

District Councillor Report for Bramford July 2023

Mid Suffolk District Council and CARE Suffolk joint statement on solar farm application

Mid Suffolk District Council and CARE (Community Alliance for a Rural Environment) Suffolk have today issued a joint statement about the Bramford Green solar farm application and appeal.

The statement 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’ 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, 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

Helping residents to make their homes warmer and more energy efficient

Warm Homes Suffolk is now accepting applications to fund improvements to houses across Babergh and Mid Suffolk – making them warmer this winter and saving residents money on their energy bills.

Warm Homes Suffolk has new funding available for eligible households, to put towards energy efficient measures such as insulation, solar panels or heat pumps.

The scheme is administered by Suffolk County Council, and delivered by East Suffolk Council, on behalf of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and other councils in Suffolk.

It has been funding home energy efficiency improvements for over a year, but has recently received further funding from the Department for Energy, Security and Net Zero, to continue the work.

An average of £18,000 in funding per property is available for homeowners meeting the following criteria:

- Homes that are not heated by mains gas
- Homes with an EPC rating of D, or below
- A combined household income of under £31,000 (for certain postcodes)

Landlords and tenants are also eligible to apply, with qualifying rental properties getting up to two-thirds of costs, as an average grant of up to £12,000.

Since Warm Homes Suffolk began in early 2022, more than 550 properties have been improved, making homes more comfortable and more energy efficient – meaning lower energy bills.

Warm Homes Suffolk is also contributing towards all the county's authorities to be net zero by 2030 as part of the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan.

To find out more about how Warm Homes Suffolk could help you, visit www.warmhomessuffolk.org or call the team on 03456 037686.