

District Councillor Report to Parish Councils

Elmswell, Norton and Tostock

District Cllr John Levantis

2 March 2019

1. **Proposals for the former Mid Suffolk offices and the former Needham Market Middle School sites were approved, by MSDC Planning Referrals Committee on 27th February.**

New housing and retail development Needham Market.

The two applications approved are for **94** new homes at the former Mid Suffolk District Council Offices at 131 High Street and **41** new homes at the site of the former Needham Market Middle School. There will be **38%** affordable housing across both sites, either for affordable rent or under affordable home ownership schemes.

The plans also include a retail unit on Hurstlea Road, at the former council offices car park, and a new library in a converted Victorian building on the Middle School site. Listed building consent was also gained to convert the Grade II listed building at 131 High Street itself into flats while retaining its key historic features.

Anyone interested in registering an early interest in the shared ownership units then please email:housingdevelopment@babberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

2. **BDC/MSDC Public Developers' Contributions Database**

Mid Suffolk and Babergh's Exacom database – which gives the public access to figures for developer contributions towards infrastructure all the way back to 1974 – has been nominated for the Royal Town Planning Institute's (RTPI) Awards for Planning Excellence. The database, which is the first of its kind in the country, is in the running for an award within the Excellence in Tech Within Planning Practice category.

As it is the first such database to be published, Mid Suffolk along with Babergh, have been designated Pilot Authorities by the developer. More details the MSDC website.

3. **Safeguarding Reference Tool for District Councillors**

The Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership Overview and Scrutiny meeting in September 2018 identified the need for Councillors to be supplied with comprehensive information to assist residents in their wards if and when concerns arise in respect of any issues concerning adults or children i.e

- Hate Crime
- County Lines (drug dealing)
- Domestic Abuse

4. From the District Councils' Networks' Annual Conference(DCN)

4.1 Communities Secretary James Brokenshire stated, "I am optimistic, positive and confident about what the future holds for local government...I can see district councils coming into their own as part of a reinvigorated, stronger, and more self-sufficient system".

He confirmed that Government wanted to create a ***housing market*** that works for everyone. He said that 222,000 new houses had been built in 2018 which was 12% up on the previous year, and he announced that £497m had been provided for housing associations to build an additional 11,000 new houses. He wanted local government to work with government on **place shaping** so that design for better social inclusion and healthy outcomes were championed, and that he hoped to see more joint spatial plans like those in Oxfordshire. He also announced that the Government would shortly be publishing their response to the *Letwin Report on build-out*.

4.2 Letwin Report

The report will seek to "explain the significant gap between housing completions and the amount of land allocated or permissioned in areas of high housing demand, and make recommendations for closing it".

It focusses on 'build out' (Stage 2) which ***starts*** at the moment when the house builder has an implementable consent and is therefore able to start construction on the site (i.e. has received either the grant of full planning permission or the first final, detailed planning permission under reserved matters, and has satisfied all pre-commencement conditions) , and ***stops*** at the moment when the last home on the site has been, or is scheduled to be completed. The amount of time between these two moments is what is meant by the 'build out period'. The '**build out rate**', is the percentage of the site that is built out on average in each year during the build out period.

Key issues are addressed to determine:

1. what the build out rate is on large sites in areas of high housing demand
2. why the rate of build out on these sites is as it is; and
3. which factors would be most likely to increase the rate of build out on these sites without having other, untoward effects.

The next phase will consider, what policies the Government might adopt to 'close the gap' between permissions and homes completed on the largest sites and hence to increase the overall rate at which land allocated for housing is converted into new homes.

Recommendations will be made on this to the Chancellor and the Housing Secretary at the time of the Budget in the Autumn.

(<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government>)

5. Other National News

5.1 New Funding for Parks

New funding announced to improve parks and green spaces will be in the form of £9.7million for day to day maintenance costs; essential play area repairs and the creation of new green spaces, and £2.75million to be invested in the “pocket plus programme” which will support communities in transforming neglected and derelict spaces.

5.2 Improving Public Health

This has been a success story since the councils’ took on responsibility in 2013. The recent LGA analysis of the official data has shown that :

1. Teenage conception rates have plummeted
2. Youth smoking and drinking rates lowest in decades
3. Also reductions in
 - premature deaths
 - new cases of sexually transmitted infections
 - adult smoking

www.local.gov.uk/events

5.3 Taxi licensing crackdown

A raft of new measures aimed at improving safety for taxi passengers, including the installation of CCTV in all cabs are being planned by the Department of Transport. Drivers also face tougher criminal record checks, and ministers intend to set up a national database to prevent them from working away from the area where they hold a licence. It follows a review into the industry after several sexual exploitation scandals in towns such as Rotherham and Rochdale.

5.4 Illegal Encampment Controls

A joint letter from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Home Secretary sets out proposals for better control of illegal traveller sites which include

- the consideration of a new criminal trespass offence,
- additional support for local authority enforcement activities,
- further reforms to the planning system, and
- measures to support law- abiding Gypsy, Roma and Travellers.

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