

District Councillor's Report for Westhorpe Parish Council – July 2021

Changes in opposition group	The opposition group on Mid-Suffolk Council is made up of 12 Green Councillors together with 5 Liberal Democrats. Councillor Rachel Eburne, who has led the group for several years, has stood down due to ongoing health issues, and I have been chosen as the new leader.
Burgess Homes application – Westhorpe Road Finningham	<p>This application was called-in by me and came to committee on 3rd June. There was a united front of opposition from Finningham Parish Council and a local resident (both in-person at the committee) plus letters and e-mails sent in from Westhorpe PC and residents of both villages. I was delighted that the application was unanimously voted down by the members of the committee. The grounds for refusal were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the level of harm to the setting of the Grade II listed Hill House, and lack of information to show how this harm would be outweighed by public benefits 2) The site being outside the old settlement boundary for Finningham and also not within the proposed settlement boundary in the Joint Local Plan. <p>There is of course the possibility of an appeal, though appeals on similar sites (eg Gt. Finborough) have been recently turned down.</p>
Flooding	The flood on Westhorpe Road in Finningham reappears every time we get heavy rain. I continue to campaign for a resolution of this issue on two fronts: Through the Planning Enforcement team at Mid-Suffolk, who are investigating the effect of the new development, now almost complete. Also through SCC Highways, though so far without an adequate response.
Joint Local Plan	<p>The examination of the JLP has begun. The first hybrid hearings were supposed to be held at the end of June, but unfortunately the technology did not work correctly and the session had to be suspended. This from the JLP team update:</p> <p>“It is anticipated that the Stage 1 hearings sessions originally scheduled for June and July will now take place over a concentrated period from September and it is envisaged that the Stage 2 hearing sessions will continue to be able to take place in mid-Autumn as originally planned. This change of date will enable the examination to be conducted effectively and ensure inclusivity for every participant. Appropriate notice will be provided to all who made a representation to the Regulation 19 consultation, so that if they wish to participate in the hearings sessions they are able to do so.</p> <p>Further information for anyone who wishes to follow the proceedings will be published on the councils’ dedicated Joint Local Plan examination webpage nearer the time.</p> <p>The change of dates will still result in the Examination hearing sessions being heard as planned in the Autumn and does not alter the status of the Joint Local Plan as submitted in March 2021, regarding weight in the planning decision making process.”</p>
New Leisure, sport and physical activity strategy	Mid-Suffolk cabinet yesterday approved a refreshed strategy for this area, under the new Cabinet member for Health and Wellbeing. As part of the recovery from the Covid pandemic, there is an increased focus on supporting and encouraging active residents, though upgrades to the leisure centres as well as sport, activity etc. in smaller communities.

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