

District Councillor Report – Harry Richardson

2nd February 2025

Local Plan review	<p>Mid Suffolk will now review its (Joint, with Babergh) Local Plan in response to an increase in housebuilding targets from the government. 'Part 1' of the Local Plan, covering key planning policies, was adopted in November 2023 but 'Part 2' (covering site allocations) is still in development.</p> <p>For context, the government has increased the annual housing requirement from 535 to 734 in Mid Suffolk (up 37%), although we have exceeded this in recent years. Although we have surpassed the five-year land supply required of us, this may not be the case for the remainder of the Local Plan's lifecycle to 2037, hence the need for the review.</p>
Support for farmers	<p>At our Full Council meeting on 23rd January, councillors agreed unanimously to consider all reasonable and practical measures to support local farming communities, and to urge Suffolk MPs to push for a review of recent changes by the Government, which we fear could lead to a crippling 'Family Farm Tax'.</p> <p>The National Farmers Union warns that 75% of working farms could be at risk from the 'Family Farm Tax,' putting both key sources of employment and food production in jeopardy. There is also added difficulty for businesses to invest given the downgraded expectation of future interest rate cuts, accompanied by predictions of sluggish economic growth in the remainder of 2024/25 and beyond.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council, Cllr Mellen, will now be writing to Suffolk's MPs asking them to push for the changes to APR and BPR to be reviewed. Meanwhile, cabinet members will discuss with representatives from the NFU, Suffolk Agricultural Association and the Chamber of Commerce how the council can further support local farmers and businesses within the district.</p>
A14 services	<p>As you may be aware from reporting in the local press, Mid Suffolk has ordered the closure of the new service station at the A14 roundabout off the A1088. This is due to the failure to comply with planning conditions imposed when approval was granted at appeal by the Planning Inspectorate, pertaining to highway safety matters.</p> <p>The occupiers have not complied with the planning enforcement notice and so legal advice is being sort by the Council before consideration is given to a further response. For the avoidance of doubt, the Council is able to commence a prosecution in its role as the local planning authority.</p>

<p>Visit from Tokyo Metropolitan Government</p>	<p>A delegation of three officers from the Tokyo Metropolitan Government visited the councils' offices on 27th January. This followed the council winning, jointly with Babergh, the UK Council of the Year award win in spring last year, which recognised several achievements, including becoming the first rural UK councils to commission a pioneering full tree canopy data survey.</p> <p>The survey by Treeconomics established the districts' detailed baseline tree coverage data and enabled us to map Mid Suffolk's tree cover, identify where more planting was needed, and improve tree management long term. This then prompted the Tokyo Metropolitan Government to request a meeting to better understand how this approach could be adopted in Japan.</p>
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