

District Councillor Report
Elmswell Parish Council
Prepared by District Cllr John Levantis
October 2018

1. Parliamentary Boundary Review

The Boundary Commission for England has now published its final recommendations for parliamentary constituencies. The recommendations now need to be agreed by Parliament. The report recommends that the Central Suffolk and North Ipswich constituency be renamed to Central Suffolk and that the Needham Market and Ringshall wards will move into the Central Suffolk Constituency from the Bury St Edmunds Constituency.

2. Annual Canvass of Electors

Beginning in July every year, the Electoral Registration Officer (the Chief Executive) is required by law to send up to three household enquiry forms to every residential property in the district. The purpose of this form is to collect details of residents who need to be included on the register of electors. A revised register is then published annually on 1 December.

The third stage of the canvass is now underway, which involves a personal visit by one of the canvassers to any properties where there has been no response to the first two forms. To date 84.1% of households have responded to the canvass which is an excellent result for this stage in the process. Invitation to register forms are being sent out in weekly batches to new electors who have been identified on the household forms.

Mid Suffolk Five Year Land Supply ?

The calculation at Mid Suffolk for a supply of land for development to meet annual house build targets was announced in July this year as 6.4 years. Recent S106 applications have been reviewed for relevance as to the consequent status change of planning applications and appeals. For those who attended the public hearing of the Green Road, Woolpit development appeal, it became clear that the developer was intent on challenging Mid Suffolk's claim to having a five year land supply. We now know the inspector's decision has been to allow the appeal and took the view that the council had failed to demonstrate that it in fact did have a 5 year land supply

The Council is now considering the implications of the decision. In addition because the revisions to the NPPF have raised the bar in the evidence required to demonstrate deliverability of sites, the council is to re-evaluate its calculation of deliverable sites using the new methodology in the new NPPF as a matter of urgency.

However, in 2017/18 there were 426 house completions of which 27% were affordable. The target of 475(approx.) was again not achieved, but the affordable target was! Housing delivery is largely in the hands of developers and a number of factors can influence the rate of build; this could include materials and labour shortage. There are unfortunately some factors that can justify a slow down in delivery, and the system is designed such that the developer does have ultimate control over this.

3. Freedom of Information Act (FOI)

Anyone has a right to request information from a public authority. There are two separate duties when responding to these requests which must be within 20 days:

- to tell the applicant whether you hold any information falling within the scope of their request; and
- to provide that information

The District Council is currently taking steps to improve response times from requests made under the Act (FOI) and to ensure the response meets the statutory deadline of 20 working days. These steps include implementing an escalation process for outstanding requests and providing weekly data on the number of requests received and answered.

4. Local Government Association : The Housing Crisis

4.1 Capturing Land Value

A report from the Commons Housing Communities and Local Government Select Committee has addressed the urgent need for central and local government to have a greater share of the increase in value of land that occurs on the granting of planning permission. This additional source of wealth to the public bodies can of course be used at least for new infrastructure and affordable housing.

The main recommendations call for reforms to land compensation and ask ;

- to make it more easy for LA's to make compulsory purchases of land at reasonable prices
- to provide more resources and training to LA planning authorities to enable them to be more robust in negotiating with developers.

The LGA Housing Spokesman is quoted as saying that rising land prices mean fewer homes are built, and thus government action on the proposals would impact on more homes being built with the right infrastructure.

4.2 The Aims of the LGA Housing Campaign

- A leading role for councils in shaping the investment that has become available through the Affordable Housing Program, so that new housing and infrastructure meets the needs of their local communities.
- Access to borrowing, including the removal of the borrowing cap on housing revenue accounts, so that councils can borrow to build the homes their communities urgently need.
- Retention of all receipts from homes sold through Right to Buy, so that councils can fund replacement homes.
- Any unexpected costs for councils arising from urgent fire safety work, following the Grenfell tragedy, to be met centrally.
- Rules scrapped that allow offices to be converted to flats without planning permission.
- Local communities empowered to have a say over development in their areas.
- A system that stops land values spiralling out of control, so that councils can deliver the affordable housing and infrastructure that our communities desperately need.
- Help to attract the next generation of planners and place-makers.
- Welfare reforms adapted to reduce the risk of homelessness for key groups, including lifting the local housing allowance freeze, which is currently keeping renting out of reach for low-income families.
- Ministers to commit to covering any shortfalls in funding for councils' new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act

Joint Ward Member
Elmswell and Norton
01284 700925
07543 822145

14.10. 2018