

## **District Councillor Report Information – July**

### **Acorn and the Thurlow Estate application for an Anaerobic Digester at Spring Grove Farm.**

- I would like to thank the parish council, the Muck off Acorn Campaign group and other residents of Withersfield who objected to the Acorn and Thurlow Estate proposal at Spring Grove Farm for one of the largest Anaerobic Digesters in the UK. It has been a very long time with many attempts by the applicant to get to proposal to the state it was in, I personally remember, before I was your District Councillor, as a parish councillor the first meeting when Acorn and the Thurlow Estate presented their proposal, and the subsequent need to hold public meetings to enable the parish council to understand the desire of its resident to stand up against the proposal. I also remember the call to step up and become the Muck Off Acorn spokesperson, which laid down the need for me to become your District Councillor, and I'm very grateful to be given this honour.

If it weren't for the work of the whole community coming together to oppose it, from each individual, each family, each friend, the parish council, the Epicentre, and to the Muck Off Acorn group, it would not have gained the attention and ultimately scrutiny that it did, and I fear that if we didn't come together as a community, they may have had it approved. However it was unanimously refused, and we are all grateful for that. Especially West Suffolk Council, who as a council objected as well, both from a principle of policy, and an economic development point view.

Whilst Acorn and the Thurlow Estate may appeal, we must take pride in what we have done, we have represented the community, we are part of that community, and we stood up for the community. I am immensely proud to live in Withersfield.

### **Local Government Reorganisation**

- Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), the proposals by West Suffolk district council are progressing, and we are aiming to submit the proposal by the 26<sup>th</sup> Sept 25. To this end, West Suffolk Council will be putting forward a motion at our full council meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> July. This motion supports the model to have 3 Unitary councils to cover the area of Suffolk, these would cover a Western, Eastern and a Greater Ipswich area. The administration has taking feedback from our residents and we believe that this model will enable better services based on a more local model, which will put our residents first. More details can be found at - [New councils will put the needs of local people first](#)

### **Local Plan**

Following the receipt of the Inspectors' report last week, West Suffolk Council members will be voting on the adoption of the Local Plan at our meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> July, and will see a recommendation to adopt the new West Suffolk Local Plan.

It is the final step in what has been a long and important journey.

- The plan seeks to ensure the delivery of at least 13,005 new homes to meet housing needs across the district.
- It allocates sites for 4,963 new homes alongside 8,712 homes that already have planning permission. It also makes provision for some 85 hectares of employment growth enabling the council to help support the expansion of existing local companies, the creation of new businesses, and to attract new businesses to the area.
- Policies will boost the delivery of affordable housing in the district, with an increased requirement for 40 per cent of homes on greenfield sites to be affordable.
- Policies also recognise the need to design places to encourage health and wellbeing and for all new homes to be accessible and adaptable to building regulations M4(2) standard.
- All new homes will be required to meet or exceed the nationally described space standards and be provided with private outdoor space or balconies for flats.
- The plan also contains a suite of policies that address climate change and policies that protect the natural environment and enhance biodiversity. Through a fabric first approach such as solar panels on the roofs of homes and/or air/ground source heat pumps, we will be helping future residents power the homes for less.
- The retention, restoration, enhancement and creation of green infrastructure (GI) is encouraged with all greenfield residential developments of 50 homes or more providing around 40 per cent GI on site to create places that are green and healthy.
- The retention of trees, woodland and hedgerows on development sites is strongly encouraged as is the planting of new trees to improve the districts canopy cover.
- There is also a first policy for health and wellbeing, recognising that development and how we develop plays a role in the health of communities.

The West Suffolk Local Plan is important to ensuring the current and future generations of West Suffolk residents have a place to live.

It is important to making sure that there is land to support the growth of existing West Suffolk businesses ensuring they can expand and retain jobs in our area as well as encouraging the growth of new businesses and attracting others to our area.

Without a local plan, we will get unplanned housing development here in West Suffolk, and as we know Withersfield have had many unplanned and inappropriate applications.

By setting out where it can and can't take place, the local plan protects the countryside as well as against harmful speculative development such as infilling. The local plan will also bring the Council will have a five-year housing land supply meaning the council would be able to refuse applications for other sites and better protect the democratic voice of communities and councillors to have their say on the planning applications that come in.

By allocating where homes can be built, the local plan ensures against piecemeal development and in so doing can better secure developer funding to meet and deliver wider infrastructure needs such as road, footpaths, and cycleways.

Through this local plan we will secure the policy gains for our communities that we have fought for such as increased affordable, sustainable, accessible housing and improved living standards.

So, the local plan is hugely important.

If there are any issues across any of the topics, please let me know.

Indy Wijenayaka

West Suffolk District Council  
Withersfield Ward

[Indy.Wijenayaka@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Indy.Wijenayaka@westsuffolk.gov.uk)