the recent proposal for a national design code. If the current Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan is out of step with these we may lose some of the protection it currently provides.

Does our current plan do enough to:

- Plan for growth by considering housing, schools, employment?
- Keep young people in the village, looking at their needs for affordable housing, education, employment, public transport, entertainment?
- Provide for older people, with regard to healthcare provision, social engagement, public transport and opportunities for downsized and sheltered accommodation?
- Preserve our heritage by sympathetic development, while supporting facilities for our tourism economy, including parking and traffic management?
- Enable balanced development by maintaining but not fossilising heritage, while accommodating our share of Babergh development requirements and allowing the primary school to thrive?
- Reflect changes since the Plan was first put together?

Since 2016 there have been some new housing developments, large and small. There is the notable achievement of the Community Land Trust and Peek Close which you can read about on the Parish Council website (or type ***bit.ly/LNPpeek*** into your browser). Recent developments such as Bears Lane and Indigo Fields gave rise to a lot of comment (and provided 8 affordable houses on each site) but these small estates should be compared with, for example, the several large developments in Long Melford that went ahead without the protection of a Neighbourhood Plan.

The plus side of any development is a contribution to local infrastructure. The December 2020 Parish Council Newsletter highlighted a number of the village infrastructure projects that have benefited from the CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy paid by developers), and the whole newsletter reflects the positive vibe and current community activity in Lavenham. It is well worth re-reading. If you have lost your copy you can find it by typing ***bit.ly/LNPxnews*** into your browser.

The evidence provided in the documents supporting the Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan proves to interested parties the strength of local feeling on a range of issues including housing, speed limits, open spaces and footpaths.

Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan Revision Consultation Questionnaire

The first step of the review is to find out what YOU think about the current 2016 Neighbourhood Plan and where you think it could be improved.

The questionnaire will ask for the opinions of Lavenham residents, community organisations and businesses. The responses will build the evidence needed to continue the value of the Plan and its importance to the future of Lavenham.

Progress on this review has been slower than intended, because of the restrictions that Covid-19 has imposed, slowing down meetings and the exchange of information between the group compiling the questionnaire. We are now running up against the date for the 2021 Census, a UK Government questionnaire that everyone must complete, so while we wait to get a firm date in the calendar, **we encourage you to think about our village and how it should develop over the next 25 years.** Today's 15 year old residents will then be forty, and their current 'smart' world will be even smarter. How will climate change and its impact on farming and the countryside, electric vehicles, robot and drone deliveries and renewable energy supply affect the way we expect Lavenham to manage its future?

What will Lavenham look like in the future? As the review progresses you will be asked for your views on a way to protect Lavenham's unique character from ill-considered, inappropriate or poor quality development by the creation of a clear Design Statement, an objective that is now part of government planning strategy through the establishment of a national design code.

We all know that Lavenham is special. The 'stay at home' restrictions imposed by Covid-19 have shone a light on our community and revealed its riches – the people, the variety of shops and small businesses, the extent of the footpath network through the surrounding countryside, even the buses that kept running. Last but not least the visitors who returned in the less restricted periods thus confirming Lavenham's tourism strength. This is what the Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan is supporting, and which this revision is intended to maintain and develop.

Keep a look out for the LNP2 logo which will signal more information about the project.

