

## SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – NOVEMBER 2024



### *Cllr Stephen Burroughes - Framlingham Division*

- **GOVERNMENT'S NEW HOUSING TARGETS MUST PUT INFRASTRUCTURE FIRST**

Suffolk County Council has raised concerns in its response to the government's proposed reforms for planning policies for England. In particular, it expresses fears about the lack of clarity around infrastructure, such as schools, transport, waste and community facilities when new housing developments are approved.

Last week, the government closed its consultation on plans to change the National Planning Policy Framework and other parts of the planning system. The proposals include a significant increase in the number of new homes to be built across Suffolk – the government's own figures suggest that East Suffolk alone would see an 87% increase in the number new homes, compared those currently planned.

Suffolk County Council is already very active in securing developer contributions and delivering infrastructure. It secures Section 106 contributions as well as funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy from district councils - but this is to maintain a baseline level of service rather than make a positive overall improvement to infrastructure. In its response to government, the council said that the simple question of "who pays" for the infrastructure needs to be answered when permissions are being granted. Local planning authorities should not be allowed to assume that other authorities and agencies will make up any difference.

- **SUFFOLK LAUNCHES POTHOLE PREVENTION PROGRAMME AHEAD OF WINTER WEATHER**

Suffolk County Council has launched a pothole prevention programme to target areas of Suffolk's road network that could worsen when the winter weather hits. Teams with additional resources and the latest technology have already started visiting and treating locations susceptible to deterioration or where there are smaller defects that could grow as the colder and wetter weather strikes.

Building on the success of earlier trials with the Roadmender Elastomac and Dragon Patcher machines, teams will be deployed across Suffolk to use this equipment in addition to our usual Safety Defect Service that deals with larger defects as they occur. Highways workers using the Roadmender Elastomac system will target urban roads that are at higher risk of damage to locate cracks and smaller potholes and carry out repairs. Unlike traditional methods, which require potholes to be saw-cut, excavated and asphalt to be compacted on top, Elastomac is a flowable material used to seal the repaired area.

Once applied, this adhesive, flexible material bonds with the existing road surface, preventing water getting in the cracks and extending the road's lifespan. The process is more sustainable and efficient, reducing material movement and waste by 90%, lowering costs and minimising disruption. With the Dragon Patcher machines, these clean the surface of the road using compressed air, preparing it for repair with an application of aggregate and hot bitumen material, and will target rural roads.

Fuelled by biodiesel, HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil), the patcher reduces raw material use, generates zero waste, and has demonstrated significant carbon savings compared to traditional patching techniques.

The locations have been carefully chosen, focusing on areas with a higher risk of potholes forming during winter. Highways teams will be working when weather conditions allow, from 7am to 5pm, moving across the county to treat the more vulnerable areas. Whilst the repairs are underway, traffic will be managed temporarily by staff on site, and there may be waiting times of up to 15 minutes.

Highways authorities up and down the country experience an inevitable rise in potholes during the winter months. Water seeps into cracks in the road surface which freezes, expands then breaks up the road surface.

The purpose of this preventative programme is to seal treated areas of Suffolk's road network to reduce water getting into cracks reduce the overall number of potholes forming.

- **COUNCIL TO OFFER INTEREST-FREE LOANS TO MAKE HOMES MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT**

Suffolk County Council will offer interest-free loans to help make residents' homes warmer, safer and cheaper to run. Energy efficiency upgrades such as insulation, solar panels, batteries, glazing, or heat pumps will all be possible with loans of up to £15,000 to be repaid over a maximum of 7 years at 0% interest.

The £3 million project will be open to homeowners across Suffolk from November, but you can [register your interest now at Lendology](#).

Making homes more energy-efficient helps retain their heat and use less energy, meaning homeowners can save on their energy bills and reduce their carbon emissions. A warm home also has a positive impact on health and well-being. Money for the loans comes from £3 million of funding received as part of the council's negotiations with the previous government to secure a County Deal.

It was allocated from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to support an energy efficiency and energy generation 0% loan fund for people that cannot access grants currently available to low-income households. The scheme supports Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan, by increasing the number of properties which have energy-efficient and low carbon energy measures installed.

An increase in demand for energy efficiency measures will also help support businesses providing those services, meaning jobs, skills development and investment in the green economy.

Suffolk County Council is partnering with Lendology CIC to deliver the interest-free loan scheme. Lendology CIC is an experienced Social Enterprise Lender, managing similar schemes with councils across the country.

For more information and to register your interest in an interest-free loan, visit [Lendology's website](#).

- **SUFFOLK RESIDENTS ENCOURAGED TO SHARE VIEWS ON NEW LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN**

Suffolk's communities helped shape a new draft of the Suffolk Local Transport Plan by sharing their views back in February of this year and the county council is now seeking feedback on the final proposed document.

The plan which details activity between 2025-2040 sets out a long-term vision for transport in Suffolk and covers themes such as decarbonisation of transport, strengthening the local economy, promoting health, wellbeing and social inclusion, and creating better-connected places that encourage a range of transport choices. Alongside this county-wide plan, the county council has produced fifteen 'Area Transport Plans' and a 'Suffolk Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan' which are the funded implementation plans for the wider Suffolk Local Transport Plan. These plans outline how the Local Transport Plan's vision and objectives will be delivered in key locations across the county.

The consultation is available via [www.suffolk.gov.uk/LTP](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/LTP) and the consultation will close on Monday 25 November 2024. The Local Transport Plan and its associated plans will then be presented to Suffolk County Council's Cabinet in 2025.

- **RENDLESHAM REVEALED INSPIRES CLASSROOM ARCHAEOLOGY ACTIVITIES**

Suffolk County Council's successful Rendlesham Revealed archaeology project is expanding its legacy to primary schools across the county.

*Rendlesham Revealed* was a four-year, community archaeology project which made significant new discoveries about life in Suffolk and Anglo-Saxon England. It uncovered the remains of a large timber Royal

Hall, confirming the location as a royal settlement of the East Anglian Kings. At the same site, a rare, possible pre-Christian temple from the same period was also discovered.

Among the volunteers were over 287 schoolchildren from five local schools, who were actively involved in excavating the site near Sutton Hoo, and helped clean and sort the finds that were dug up during the *Rendlesham Revealed* project. Following on from the project's success, an educational outreach officer will be going into primary schools to deliver hands-on archaeological activities with real artefacts excavated from Suffolk.

Schools can find out more about this opportunity by contacting [archaeology.education@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:archaeology.education@suffolk.gov.uk) or visiting <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/archaeology-education>. There will be a charge to schools for the service. To find out more about *Rendlesham Revealed* and archaeology in Suffolk, visit [heritage.suffolk.gov.uk](https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk).

## • **SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL SET ON MAJOR INVESTMENT TO FURTHER PROTECT SUFFOLK FROM FLOODING**

Suffolk County Council has announced its intention to invest another £1.5 million to carry out important flooding prevention work.

- Council set to agree £1.5 million to deliver first phase of works identified in initial flood investigation reports
- Authority calls on Government to recognise ongoing impact of Storm Babet and fund £20 million of further prevention work urgently needed
- Extensive work already completed since Storm Babet including more than 111,000 drains cleared and significant road repairs.

The commitment comes as initial flood investigation reports have identified that a further £20 million is needed to complete the work – a figure that the county council can't afford. The council has therefore written to the Flooding Minister, Emma Hardy MP, and demanded the government step up and plug the funding gap.

- [Read the council's letter to DEFRA](#)

Examples of the kind of projects that could be delivered include:

1. Creating flood water retention ponds in land above villages and green spaces within communities to capture water and slow the flow into residential areas.
2. Installing flood doors and non-return valves on drains to stop water entering properties that are particularly at risk of flooding.
3. Help landowners with advice and guidance, especially those within responsibilities to maintain ditches and streams on their properties (known as 'riparian ownership').
4. Bolstering Suffolk Highways' resources to deliver planned and reactive maintenance on the county's roads and footpaths.

Storm Babet struck between October 18 and 21 last year and caused substantial flooding and disruption across Suffolk. A month's worth of rain fell in 24 hours, flooding more than 900 homes and businesses. The impact of the storm was exceptional and demanded an urgent multiagency response.

So far, Suffolk County Council has committed more than £13.75 million for work to aid recovery from Storm Babet. Suffolk County Council has made several achievements as part of our continued commitment to reduce flood risk. The council has already committed £12.25 million, including:

- £1 million on bringing in additional flood investigation specialists
- £1.25 million for repairs to Suffolk's highways following the flood damage

- £10 million funding, which was committed in 2021, to address long-standing drainage issues over three years. This complements £2 million a year invested in drainage repairs and improvements funded from the Department for Transport maintenance grant.

The council has completed seven location-based flood investigations, with an estimated 50 to complete. This compares to an average of three or four investigations in an average year. These reports provide a detailed account of events for each flooding location and recommendations for other organisations, landowners, businesses and residents.

Carried out extensive works on Suffolk's highways. Specifically:

- Cleared 96% of highway drainage gullies across Suffolk, more than 111,000. This involves lifting the iron grates and sucking up the debris that has washed off the roads
- Attended more than 3,500 emergency call outs for flooding related incidents – an unprecedented number. This includes pumping an estimated 2.5million litres of water from the roads, removing 53 tonnes of debris and clearing 121 fallen trees
- Rolled out the [DEFRA-funded Recovery Scheme](#) which meant that flooded property owners could apply for up to £5,000 to make their homes and businesses more resilient to future flooding. Suffolk County Council is administering the scheme on behalf of government. [Applications are open until April 2025](#).

#### • SUFFOLK RESIDENTS URGED TO SHARE THEIR VIEWS ON LOCAL PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES

Suffolk County Council is calling on residents to share their views on local pharmaceutical services as part of a regular review to ensure that these services continue to meet the evolving needs of the community.

The Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA), which is undertaken every three years in line with statutory requirements, is a comprehensive report designed to assess current pharmaceutical services and identify any gaps or areas for improvement. Feedback gathered through this survey will help the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board, NHS England, and Integrated Care Boards make informed decisions about future service provisions, including any potential new pharmacy openings.

Pharmaceutical services in Suffolk are delivered through community pharmacies—sometimes referred to as chemists—which include those located in supermarkets, online pharmacies, and specialist medical appliance contractors. These pharmacies not only dispense medicines but also offer essential healthcare advice and support, often serving as the first point of contact for health concerns.

Residents are able to complete the survey online by visiting <https://bit.ly/4f4PUYC>. A reminder that the deadline for submissions is 8<sup>th</sup> November 2024. By contributing to this important review, residents can help ensure that pharmaceutical services in Suffolk remain fit for purpose and responsive to the needs of the community.

#### • HRH THE PRINCESS ROYAL TO OPEN LOWESTOFT'S GULL WING BRIDGE

Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal will officially open The Gull Wing Bridge in Lowestoft on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November. The new multi-million-pound bridge, which opened to pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles in September, represents a significant step forward for Lowestoft and is already benefitting the town according to local businesses and residents.

Built on behalf of Suffolk County Council by leading civil engineering contractor Farrans, The Gull Wing Bridge has provided a long-awaited third crossing over Lake Lothing, which has significantly eased traffic congestion in the town centre, shortened journey times, and improved journey reliability.

By streamlining logistics and transportation in the town, the bridge is also expected to act as a catalyst for economic growth, attracting new investment and positioning Lowestoft as a dynamic and forward-looking commercial centre and community. Timings and event details will be provided closer to the time.

- **COUNCIL CALLED ON CHANCELLOR TO BACK LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN AUTUMN BUDGET**

In a letter to the Chancellor, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Cllr Richard Smith MVO, highlights that public funding is not keeping pace with the demand for public services, particularly in areas like children's and adult care which now account for 77 pence of every £1 Suffolk County Council spends.

Cllr Smith notes that, despite significant savings achieved by the council over the last five years, the budget gap has grown unsustainably and calls on the Chancellor to address the funding crisis and spare residents from the need for steep council tax increases. Cllr Smith says the council endorses submissions made by the Local Government Association, County Councils Network and Society of County Treasurers, each calling for urgent action to safeguard public services.

**Cllr Stephen Burroughes**

*County Councillor for the Framlingham Division  
Suffolk County Council*