

Chairman's Review of the Year - 2019

1. Firstly my thanks to my colleagues on the PC – a very supportive and helpful group with whom it is a pleasure to work. We read much about the travails of other PC's and I am happy to report that we have experienced nothing but sensible and constructive discussion of the issues.
2. Particular thanks to our Clerk, Dee Knights. She keeps us all up to the mark and makes sure we cover everything on the agenda and that actions are followed up. Once again she has kept our books of account in excellent order. Our independent examiner – none other than Mr Eric Barnett – complimented her on the clarity and presentation of the annual accounts. We are now fully compliant with GDPR and common sense having prevailed are now able to manage this ourselves without resorting to outside assistance.
3. As you know, our Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' two years ago in March 2017. That means it is now statutorily a part of SCDC's Local Plan and must be considered when planning applications come forward. As I have said before, the Plan is not a magic bullet. We still have to argue our case on each occasion and we may not always win. Annoyingly we are not automatically informed of any pre-application discussions between the LPA and an applicant. We have raised this with SCDC on several occasions but they are adamant that the legal process does not allow us to be included in a confidential discussion between them and an applicant for which said applicant has paid a fee. We are therefore at a material disadvantage in terms of time when it comes to the 21 days we have to respond, but at the moment there does not seem to be any way round this. However the Plan does create a basis for the future and we are one of the first small villages in Suffolk to achieve this. The revised East Suffolk Council Local Plan has now gone forward to be assessed by the Planning Inspectorate and the good news is that our NP is cited as an adjunct to the revised Local Plan. Unless the inspector makes changes to the underlying policies regarding the countryside, SCDC have confirmed that there will be no need to revise our plan. However I have suggested to SCDC, or East Suffolk as it now is, that we should in due course have a round table session with them and other parishes or areas that have a made NP so that we can review how they are working and what issues have

arisen in using them as a basis for determining applications. We are however now gaining experience as applications come forward and are considered in the context of the Plan and in the majority of cases these arguments are winning.

4. As the prospect of a Northern Bypass becomes ever more likely, having a Plan at least gives us a mechanism for objecting should it threaten the village. The windfarm pipeline will also help to ensure that a major new road is unlikely to be built over the top of it. The other major infrastructure issue for the county that affects us is of course the proposed development of Sizewell C. We submitted a detailed response, focusing on the traffic projections and the environmental impact, but we have not yet had any reaction. There has been, as I am sure you are aware, a lot of comment on the consultation, which is now closed. Time will tell how these comments are dealt with.
5. We received 16 planning applications during the year: 7 were supported by the PC and then permitted by SCDC; we objected to 4, of which one was refused and 3 withdrawn; we had no objection to a further 4 of which 2 were approved, 1 withdrawn, and 1 refused; and we were unable to reach a view on one since insufficient information was contained in the application.

The sensitive cases included:

- a. Rosery Farm Cottage – Barn conversion.
An application was received for the conversion of the large barn next to Rosery Farm cottage into residential accommodation. We strongly objected to this since in our view it would have been a new house in the countryside, and moreover in one of the LPAs set out in the NP. The application was withdrawn when SCDC also made clear that they would reject it.
- b. Ivy Cottage meadow
We received an application to build a house on the meadow between Ivy Cottage and the bridge. We objected strongly to this based on the policies in the NP and on the countryside policies in the Local Plan. The application was resubmitted with a revised entrance proposal, designed to make the entrance next to the bridge safer, but we objected again since none of the material issues had been addressed. SCDC have now rejected the application and the Neighbourhood Plan was

a primary element in reaching that decision.

c. Rosery Farmhouse

There have been a number of applications for this property. The most recent involved the conversion of one of the outbuildings into ancillary accommodation for the house and this has been accepted. We have now considered a revised application for the farmhouse itself, having rejected an earlier version which was not considered to be in keeping with this attractive listed building. This group of buildings features in the NP and forms an important visual gateway to the village. The latest application has responded to our earlier concerns and has now been supported by us.

6. Emergency Plan. I am very grateful to Anthony Sheppard who wrote and produced a plan which we can use if the village is struck by fire, flood, aircraft, storm, or other disaster. The plan is lodged with SCDC and is on our website. Happily we have not had to use it, but it was the basis of much of our preparation for the Armistice commemoration.
7. On 11th November we participated in the Beacons of Light festival, a chain of bonfires and beacons across the country lit at 7.00pm to commemorate the end of World War One. Apart from having to move the event to the churchyard at the last minute, all went well and over 100 people enjoyed the fireworks, the bonfire, and a BBQ. It was especially satisfying to have the next generation involved in the readings and in playing the Last Post.
8. Wind Farm. The work on this large national infrastructure project is nearing completion. I am pleased that the relations with Scottish Power have been very good throughout and we have been kept informed of all major developments. You may have had the chance to see the television programme about the ancient henge site in Great Bealings that they discovered next to the A12. A fascinating glimpse of what this area must have looked like thousands of years ago.
9. Boot Street Bridge. Last year I said that we were in discussion with SCC about what traffic measures we might get them to put in place. The options considered included:
 - a. Priority from W'bridge
 - b. Priority from Ipswich
 - c. Speed limit extended to Rosery Lane

d. Any combination of the above.

Sadly we have got absolutely nowhere. We wrote to SCC setting out our concerns and were supported by Robin Vickery, our local county councilor. We did succeed in getting Mary Evans, SCC cabinet member for traffic, to visit the site and she was sympathetic and appeared to understand the issues. However despite that meeting, which was a year ago, we have had no response. We understand that it has been recommended that if we wish to take the matter further we could seek a formal case study, but this would cost far more than we could afford. It is immensely frustrating and meanwhile traffic keeps on increasing. We will continue to argue the case and hope that we do not have to do so using evidence of an actual accident, as opposed to the risk of such an event. Perhaps we should ask Prince Philip to drive along the road and hit someone. This apparently allowed Norfolk CC to install a new speed limit within 24 hours.

10. Fly-tipping. We are not alone in suffering from the dumping of rubbish in field entrances and lay-by's. Unless the actual rubbish is on public land, SCDC will not do anything. All we can do is to continue to report it when it happens so that if it is on public land SCDC will remove it, and if not hope to deal with it as part of our annual litter-picking exercise.
11. Trees. We now have joint tree wardens in the shape of Martin Cripps and Anthony Sheppard, and they contributed an article to the FLN on their current plans. I gather Martin is nurturing a number of black poplar cuttings in his greenhouse and doing his bit for biodiversity.
12. We continue to make a contribution to Fynn Lark News. We all tend to think in terms of the internet these days but not everybody uses it as a matter of course and the mag fulfills an important role. Sadly it has fallen foul of the wider disagreements over the Angela Cobbold Hall, but I hope that it will continue to be a valuable way to let people know what is going on in the four parishes. Having said that, now that we no longer have a vicar, the shape of the benefice is likely to change and that could mean that we have a different audience.