

Lawshall Neighbourhood Plan

Initial Review Recommendations

5 March 2021

Prepared by Places4People Planning Consultancy for
Lawshall Parish Council

Introduction

Lawshall Parish Council has given a commitment to review the Neighbourhood Plan that was “made” by Babergh District Council in 2017 with a view to bringing the policies up-to-date and in accordance with the latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework and the emerging Joint Babergh Mid Suffolk Local Plan, which is likely to come into force in Winter 2021/22..

This report has been prepared for the Parish Council to identify areas of the Neighbourhood Plan that will need updating in the light of the above. It also identifies topic areas and matters where the Neighbourhood Plan could be enhanced through the inclusion of additional policies.

The review has been undertaken on a chapter-by-chapter basis and includes recommendations for the content of the new Neighbourhood Plan for consideration by the Parish Council.

Part One - Why a Neighbourhood Plan

Chapter 1 - Lawshall Present

This chapter remains largely current but there will be a need for a minor review to ensure that it remains up-to-date. Given the local knowledge, it is requested that the Parish Council provides us with this information.

Chapter 2 - Lawshall Past

This chapter does not require amendment. The inclusion of an old map of the parish might help to emphasise the traditional hamlet characteristics of the village that are important to maintain.

Chapter 3 - Why a Neighbourhood Plan for Lawshall?

This very short chapter might be better merged into a larger chapter that encompasses more of the “how and why”, merging with Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 - How we did it

Having regard to our comments in Chapter 3, this chapter will need bringing up-to-date to have regard to the fact that the Neighbourhood Plan was originally made in 2017 and is now being updated. The NP Timeline should also be revised to relate better to the current Review. It should probably include details as to why the Plan has been reviewed and the process for undertaking the review.

Recommendation: Places4People to rewrite this chapter and to merge it with Chapter 3

Chapter 5 - Key Issues

The Key Issues were identified in 2016 when work on the Plan originally commenced. The Parish Council is requested to review whether the Issues identified remain current

and whether there are new planning issues it would the Neighbourhood Plan to address.

The chapter also contains a table of key findings from the evidence gathered at the time the Neighbourhood Plan was prepared. The evidence forms a strong basis for the content of the Plan and it is not considered necessary to update it at this time.

Recommendation: Parish Council to review and update the Key Issues

Chapter 6 - Planning Policy Context

This chapter will need a rewrite to bring it up-to-date, particularly in the context of the emerging Joint Local Plan.

Recommendation: Places4People to rewrite this chapter

Chapter 7 - Lawshall Future

The Plan doesn't currently contain a succinct vision but does contain a number of statements that could be described as objectives for the Plan. There is no requirement to have a vision but the statements do need reviewing to ascertain whether they remain valid date this time.

Recommendation: Places4People to review the content of this chapter and identify potential objectives for the RevisedPlan

Part Two - Components of the Plan

Chapter 8 - Settlement Pattern and Spatial Policy

This chapter is directed by the content of the Babergh Core Strategy. The Core Strategy will soon be superseded by the emerging Joint Local Plan and, consequently the spatial strategy is now out of date in that it enables development outside but adjoining the Built-Up Area Boundary. The Joint Local Plan will not permit such development except in exceptional circumstances.

We would propose rewriting this chapter to remove all reference to the Core Strategy and in particular Policy CS11 and develop a new Spatial Strategy that reflects the Hamlet designations that the emerging Joint Local Plan has bestowed Lawshall but to reinforce the importance of the gaps between the Hamlets and other important landscapes that are present in the Parish.

Recommendation: Places4People to rewrite this chapter

Chapter 9 - Housing development

The Housing chapter was written at a time when the Local Plan did not identify a minimum housing requirement for neighbourhood plans. Given the advanced status of the emerging Joint Local Plan, it will now be necessary to revisit the housing requirements section of the chapter and, where necessary bring the data up-to-date. Policies LAW2 and LAW3 are closely aligned with the policies in the Babergh

Core Strategy. They will need to be deleted and replaced with a new policy that reflects the approach of the emerging Joint Local Plan.

Policy LAW4 will need reviewing to ensure that it is relevant. However, at present there is nothing to suggest that it should be amended.

Policy LAW 5 also appears to be fit for purpose at this stage.

Recommendation: Places4People to rewrite this chapter with a particular emphasis on the policies that will soon be superseded by the Joint Local Plan.

Chapter 10 - Our Natural Environment

This chapter remains largely relevant and is backed up by strong evidence produced through the Character Appraisal. However, it is considered that the Important Recreation and Green Spaces identified in Policy LAW6 could meet the NPPF criteria for designating as Local Green Spaces. We will undertake a separate assessment to demonstrate this and propose that Policy LAW6 becomes a policy to protect Local Green Spaces. We will also assess whether there are potential additional spaces that would meet the NPPF criteria.

Policies LAW7 and LAW8 appear to be largely fit for purpose and are unlikely to require amendment. However, we will explore the opportunity for introducing additional policy opportunities to achieve Biodiversity "net gain".

Policy LAW9 (Settlement Gaps) is more about the overall strategy for where development will take place. With this in mind, we will explore the opportunities for the incorporation of the protection of these gaps in Policy LAW1.

Policy LAW10 remains fit for purpose and does not require amendment.

Recommendation: Places4People to review Policy LAW6 with a view to the potential designation of open spaces as the nationally recognised Local Green Spaces. Policy LAW9 to also be reviewed and if appropriate to incorporate in a new Policy LAW1

Chapter 11- Our Built Heritage and Design

Policies LAW 11 and LAW 12 appear largely fit for purpose. However, given that other neighbourhood plans across Babergh and Mid Suffolk have taken a more proactive approach to designating Local Heritage Assets, we will seek to discuss with the Parish Council whether there is support for a more pro-active approach to identifying such heritage assets. See, for example, the Little Waldingfield Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy LAW13 remains largely fit for purpose and we would not propose amending it. We will, however, explore whether there is an opportunity to add a further policy into

the Plan to cover sustainable design, albeit that it may be difficult to apply such requirements to residential development.

In other Neighbourhood Plans we have successfully introduced a designation of "Special Character Areas" for parts of a village where there are clusters of listed buildings, important open spaces and other locally distinct features. We propose investigating whether such a policy approach might be appropriate for parts of Lawshall, particularly in the light of the Community Action concerning a Conservation Area in the adopted Plan.

Policy LAW13 will be reviewed once the AECOM Design Codes work has been completed. The outputs from this work will directly inform the content of a revised Policy LAW13 and other content in this Chapter.

Recommendation: Places4People to:

- i. ascertain the appetite for identifying Local Heritage Assets with the Parish Council*
- ii. consider the potential for including a policy to cover sustainable construction requirements*
- iii. consider the potential to define one or more "Special Character Areas" in the Plan*
- iv. Review Policy LAW13 once the AECOM Design Code work is complete.*

Chapter 12 – Our Amenities and Services

Policy LAW14 is fit for purpose and does not require any significant amendments.

Chapter 13 – Our Infrastructure & Businesses

Policy LAW15 is assumed to remain relevant and we do not propose to amend it.

Policy LAW16 will be brought up-to-date in order that it aligns with guidance and requirements of Anglian Water and the County Council in terms of surface water run-off and recycling.

Recommendation: Places4People will review and propose amendments to Policy LAW16

Chapter 14 – Implementation and Monitoring

There are no requirements for amendments to this Chapter.

Proposals Map

This will need redrawing to provide a clearer map base and to reflect any changes resulting from the Policy review. It is likely that more details "inset" maps will be needed to identify particular designations more accurately.

Recommendation: Places4People to redraw the Proposals Map

Appendices

We consider that the content of most of the appendices remain valid but this will be reviewed in more detail once the content of the revised policies is formulated. Generally, best practice reduces the number of appendices in a Plan to that which is essential to its operation.

New Policies

We will give careful consideration to the opportunity to introduce new policies in the Plan, such as a Dark Skies policy which is not addressed sufficiently in the Joint Local Plan. We will consider this as part of the ongoing liaison with the Parish Council.

Conclusion

Our review has highlighted some policies that will require amendment and review. We would propose preparing some of the background material and up-to-date mapping while the Design Codes document is being prepared by AECOM. This will ensure that time delays are reduced to a minimum.

We would welcome the Parish Council's feedback on this Review.

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5 March 2021