**Parish Report – September 2024**

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**Apologies – I will be on annual leave and out of the country from 7 September – 22 September, I am sure that Penny Otten will be happy to pick up any queries in my absence.**

**Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils’ Building Control team has been recognised with five top awards at a prestigious ceremony.**

The Local Authority Building Control (LABC) Building Excellence Awards take place annually and celebrate the best in building design, construction and innovation.

They highlight the vital contribution public sector building control teams make - ensuring safe, sustainable, and high-quality construction projects.

In the East of England’s 2024 awards, Babergh and Mid Suffolk had winners in five categories, including the Newcomer of the Year award, which was given to Trainee Building Control Inspector, Brieze Bradford.

The full list of awards was:

• Best Residential Conversion to a Single New Home - The Byre, Wetheringsett (Beech Architects and NSH Developments)

• Best Individual New Home - Orchard Farm, Leavenheath (Daking Designs)

• Best Residential & Small Commercial Builder - Craig Page-Baker, Page-Baker Construction

**•** Best Partnership with a Local Authority Building Control Team - Binder Ltd

• LABC Newcomer of the Year - Brieze Bradford

The councils were also highly commended for:

• Best Residential Extension - Farmhouse, Mid Suffolk (Mole Architects and Thornton Construction)

• Best Individual New Home - Woodfield, Sproughton (Wincer Kievenaar and The Birch Group)

The winning projects will now go onto the national LABC award finals where they will go head-to-head with other regional winners to compete for the overall titles.

The national awards ceremony is due to take place in January 2025.

**A by-election is set to take place in the Thurston ward on 24 September.**

Cllr Austin Davies has announced his resignation from Mid Suffolk District Council.

The ward councillor for Thurston has stepped down because he is moving away from the area.

First elected in Thurston in February 2022, he has been a member of the planning committee, a company director of Mid Suffolk’s property investment company CIFCO and Mid Suffolk Holdings, and sat on the council’s Audit and Standards committee until recently.

The resignation has taken immediate effect and triggers a process which is expected to result in a by-election in Thurston on 24 September. Nominations close at 4pm on Wednesday, 28 August.

**The latest development at state-of-the-art business, innovation and logistics park is under way**

The first spades went into the ground to start construction of a 44,000 sq ft distribution centre at Gateway 14 for Bauder – a leading international manufacturer of flat roof building construction materials including solutions for green roofs and solar PV arrays.

Bauder managing directors Yvonne Higgins and John Llewellyn, plus logistics manager Ian Madgwick (pictured centre) led the ground-breaking ceremony at the state-of-the-art business, innovation and logistics park near Stowmarket, flanked by representatives from Gateway 14 Ltd, Mid Suffolk District Council, Jaynic, Freeport East and Wilten Construction.

The new investment on the Freeport site represents a broader strengthening of Bauder’s presence in Suffolk to support continuing growth and opportunities in the UK. Bauder’s UK operational headquarters will continue to be based in Ipswich – with plans to revamp their existing facility on Landseer Road – while the new centre at Gateway 14 will become its biggest distribution location in the UK.

Development of the building is by Gateway 14 Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Mid Suffolk District Council, and Jaynic its development manager. The construction contract has been awarded to Leicestershire-based Wilten Construction.

Bauder specialises in quality flat roof waterproofing systems, insulation, green roofs and rooftop solar PV to make buildings watertight, thermally efficient and positively support the environment.

Bauder’s parent company in Germany has been producing roofing products for more than 160 years and has grown continuously; with seven factories in Germany, one in Austria and subsidiaries in 14 countries.

**Suffolk residents will boost local renewable energy generation, cut carbon emissions, and save on energy bills with a community-led solar panel initiative**

Residents of Suffolk can come together to invest in renewable energy sources through a group-buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage.

Solar Together Suffolk helps homeowners feel confident that they are paying the right price for a high-quality installation from qualified installers.

Suffolk residents can join the group-buying scheme, which offers:

solar panels with optional battery storage and EV charge points

retrofit battery storage for residents who have already invested in solar panels and are looking to get more from the renewable energy they generate

The scheme allows homeowners to increase their independence from the national grid.

It’s free to register, and there is no obligation to go ahead with an installation.

**Mid Suffolk District Council’s former offices in Needham Market are to go on the market in order to deliver the regeneration plans and funds for reinvestment back into council housing.**

The council’s ambitious vision of the regeneration of Needham Market has already seen the award-winning conversion of the town’s former middle school site to include a mix of affordable housing for rent and purchase for local residents, as well as the retention of a Victorian school building as a new library.

The council also successfully delivered the first phase of the transformation of its former council office site – creating another 32 homes, including further affordable housing, plus a new retail unit, which Co-op moved into last year.

However, the council’s development partner has chosen to step back from the former HQ project ahead of its second phase, which includes a further 48 open market homes and the redevelopment of grade 2 listed Hurstlea House in 12 apartments.

**Residents in Babergh and Mid Suffolk are set to benefit from a new electric vehicle initiative**

A trial of electric community vehicles is set to launch next summer in Suffolk, with the tender process beginning this autumn.

Plug In Suffolk Car Clubs will be placing sixteen electric vehicles across eight locations in Suffolk, which local residents can book by the minute, hour or day.

Planned locations include Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket, Sudbury, Needham Market, Stowmarket, Lowestoft and Woodbridge.

Members of the public interested in this project are urged to sign up to the Plug in Suffolk mailing list to receive updates as the project progresses.

Car Clubs have already offered people in other parts of the UK access to local, low-emission vehicles without the expense of owning one. Local communities in these areas have already experienced many benefits including improved air quality, reduced congestion and increased mobility for those without access to their own car.

Current providers remain reluctant to fully fund electric community vehicles in rural and semi-rural areas like Suffolk as they do not yet have the real-world data to support the usage.

The project is funded by Suffolk’s public sector organisations, which includes Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, helping deliver on two of the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan’s goals:

* a reduced number of cars on the road
* an increased proportion of vehicles on the road that are low or zero emission

Additional charge point funding is being provided by the Department for Transport’s On Street Residential ChargePoint Scheme (ORCS).

**Councils are putting landowners in touch with organisations that can help them improve their land for wildlife and nature**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are hosting a free event in September for local landowners in the districts to help put them in touch with organisations that can support them in managing their land better for wildlife.

Call for land summit attendees include environmental organisations working across both Babergh and Mid Suffolk, such as the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission, among others.

They will be able to offer landowners advice, support, funding and resources to help ensure their land best supports our native wildlife. This could be tree planting, hedge planting, meadow creation or allowing land to develop naturally.

The summit will take place at **The Mix in Stowmarket on 5 September between 10am-2pm.**

Attendees will benefit from presentations, landowner case studies, as well as networking opportunities.

Interested landowners can reserve their place via Eventbrite

The councils have already helped put almost 40 landowners in Babergh and Mid Suffolk in touch with organisations that can help them with this work.