

District Councillor Report: Walsham Le Willows

February 2025

Mandatory housing numbers – revised Local Plan	The Government has increased the annual housing requirement from 535 to 734 in Mid Suffolk (up 37%). Each year, planning authorities must demonstrate they have a five-year land supply for the required number of homes. If this can't be demonstrated there is a risk that national planning policies would start to take priority over the Joint Local Plan - and we may find ourselves in a position where they are required to approve planning applications on sites contrary to the development plan. <i>Therefore, we are going to need to revise our Local Plan to ensure it is robust.</i> For information the housing supply in the last 5 years: <table><tr><td></td><td colspan="2">Mid Suffolk</td></tr><tr><td>Year</td><td>Housing requirement</td><td>Housing completions</td></tr><tr><td>2023/24</td><td>535</td><td>1,014</td></tr><tr><td>2022/23</td><td>534</td><td>1,234</td></tr><tr><td>2021/22</td><td>529</td><td>862</td></tr><tr><td>2020/21</td><td>513</td><td>672</td></tr><tr><td>2019/20</td><td>535</td><td>451</td></tr></table>		Mid Suffolk		Year	Housing requirement	Housing completions	2023/24	535	1,014	2022/23	534	1,234	2021/22	529	862	2020/21	513	672	2019/20	535	451
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Potential new Local Government reform	Conservative run Suffolk County Council have been successful in their request to be on the fast-track devolution programme and to cancel the County Council elections in May 2025. Four of the seven Conservative Councillors at Mid Suffolk District Council have now formed a Suffolk Independent Group stating “we are both appalled and dismayed that our Conservative county colleagues have so swiftly embraced this change imposed by the Labour government and agreed to extend their likely term in office from 4 years to possibly 7 years, serving unelected beyond their period of mandate and without any prior consultation with residents.”																					
Tree canopy survey	There has been recent publicity about Mid Suffolk becoming one of the first rural UK councils to commission a pioneering full tree canopy data survey. The survey, carried out by Treeconomics, established the districts’ detailed baseline tree coverage data. It enabled the councils to: • map their districts’ tree cover • identify where more planting was needed • and improve tree management long term																					

	Google “Treeconomics Mid Suffolk” for further details.
Living Well in Winter Grants	The goal of these grants is to help nearby organisations such as councils, charities, community groups and more to provide accessible spaces and activities during colder months. This year, the funding has been distributed among over 13 organisations with grants between £500 and £2,000 awarded.
Insulation of Council Housing	Mid Suffolk District Council has appointed Equans to carry out retrofit measures to a significant number of the most disadvantaged households in the council’s stock. The total cost will be £1.6 million half of which is funded by the government.
Skills and Innovation Centre	Work has started on the delivery stage of the Skills and Innovation Centre at Gateway 14 which will include office space for high growth start-ups, collaboration and innovation spaces, training and meeting rooms and a café. Designed following positive discussions with businesses and local skills providers, the centre aims to address skills gaps locally and within the Freeport area and seize opportunities around growing sectors such as the green economy and digital/AI technology. Freeport East agreed £16.66m funding for the centre earlier this year.
Farm inheritance tax	Councillors from across Mid Suffolk’s political divide have come together to pledge their support for the district’s farmers, in the face of challenges that could undermine the farming sector and threaten the nation’s food supply. At its Full Council in January, councillors agreed unanimously to consider all reasonable and practical measures to support local farming communities, and to urge Suffolk MPs to push for a review of recent changes by the Government, which they fear could lead to a significant financial impact on farmers.
Simonds Bus service	Please see separate document