



Stonham Ward

Babergh and Mid Suffolk join calls for devolution talks with Government

Public sector leaders in Suffolk have written to the Secretary of State responsible for local government to say they welcome early discussions with Ministers about a possible devolution deal for Suffolk.

In a joint letter sent to Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Babergh's Cllr John Ward and Mid Suffolk's Cllr Suzie Morley, joined leaders of all of Suffolk's six councils and Police and Crime Commissioner Tim Passmore, seeking early discussion over devolved decision-making powers and public funding for the county.

The letter says: "Suffolk has already demonstrated its credibility as a place where Government will find strong and ambitious delivery partners.

"The Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) group...has a track record of effective partnership working. These robust relationships enable more innovative ways of working, including exploring opportunities for devolution as part of a County Deal.

"Suffolk...is an ideal place to help Government demonstrate how levelling up can work in diverse geographies. Suffolk has a strong offer to make to Government and we would welcome early discussions with MHCLG Ministers to explore proposals for a County Deal ahead of the White Paper being published."

The Government wrote to councils in July 2021, setting out its ambition to make available to county areas the kind of devolved powers currently enjoyed by larger cities and urban areas. It's part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda and will see a White Paper published in the coming months.

Cllr Suzie Morley, Leader of Mid Suffolk District Council and chair of the SPSL, said:

"Suffolk is known for working well together. Whether it's partners joining forces during the COVID-19 pandemic, pooling public funding for the greater good or developing shared strategic priorities, collaboration is what we're good at.

"From inclusive economic growth and community safety to climate change and strong communities, we're focused on collaborative actions that deliver the biggest and best additional benefits for our communities.



Stonham Ward

“We believe this makes Suffolk a strong contender to work with the Government as part of its Levelling Up agenda.”

It is understood that Suffolk’s approach involving all councils is rare among other expressions of interest being submitted to Government, a point that has been welcomed by the county’s seven MPs.

In an accompanying letter to Robert Jenrick MP, they said:

“We are...writing to wholeheartedly support the vision set out, collectively, by Suffolk County Council and all of Suffolk’s District and Borough Councils. We believe this unity of purpose behind taking the next step in devolution through a County Deal can not just help persuade you that we should be in the vanguard of the next stage of devolution, but also that Suffolk can use such a deal to deliver better services locally.

“This is not a recent or short-lived view. For many years local leaders in Suffolk at all levels have worked more closely together, and have put forward constructive propositions for further improvements. We hope to work with you on your forthcoming White Paper to show that strong local leadership and strengthened local governance can deliver better.”

Statement regarding Afghan refugees

On Wednesday 18 August, the Government announced its new resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees. Whilst the full details are yet to be confirmed, it is crystal clear that the Government needs local authorities everywhere to step up and support this national effort.

All councils in Suffolk are committed to this cause. We have already helped a small number of Afghan interpreters and their families to resettle in Suffolk, in addition to ongoing work to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children and other refugees entering the UK. In the coming days and weeks, the district, borough and county councils will continue working with the Government to do what we can to provide assistance to vulnerable refugees.

Times like this call for acts of humanity. Suffolk will play its part.

Green light for Gateway 14

Councillors at Mid Suffolk District Council this week approved initial plans, with conditions, for Gateway 14 – Stowmarket’s 2.45 million square foot, innovation, business and logistics park.

Gateway 14, adjacent to the A14, is set to create thousands of jobs and bring a massive boost to the region’s economy, but at [Wednesday’s planning committee meeting](#), councillors also sought to further mitigate its impact on the environment and neighbouring communities.



Stonham Ward

The cross-party planning committee approved the hybrid application subject to bolstering recommendations by planning officers by adding conditions around landscaping, biodiversity, construction traffic, and a Section 106 agreement – a legal obligation for a developer to contribute to community facilities.

Gateway 14 is a development by Gateway 14 Ltd (wholly owned by Mid Suffolk District Council) and partner Jaynic.

Speaking during the meeting Chris Starkie, Chief Executive of New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership described Gateway 14 as “the most important commercial development in Suffolk for some years”.

“We need well paid jobs to rebuild our economy and fund the public services that we all rely on. The Gateway 14 site offers a great opportunity to provide growing space for existing business in Stowmarket and Mid Suffolk and the wider area, many of whom need more space and are already been lost to the local area, but it also provides a huge opportunity to attract innovative new businesses offering high quality jobs to our local residents,” he added.

Responding to the decision, Ben Oughton, development director for Jaynic, said:

“This is tremendous news for Stowmarket and the region. Gateway 14, with its Freeport designation and proximity to Felixstowe, has already attracted significant interest from potential occupiers.

Sir Christopher Haworth, Chairman of Gateway 14 Ltd said:

“As we meet this important milestone, I am delighted that we can move forward with this development, bringing new businesses, employers and jobs to the region.”

Councillor Suzie Morley, Leader of Mid Suffolk District Council commented:

“Gateway 14 will deliver a significant economic boost for Stowmarket and the wider Mid Suffolk region. The site will allow the creation of a range of jobs as well as space for new businesses helping to build a place where people are proud to live and work.”

Jaynic will be appointing contractors to go on site in the coming months to construct the estate road infrastructure, services and landscaping. It could be delivering buildings by the second quarter of 2022. High-quality landscaping is also set to deliver a biodiversity net gain of 10%, retaining the site’s thriving ecology whilst creating a vibrant and healthy working environment.

Agents for the scheme are Savills and Avison Young.



Stonham Ward

Show homes give first glimpse of council's investment in Needham

Show homes in Needham Market are opening their doors to potential buyers this weekend – in the first phase of Mid Suffolk District Council's multi-million investment in the town.

Five houses on the new Chambers Green development – built on the council's former office complex in the town – are now open for viewing by appointment, with councillors amongst the first over the threshold to see the new homes for themselves.

The development is being delivered by Mid Suffolk Growth – a joint venture between Mid Suffolk District Council and Norse Group set up to deliver housing and promote sustainable growth across the district.

The first phase sees the Council's former headquarters transformed into a combination of two and three bed detached and semi-detached houses, as well as one and two bed apartments and a retail unit. Ten of these properties will be affordable homes, helping to support those on lower incomes.

Part of the original headquarters building is listed, and its character and period features will be preserved. The former bowling green next to the site will be maintained as open space, with a community walk and benches to be added near the existing duck pond.

The Chambers Green development is, part of a wider vision for Needham Market – which will ultimately see a total of 133 new houses, flats and bungalows in the town, a natural community space and walk, a new library, a café and visitor centre at nearby Needham Lake, and improved access between the lake and town to boost visitor numbers to the high street.

The first phase of 32 homes at Chambers Green is due to be completed by Spring 2022. The second phase will provide an additional 60 homes, and the transformation of the former Middle School will create a further 41 homes.

The Middle School development also includes converting the existing Victorian school building into a library to replace the town's current library provision.

At the same time, the council's investment in the new visitor centre is expected to attract more visitors to enjoy the open space at Needham Lake. A new pedestrian access through Needham Market train station will then provide easy access from Needham Lake to the town centre where visitors can enjoy the High Street's independent shops and restaurants.

Mid Suffolk District Council cabinet member for Economy and Chair of MSDC (Suffolk Holdings) Ltd, Cllr Gerard Brewster said:

District Councillor Suzie Morley – 01449 711306 / 07976 927226 – suzie.morley@midsuffolk.gov.uk



Stonham Ward

“I am pleased to see the development at Needham Market taking shape. Our investment in this project not only helps us realise our goal of delivering local homes, but also helps to support the economy in Mid Suffolk, developing sustainable communities, and providing as many people as possible with a place they are proud to call home.”

Cllr Suzie Morley Mid Suffolk District Council Leader said:

We are committed to investing in our market towns and this development shows what is possible. Together with our partners, the local community and businesses we can work to ensure the infrastructure and facilities are in place to ensure Needham Market can continue to grow and thrive.”

Cllr Harry Richardson, Mid Suffolk District Council cabinet member for Wellbeing and Mid Suffolk Growth director said:

“This is a major investment in Needham Market, not only meeting the need for new homes but also supporting the wider community in accessing open spaces, attracting visitors and boosting the local economy.”

Anyone interested in viewing the show homes should contact sales agents William H Brown on 01449 614459 or [email](#). Show homes viewing Friday – Monday, 10am – 5pm, by appointment only.

Local Energy Showcase will champion green businesses

Businesses and community organisations are being urged to tackle climate change by joining Suffolk’s first ever showcase event celebrating sustainability and green energy.

The Local Energy Showcase, organised by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, will promote how different types of energy can be used by communities and businesses help reduce their impact on the environment, lower costs and contribute to the fight against climate change.

[Tickets are now available](#) for the two-day extravaganza, at Wherstead Park in Ipswich on 21 and 22 October. The event is open to all businesses with an interest in finding out more about local energy solutions and as well as community groups and parishes who would like to understand and explore the benefits of using local energy solutions.

The Local Energy Showcase, marks the Councils’ recognition of a climate emergency and their commitment to the Suffolk-wide aim to become carbon neutral by 2030, aims to inform and update visitors on the latest in green energy. Featuring keynote speeches from specialists



Stonham Ward

in the field, workshops, as well as the chance to participate in a Q&A session with a panel of experts.

The event will feature a marketplace for green energy businesses and organisations to showcase their products and services, demonstrate how local energy solutions can be installed and used, and how switching energy supplies can lower greenhouse emissions and reduce energy costs.

Delegates will have the opportunity to network with and learn from leaders in the fields of carbon reduction, heat networks and solar energy.

Practical workshops will include understanding the concepts of becoming net zero, how to access green grants and funding, and how to reduce energy consumption.

During day one, businesses will find out what local energy solutions are available to them, how technology can be used to boost the benefits of green energy and how, local energy is a growing sector with the potential of bringing more skilled jobs to the region.

On day two, local groups and parishes will learn how solutions such as solar energy and ground source heat pumps can power whole communities, reducing costs and supporting local ambitions of cleaner and greener places to live, work and visit.

Keynote speakers include Shivali Mathur, from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and Emma Bridge, of Community Energy England, who will share real examples of how businesses and community groups can drive forward their green ambitions, improve their energy efficiency and reduce costs.

Councillor Michael Holt, cabinet member for economic growth, Babergh District Council, said:

“Green energy has the potential to not just create jobs, but also save money which will be vital for future economic growth in the district as we come out of the pandemic.”

The benefits that green energy can deliver provide hope for a much brighter future for our districts and I hope that many of our businesses, community groups and parishes will attend the Local Energy Showcase to find out how pursuing environmentally-friendly practices can enable them to be more sustainable in the future.”

Councillor Jessica Fleming, Mid Suffolk District Council, cabinet member for environment said:

“As a council, we are committed to tackling climate change and working with our Suffolk partners toward achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. This event is a great opportunity to promote the great work of local organisations that are helping to achieve that goal.

“The Local Energy Showcase is a significant step on the road to achieving our carbon neutral aims and will help to inform local organisations about emerging technologies and what they



Stonham Ward

can do to contribute to reducing their climate impacts and ensuring a brighter and happier future for our children and planet.”

The event is being sponsored by businesses and organisations with a proactive approach to green energy including the University of Suffolk, Eastern New Energy and East of England Co-op.

Further information about the event, including how to book a place on a workshop will be available in the coming weeks.

Green oasis set to strengthen Mid Suffolk's biodiversity

Almost three acres of land near Stowmarket has been bought by Mid Suffolk District Council to provide a green oasis for the town – as part of the council's biodiversity plans.

The council has invested £65k, funded from their climate change and biodiversity reserve, to acquire 2.71 acres at Wash Lane, in Great Finborough near Stowmarket.

The investment is a further step in the council's joint Biodiversity Action Plan – protecting and strengthening the district's wildlife and plant life populations.

As verdant wetland alongside the River Rat, with extensive tree cover including several with Tree Preservation Orders, it is already a welcome home to several wildlife species. Visitors include deer, willow warbler and siskin birds, the common toad and a wide variety of insects. Suffolk Wildlife Trust will also be carrying out a full habitat survey and assessment on site.

The land is situated off a popular route for local walks and rambles in the outskirts of the town, which joins Combs Lane and the main Finborough Road, crossing the River Rat. As it is not suitable for development, it is an ideal space for local nature to quietly thrive alongside a busy town. As such, there are currently no plans to make the site publicly accessible, but instead allow it to be a green oasis for local flora and fauna.

Cllr Jessica Fleming, cabinet member for environment at Mid Suffolk District Council, said:

“I am simply delighted that we have been able to acquire this piece of wild, wet, overgrown land alongside the River Rat – helping to safeguard an important wildlife corridor, which is home to a wide variety of species.

“This acquisition fits well with our ambitions for countering biodiversity loss and improving the environment for both people and nature. Our vision for Stowmarket is to create a thriving town that people are proud to call home, and where economic growth and regeneration are balanced by quality of life and open space.



Stonham Ward

“The purchase of this land means it will remain a welcome home for wildlife in the town for generations to come.”

Significant work now needs to be undertaken to fully realise the land’s biodiversity potential, to enhance the habitat and increase wildlife. It is expected to take five years to complete, to ensure the least disruption and maximum protection possible for existing natural wildlife and plant life cycles.

The council’s public realm team will be engaging with the Stowmarket Eco Future group, adjacent residents and the two parish councils over coming months, to look in further detail at how they may be able to best work together on the project.

Cllr John Matthissen, member of the Stowmarket Eco Future group, who is also ward member for Onehouse, said:

“I very much welcome this move to secure an important link in the chain of biodiversity from the source of the River Rattlesden to where it meets the River Gipping. I would particularly like to thank local constituents who have highlighted this opportunity and also councillor Jessica Fleming who has been supportive of the project from its inception. In addition I am grateful to the officers who have worked to obtain a Tree Preservation Order and ultimately complete purchase of the land.

“An example of the opportunities ownership will provide is an extension of the clearance of invasive Himalayan Balsam. This has begun at the Museum of East Anglian Life and the adjacent Danecroft land, much of it carried out by volunteers, including the Stowmarket Eco Future group.”

This work further complements other projects being carried out by the council, including biodiversity mapping, a tree canopy survey, and ongoing consultation with town and parish councils to establish suitable new wildflower areas across the district.

Work begins on Woolpit community car park

Mid Suffolk councillors were joined by NHS representatives today to mark the start of construction on a much-needed car park serving Woolpit Health Centre and the local community.

The project has been made possible following the transfer of land earlier this year to Mid Suffolk District Council from David Wilson Homes, who are currently building new homes in the village.

Since permission was granted for this development, the council has worked closely with Suffolk County Council, Woolpit Health Centre, the NHS West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning



Stonham Ward

Group and Woolpit Parish Council to ensure that the transferred land best meets the needs of the community for years to come.

It will initially be used as an additional car park for Woolpit Health Centre, enabling the surgery to meet demand from housing growth in the area and continue to serve patients from almost 30 surrounding towns and villages. The 120 new parking spaces created by the land will also be invaluable in the ongoing Covid-19 and flu vaccination effort, accommodating potential extra demand if booster jabs are required in the winter and beyond.

Further community uses for the car park are currently being explored with Woolpit Parish Council, who have lent their support to proposals and joined today's ground breaking ceremony.

Mid Suffolk District Council leader Cllr Suzie Morley was also in attendance, as were other district and county councillors, Woolpit GP Dr Ben McCann and representatives from David Wilson Homes and Breheny Civil Engineering.

Cllr Harry Richardson, Mid Suffolk District Council's cabinet member for health and wellbeing, commented: "It's wonderful news that work has begun on this exciting collaborative project, which is set to make a real difference to Woolpit and the wider community by delivering the facilities needed to meet local demand for health care.

"I'd like to thank all those involved to date, including the CCG, Suffolk County Council and Woolpit Parish Council, as we continue to work together to achieve our ambition for all Mid Suffolk residents to lead active and healthy lives, whilst managing their own health and wellbeing."

Dr Ed Garratt, Chief Executive of West Suffolk CCG, said: "We believe the construction of this new car park will really increase ease of access for many people to the health centre. We know the local communities really value this health centre facility and the CCG is pleased to have been involved in supporting the development of plans. We look forward to continuing our work with partners."

Jo Churchill, MP for Bury St Edmunds and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care commented: "Great news to see increased parking facilities at Woolpit Surgery, much needed to enhance the experience of our growing population when accessing healthcare. Well done to everyone involved."

Construction of the new facility, including significant drainage and resurfacing works, is due to be completed in November. This will not impact upon the health centre's existing car park, which can still be accessed during works. All construction vehicles will also use the David Wilson Homes site to access the land – ensuring minimal disruption to the community.



Stonham Ward

Funding for the car park will be provided from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – paid by housing developers to provide facilities needed to meet growth – following approval from Mid Suffolk District Council’s cabinet in June.

The project has been awarded to Breheny Civil Engineering, based and operating in Suffolk for over 50 years, after a rigorous tender process by the council earlier this summer.

Ministers ‘drop in’ to Holiday Activities and Food programme

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford and MP Jo Churchill joined Mid Suffolk District councillors yesterday in a visit to The Mix’s summer activities, made possible by Government funding and support from the council.

The Mix youth charity, in Stowmarket, is one of many provisions across the district who have benefitted from a significant investment by the Department for Education in their expanded Holiday Activity and Food programme.

The funding, up to £220million in every council in England, ensures that children can access healthy food and enriching activities over the school holidays, in recognition of the pressure points for some families because of increased costs, such as food and childcare.

It also aims to narrow the holiday experience gap, with children from disadvantaged families less likely to access organised out-of-school activities and more likely to experience social isolation.

Over £86,000 in funding was awarded to Mid Suffolk this summer, enabling the district council to co-ordinate with Suffolk County Council and activity providers to facilitate a range of exciting and educational activities, primarily aimed at children in receipt of free school meals, during the school holidays. This year’s programme builds on the work done by Suffolk County Council as part of the HAF pilots in 2019 and 2020.

Mid Suffolk District Council’s deputy leader, Cllr Gerard Brewster and cabinet member for communities, Cllr Julie Flatman, accompanied Minister for Children and Families, Vicky Ford and local MP, Jo Churchill to visit one of the drop-in activity sessions at The Mix made possible by this funding.

The session, open to young people aged 11-16, included pool, table tennis, air hockey and other sports activities – offering the opportunity for fitness, fun and friendship. In addition, recording studio and music sessions were provided from The Mix’s Band Academy to inspire the next generation of musicians, and cater for those who prefer creative activities to sports.



Stonham Ward

Those in receipt of free school meals were also provided with a healthy lunch from The Mix's award winning café, Cabbages and Kings, meeting Mid Suffolk District Council and the Government's ongoing ambition to combat holiday hunger.

Cllr Julie Flatman, cabinet member for communities, said:

"It's been wonderful to come along to a summer activity session and see, first-hand, the real difference that these make to our district's young people.

"As a teacher myself, I appreciate how challenging the school holidays can be for families, with many struggling to find affordable activities to occupy the time, leading to the health and wellbeing of young people sometimes sadly suffering as a result.

"That's why I'm incredibly grateful to the Department for Education for providing this vital funding. I'd also like to thank our council officers, who have worked tirelessly to organise the activities, as well as The Mix, and our other fantastic providers, who continue to go above and beyond to ensure young people have fun, whilst also learning invaluable new skills."

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

"It's been fantastic to see children involved with the all different sports, activities and musical opportunities as part of the visit to The Mix youth charity in Stowmarket today, and to see first-hand how our national Holiday Activities and Food programme is directly benefitting young people in the area.

"Mid Suffolk District Councillors have been working hard with Suffolk County Council and their local providers to provide opportunities for fun and friendship this summer, building on their work as part of the HAF pilot schemes which they have taken part in since 2018. I know that this support will prove invaluable for these young people and their families."

David Pepper, CEO of The Mix, said:

"It is wonderful to have the resources to offer our 'Drop in' days to young people over this Summer period. With the pressure that many families, children and young people have faced during the pandemic, this initiative is a crucial element in providing tangible support.

"We are overjoyed to see young people returning to the Mix after such a long period of 'quiet'. Our passion is that every one of them who walks through our doors is enabled to flourish in every way.

"Being able to offer great, free food is a key part of that offer. Cabbages and Kings, our on-site Coffee Shop provide those healthy meals and our youth work team are delivering a wide range of activities, fun and laughter as well as creating a safe, supportive space for all the young people who attend. Thank you to everyone whose hard work has made this possible."



Stonham Ward

Other activities taking place in Mid Suffolk during the school summer holidays include sports in Stowupland, outdoor cookery at the Museum of East Anglian Life, rock music sessions at the John Peel Centre and free swims at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre.

Whilst the activities are primarily aimed at families who currently receive free school meals, some paid for places are also available and further information on this can be found on [Suffolk InfoLink's website](#).