

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT JULY 2023

Norwich to Tilbury – National Grid Pylons

National Grid has launched its latest public consultation for a new high voltage power line across East Anglia including Mid Suffolk and Babergh.

The public consultation event in our area is on Wednesday 19th July, from 2 till 7 p.m. at Copdock Village Hall, Old London Road, Copdock. There are also consultation webinars on July 25 (7-8. pm) and August 12 and 17 (both at 10-11 am). I intend to attend the event at Copdock. MSDC councillors were given a presentation by National Grid to explain the project.

MSDC Councillors were given a briefing on this subject by representatives of National Grid. I had assumed that we would be given copies of the presentation but I haven't received them; therefore I have to rely on my notes.

Their main objection to a subsea route was regarding the subsea connections – it would be necessary to have a very large housing at each end of the cables and each housing would cost hundreds of millions of pounds. Six or more converter stations would also be needed at a cost of £500m.

Regarding the overland option, there had already been five changes to the suggested route since 2022 to take the line

East of Wortham Ling
North of Flowton
West of Great Wentham
West of Writtle
Further East of Inगतstone (heritage assets).

Grid had put together a design development report to look at alternatives identified through feedback with reasons of why they were preferred or not. In this report they would look at "cumulative effects" e.g. those on the Grade 1 church at Flowton. They were considering some "undergrounding" but I didn't get the feeling that this was related to effects upon residents, more that it would relate to practical building considerations, e.g. dealing with crossings such as solar farms. The route across "Constable country" would however, be underground.

Enso Energy Solar Farm – latest developments

21st June was the first meeting of the new MSDC Planning Committee at which they were to consider the duplicate application for this development – the first having been refused by the previous Planning Committee on 3rd February. I was to speak on behalf of Blakenham Ward and had written a report to that purpose. However at the last moment I was advised that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda. Instead of the duplicate application being discussed, the committee met in private to take legal advice and we were advised that they had decided not to defend the original refusal at appeal. There had previously been issues regarding deadlines for feedback re the duplicate application, whereby the online site gave an earlier deadline than was required. However, respondents would still have been able to email Planning Officers.

We were advised that a Press Release would be forthcoming and on 26th June Mid Suffolk District Council and CARE (Community Alliance for a Rural Environment) Suffolk issued a joint statement about the Bramford Green solar farm application and appeal.

The Press Release from the Council and CARE reads

“Like many rural planning authorities, Mid Suffolk District Council’s planning committee has been asked to determine large-scale renewable energy developments. The council always tries to balance the benefits of that with any constraints it may face in the district.

“When a council refuses a planning application, like it did this one in February, the applicant has the right to appeal with the Planning Inspector. On this occasion the applicant did just that.

When the applicant makes their case to the Inspector it is then good practice for the council to review its position and seek legal counsel. This legal advice was considered at the first opportunity on 21 June at the newly-formed planning committee’s first meeting.

“The committee will always consider and value public opinion alongside the recommendations of professional planning officers in reaching a decision, which the committee believes to be in the best interests of the district.

“However, it is bound to reach its decision in accordance with its statutory duty, which is to determine planning applications in accordance with the local development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, including among other things the National Planning Policy Framework.

“After careful consideration of the legal advice received, and taking into account material considerations that have changed since the original decision, the council will not be defending the reasons for refusal.

“Community representatives will continue to defend similar reasons to the council’s refusal at appeal. They will continue to make their case directly to the inspector, based on their own concerns and evidence.

“We will continue to lobby government to provide urgent clarity through the production of a more joined up strategic plan for energy developments as well as a national plan for agriculture, to help all local authorities find the right balance between food production, protecting our countryside, and delivering energy security.

“The council is considering how it proceeds with a separate ‘free-go’ (i.e. duplicate) application for the solar farm, and the various options, as it may influence the appeal process.”

Works get underway to install almost 30 new electric vehicle charge points in council car parks

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are set to install 28 new electric vehicle chargers across their car park network this year, to help tackle climate change.

Starting this week, (28th June) works are getting underway to install 28 new 22kW EV charging points in several council car parks in Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

They are thanks to a £300K grant from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV).

Each charging point will be able to charge two vehicles at the same time, significantly improving access to chargers for local residents and visitors.

Locations have been chosen specifically to provide an off-street EV charging option for residents living nearby, who currently use on-street parking spaces. However, they will also be available for all other car park users.

Their aim is to help cut carbon emissions, reduce air pollution, and encourage greater numbers of people to shift to more environmentally sustainable modes of transport across the district.

Works, being carried out by Suffolk-based firm [Anglia Car Charging](#), have been phased to ensure as minimal disruption as possible. They will start from this week and continue throughout this year.

Visitors are advised to refer to specific signage in each car park for information about when works will be taking place.

Mid Suffolk car parks due to benefit from the new chargers are:

- Ipswich Street
Stowmarket
- Bury Street
Stowmarket
- Milton Road
Stowmarket
- Iliffe Way
Stowmarket
- Union Street West
Stowmarket

The Range pre-sale at Gateway 14 named 'Deal of the Year'

Gateway 14 Ltd (wholly owned by Mid Suffolk District Council) and development partner, Jaynic, scooped the 'Deal of the Year Award' at the recent UK Property Forums' Eastern Echo Awards.

The award was for the pre-sale of a new 1.17m sq ft warehouse at Gateway 14 at Stowmarket to be used by garden and leisure products retailer The Range.

Gateway 14 Ltd managing director Emily Atack said:

It's fantastic to receive recognition for this deal and its significance to the region – with this highly sustainable development set to bring 1,650 new jobs to Suffolk.”

You're not alone: Support available as more people seek cost of living help

Find out what help you are entitled to – that is the message from the district councils and Citizens Advice, as residents and families continue to deal with the high cost of living.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and Citizens Advice are calling on those feeling the financial squeeze to check what help they can access – particularly if they have not done so before.

The call comes as Sudbury and District Citizens Advice announce that they delivered £5,500 worth of fuel vouchers last financial year. Meanwhile Mid Suffolk Citizen’s Advice shared that their team saw a huge spike in demand for their help, advising on 65% more issues than in the previous 12 months.

The biggest increases were from people looking for help with consumer goods, such as food, energy, phone and internet bills. This comes at the same time that research by [Policy in Practice](#) shows almost £19bn in support goes unclaimed every year, which could change the lives of millions of people nationwide.

Residents can contact their district council or local Citizens Advice to find out what help is available. There may be support that they are unaware of, and offers which help cut spending such as ['social tariffs'](#) from internet and phone companies.

Simon Clifton, Chief Officer at Citizens Advice Mid Suffolk, said: “We’ve seen record numbers of people accessing our services, including many who have not been in this situation before. But we know there are more people out there who don't know what support is available to them, and who may be uncomfortable asking for help.

Cllr Tim Weller, Mid Suffolk cabinet member for Environment, Culture and Wellbeing, said: “We’ll be doing everything we can to support our residents over the summer and beyond. Anyone unsure where to turn for help should start on our website’s Cost of Living section, where there’s a clear breakdown of the help available.”

*Adrienne Marriott
Blakenham District Councillor
13/07/23*