



Cllr Chris Chambers

**Gipping Valley
Division**

www.chrischambers.uk

**October 2024
Report**



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Uncertainty looms for 177,000 Suffolk residents currently eligible for winter fuel payments

As many as 177,000 Suffolk residents are currently eligible for winter fuel payments and should be protected from Government plans to cut the allowance, Suffolk County Council has warned.

According to 2023 mid-year population estimates from the ONS, around 177,000 people over the age of 66 in Suffolk are eligible for these crucial payments, leaving them potentially vulnerable if they are withdrawn.

In response, Suffolk County Council's leader, Councillor Matthew Hicks, has written to all of the county's MPs - urging them to vote against the proposed changes. The council is particularly concerned that rural areas, like much of Suffolk, will be disproportionately affected due to reliance on expensive oil heating and the added burden of rural deprivation.

Rural homes are statistically less energy efficient compared to urban homes, meaning they require more energy to maintain a healthy temperature. Furthermore, many rural homes are not connected to mains gas, forcing households to rely on more costly heating sources like wood, canister gas, or oil. The price of heating oil has now risen to 66p per litre, a 12p increase since 2020.

Energy projects and the wellbeing of communities

Suffolk County Council has produced guidance to help protect the wellbeing of local communities impacted by large Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

The new document - <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/community-engagement-and-wellbeing-policy.pdf> - complements the council's Energy and Climate Adaptive Infrastructure Policy, and is aimed at project promoters, parish councils and local communities.

Research by Suffolk Mind, and the experiences of the county council, show that the wellbeing of local residents and communities suffers when NSIPs are proposed in a local area, especially when multiple projects are on the table.

Feelings of fear, mistrust, anger, and frustration are all reported, along with impacted sleep, and inability to plan for the future, due to the uncertainty created by the proposed development.

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The new guidance stresses the importance and value for project promoters of an NSIP to collaborate with local communities from the early proposal stages, through to life after construction, to protect the wellbeing of those local communities.

The cumulative effect of NSIPs has resulted in considerable impacts on the wellbeing of individuals, the overall wellbeing of the community, and has also led to feelings of lost identity.

One member of the public described how the association with the energy projects has “created a perception that the nature of our village and parish... has been completely altered, and is now one to be defined by the presence of large industrial complexes, rather than what it actually is, a rural community... it remains a small rural village, with living breathing people, who strive to protect its unique quality.”

The document provides a framework for promoters to follow, to help them understand their project’s impact on the wellbeing of local communities, and what they can actively do to mitigate it.

Window now open to apply for primary and secondary school places

Parents and carers can now apply for a place in the normal year of entry at a primary (including infant and junior) school and secondary school for September 2025.

The deadline for applications to secure a place at a secondary school is Thursday 31 October 2024 and for primary school places, including infant and junior schools, the deadline is Wednesday 15 January 2025.

All applications received by the relevant closing date are processed at the same time using the schools’ oversubscription criteria to prioritise applications when necessary. Late applications are processed after all of those received on time.

Last year, Suffolk County Council received just under 15,000 on time applications for pupils wishing to start at a primary or infant school, or to transfer to a junior school, or into Year 7 at a secondary school from September 2024.

94.7% of applicants received offers for their first preference school and 98.5% of applicants received an offer for one of their top three preferred schools.

Further information on SCC’s School Travel Policy can be found at www.suffolkonboard.com/schooltravel.

Parents and carers should apply online at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions as they will receive confirmation that their application has been received. If for any reason they are

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unable to apply online they should apply on a paper application (CAF1). Suffolk County Council is unable to acknowledge receipt of paper applications and therefore suggest that proof of posting is obtained.

If families are planning to move house or think their circumstances may change before next September, it is still important to make an application on time using the current address. It is recommended to apply for schools based on the current address in case the proposed move falls through. Advice and guidance about this process is available at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions.

Families who apply online will be able to log on to the Online Service on the National Offer Day, which is Monday 3 March 2025 for secondary school places and Wednesday 16 April 2025 for primary school places, to see their offer of a school place, and they will receive an email to confirm this offer on the same day. Offer letters will be sent by second class post to applicants who made a paper application.

Information to help parents and carers make their application is available at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions.

£500 million investment in Suffolk scrapped by Government

Suffolk's proposed in principle devolution deal, which would bring more than £500 million to the county over 30 years, has been scrapped by the Government.

The additional funding – which would come with new local decision-making powers over areas including housing, transport, adult education and regeneration – is no longer being offered to Suffolk. The deal would mean local people who know and love Suffolk would be empowered to make more decisions about the county's future, rather than people in Whitehall.

Key aspects of the deal included:

- Control of a new investment fund worth £480m over the next thirty years
- Local control of the Adult Education Budget each year (worth £9.4m in 2025/26)
- £5.8m one-off funding to prepare brownfield sites for development
- Multi-year transport funding plus an additional £500,000 over two years to finalise Suffolk's Local Transport Plan
- The leader of Suffolk County Council would be directly elected by the people of Suffolk – rather than by county councillors.

Most people who responded to an independent survey, run by Ipsos, were in favour of the proposed deal. 63% of people supported or strongly supported it while 7% disagreed. 21% of people were unsure. In a separate but linked poll run by Suffolk County Council, 49% of

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people who responded supported or strongly supported the deal, whilst 40% did not and 11% were unsure.

Suffolk County Councillors were expected to vote on the deal after the General Election in July.

Council's actions bring hope to local communities despite pylon project approval

Suffolk County Council is confident that details announced in today's approval of National Grid's Bramford to Twinstead pylon project, will have significant implications on other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) across the country.

The application was approved on 12 September 2024 by the Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero.

Despite objecting to the Bramford to Twinstead pylon application, the county council's influence throughout the process has led to the Secretary of State acknowledging the importance of the role of local authorities - by requiring their approval of National Grid's detailed construction and environmental management plans as part of the process prior to work starting.

Following points made by the county council during the examination process, the Secretary of State has agreed that National Grid should not wield so much control over the delivery of the project, recognising instead that local authorities are integral to the proper and fair delivery of NSIPs.

The county council had formally objected to the application, concluding that National Grid had failed to adequately safeguard Suffolk's environment and communities affected by the scheme. It felt that proposals did not go far enough to mitigate the impact of the scheme, and that supervision of construction would be inadequate.

There were disappointments in the approval decision, such as working hours to include weekends and bank holidays. However, certain locations will be exempt from these hours, which is encouraging for other communities where NSIPs are yet to be approved.

The project will see 18 km of overhead lines and around 11 km of underground cable through the Dedham Vale National Landscape and in the Stour Valley.

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Second abnormal load rescheduled for Suffolk

On Sunday 6th of October, the second abnormal load which was previously postponed by the haulier, Allelys, will be transported from Ipswich Docks.

Allelys has been working with Suffolk Highways, National Highways, Suffolk Police, as well as J McCann and Swarco to reschedule the abnormal load movement, on behalf of Conrad Energy and National Grid.

A 164-tonne transformer, which is being transported on a vehicle measuring 71 metres in length, will depart from Ipswich Docks at approximately 6am on Sunday, starting its journey to the Synchronous Condenser Plant in Yaxley.

To support future abnormal loads, since 2021, Suffolk Highways has been replacing permanent street furniture such as safety railings, road signs and traffic signals with easily removable versions. This has since proven to limit the amount of work and disruption required during the lead up to abnormal load movements.

Teams will be leading and following the vehicle to prepare the route, temporarily removing and reinstating street furniture. This will enable the load to be transported safely whilst keeping disruption to a minimum.

A temporary road closure of the A140 will be necessary whilst the load moves to its destination. A temporary overbridge at Brockford will be installed to protect the roads and structure.

Once the load has safely passed the overbridge and the road is deemed safe for public use, the overbridge will be dismantled in readiness for when the A140 can be reopened. The closure could be in place for several hours from late morning. Whilst the A140 is closed, between A14 and A1120, access to smaller vehicles will be allowed to cross from East to West and vice versa. However, this will be subject to the position of the abnormal load at the time.

Other restrictions will also be in place, such as parking and weight limit restrictions, the suspension of any double yellow lines along the route and the closure of Derby Road, Tomline Road, and the St Matthews Street subway, in Ipswich. Old Norwich Road, Ipswich and Old Norwich Road, Whitton will also have parking restrictions as a contingency route in the unlikely event that the move needs to be spread over two weekends.

To allow the load to navigate safely around permanent street furniture on the day of the move, the load will be travelling on the opposite side of the carriageway at times. Traffic Management teams will be leading the load, whilst Suffolk Police will manage traffic. Mid-morning, traffic on the A14 eastbound will be temporary held whilst the load travels the

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wrong way from the Whitehouse Interchange (jct. no. 53) to the A140 Interchange (jct. no. 52).

The Suffolk Police enforced rolling roadblock on the A14 eastbound is anticipated to be in place between approximately 10am and 10.30am. The A140 is expected to be closed from approximately 11am until 6pm; however, these timings will be subject to change.

To limit the impact on the travelling public, there may be temporary stop points along the route to support with minimising congestion.

Whilst the restrictions and road closures are in place, road users are encouraged to avoid the area where possible to ensure disruption is kept to a minimum.

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