

# **SAXMUNDHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

## **Future housing development in Saxmundham - what are the issues, what do we want?**

*Discussion paper by John Findlay, Chair of NP housing working group, June 2018*



### **Introduction**

The Neighbourhood Plan for Saxmundham provides us with a great opportunity to plan the future of our town.

This note looks at the future for housing development in Saxmundham.

We need to think about what we would like the town to be like, and look like, in five, ten and twenty years' time.

### **The policy background**

Central Government has set very specific targets for more housing, with plans for 300,000 new homes nationwide. There is a wider national debate about housing policy, whether the housing crisis is caused by a shortage of housing or simply by inflation in house prices; but here in Saxmundham, we have to recognise that some housing development is inevitable.

Suffolk Coastal District Council is currently developing its Local Plan for the period from now up to 2036. Their Plan is likely to propose significant expansion for Saxmundham, with up to 1200 new homes.

Such development would

- help meet the Government's housing targets
- generate a new economic stimulus for the town
- considerable increase in the Community Infrastructure Levy, which developers have to pay to the District and Town Councils for local infrastructure projects such as schools, healthcare and transport.

But such expansion would have a major impact on the town and the way it looks; and on housing provision for the local community.

The District Council will be publishing its Local Plan later in the year.

Our Neighbourhood Plan is vital because it gives us the opportunity to influence what happens in the future. Provided it does not contradict the Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan has statutory force. So, for example, if the Local Plan says there must be so many new houses in Saxmundham, but doesn't specify where they should be built, the Neighbourhood Plan can identify locations for new development.

### **Community needs and expectations**

We therefore have to work out what local people need and want in terms of housing; and recognise what other pressures there may be for new housing.

Different groups have different housing needs.

There needs to be a range of housing, with real choice and plenty of genuinely affordable homes both to buy and to rent. There needs to be specific provision for local people, so that new homes are not just for incomers. There will be demand for second homes, especially if Saxmundham becomes more of a destination town for tourists and visitors.

There are also dangers that Saxmundham might become more of a dormitory town, where people have homes but work and play elsewhere. There are the longer-term implications for housing if Sizewell C goes ahead. And developers of course have their own priorities: to build as many homes, at a profit, as they can, whatever the particular needs of the local community.

We need to look at innovative new models for housing provision, such as councils setting up new bodies to provide social housing, and work with others to press for the Government to relax legislation preventing councils from building houses.

## **The issues**

New housing development is a key issue for the local community and for Saxmundham as a town. So we need to think about:

- What is in the best interest of the town and the next generation?
- What kind of new housing do we need?
- How much new housing do we need to plan for?
- How will new housing affect employment in the town?
- Will it help revitalise the High Street?
- How can we ensure we have the schools, healthcare and transport we need to support new housing development?
- Where should any new housing go? For example
  - up the hill to the east of the town, behind the Hopkins Homes development?
  - on The Layers, to the south of the town?
  - on land south of the Free School?
  - on land between the railway line and the A12, south of the Mayflower Green estate?
  - on a combination of these?
  - on new sites elsewhere?
- what will be the effect on our landscape and the environment?
- What will be the effect on neighbouring villages?
- Should some of the housing be built in the neighbouring villages?

- What should we demand of developers to help the town, for example in infrastructure and in helping support the local economy?

### **Next steps**

This note is designed to stimulate discussion; and as background for local community meetings to generate ideas about what should go in our Neighbourhood Plan.

The final draft Plan will be put to the community in a referendum.