

District Councillors' Report for Parish Councils – September 2021

<p>Appeal Hearings & Planning</p>	<p>The nine separate appeals against the enforcement actions taken by Mid Suffolk District Council in Brockford road are still on track for the hearings in October 2021. The recent deferring of the Hearings till September regarding the Joint Local Plan has not changed the previous arrangements for these appeal hearings.</p> <p>This week a planning committee refused an Application for 14 houses in Wetheringsett, despite the site being inside the settlement boundary of the 1998 local plan, the site however is not part of the allocation in the emerging Joint Local Plan, it was that change in circumstance that the committee focused upon, leading to the site being refused against the advice of the officers.</p>
<p>Car Park Review</p>	<p>Mid Suffolk is reviewing its Car Parks under our operations. This review of carparks in Mid Suffolk is just looking at how much we charge per hour etc & does not take into account upcoming changes in car use and recent developments.</p> <p>It is now almost certain that that future of personal car use will become electric driven, and that the future relationship with car transport and centres of business and services will change radically in the short to medium term.</p> <p>In Stowmarket an electric car can be charged free of charge for up to 1.5 hours, (10kw or 40 miles) in two retail locations, with two more planned in the pipeline. We have to ask ourselves, if a car can park and be refuelled for free in increasing numbers of retail locations, what is the future for trying to charge for parking, without even offering pay as you go charging points? Surely if we as a council has the wish to increase footfall to support independent retail and services, we should consider matching the free parking and charging offer, helping increase trade for our towns, and encouraging a zero emission shift. We could then reinvest the charge parking into public transport, or more electric charging infrastructure, thus putting us ahead in the transition, as we find at present people are changing their shopping and leisure and work habits, to make our towns most viable we need to place them ahead of the transition curve.</p> <p>We could also consider making all car parking free, and treat it as a business support service, the government has recognised the value of supporting business through the various lockdowns, why should we as a council not demonstrate our support by putting our towns at an advantage, especially as our council has underspent its budget every single year for a decade, by more than 10 times what it would cost to offer free parking?</p> <p>Surely any parking review that is going to deliver modal shift, and unlock the full potential of Mid Suffolk, should at least explore these options?</p>
<p>Solar Charging & Battery Storage</p>	<p>At a recent Planning Committee, I moved approval for a project that will install solar panels, battery storage and 8 electric car charging points at the Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre in Stowmarket for Mid Suffolk this is the first scheme of its kind, the solar panel are mounted on a system of metal supports that are designed to have no loss in parking bays but will provide for an easy to maintain solar installation, coupled with battery storage it will break the need to use the solar energy at the second it is produced, it further allows for the stored energy to be used to generate income, as well as proving much need electric charging points in the District, as we still lag behind many Districts in tis provision.</p>

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