

District Councillor Report: Walsham Le Willows

April 2025

Housing numbers

The Joint Local Plan (JLP) for Babergh and Mid Suffolk is being reviewed, to make sure it stays compliant with the government's increased new targets for housebuilding.

A general meeting for Mid Suffolk Parishes was held on March 21st 2025 in response to the Government's revised housing targets. The aim was to make Parishes aware of the likely potential impact and to enable them to start to prepare for what is planned.

Mid Suffolk's housing target has increased from 535 per annum to 734 (an increase of 37%). If you include a 5% buffer this amounts to a requirement of 15,414 for the period from 2024 to 2044, although 5,475 of these are in the current identified supply.

The provisional figures for the Walsham Le Willows ward are as follows (these are based on a rough apportionment of the total target based on population and give indicative order of magnitudes only)

	Indicative requirement over 20 year period	Identified residual dwellings on commenced sites	Permitted residual dwellings on sites not started yet	Indicative requirement minus permitted dwellings
Badwell Ash	130	76	25	29
Great Ashfield	50	0	0	50
Hunston	30	0	0	30
Langham	10	0	0	10
Walsham Le Willows	190	0	7	183
Wattisfield	70	9	1	60

New fund for sports facilities in rural areas

A fund for Sports provision outside of Stowmarket has been established.

This is set as £750K for April 2025 to March 2026, with £750k proposed for April 2026 to March 2027.

The criteria area being developed for the funding and will support design, feasibility & planning costs, to develop sports infrastructure in a rural area of Mid Suffolk, outside of Stowmarket, by exploring upgrading or extending existing sites, as well as opportunities for new sports provision or facilities.

Through our Communities Team locality working, proactive work will commence with Parish Councils and community groups as soon as the fund is launched as well as working with our comms colleagues to ensure all potential avenues for promoting the fund are fully exploited. We will also include the new

	fund on the grant landing page of the website with along with supporting information and contact details of the officers supporting delivery. The intention is to have a two-stage process, to include an initial Expression of Interest, followed by an application process. This will enable our Communities Team to work with groups to ensure good quality applications that focuses on needs as illustrated in our Leisure, Sports & Physical Activity Strategy and wider community aspirations. We expect to launch the fund early April and will also collaborate with internal teams and key partners such as Active Suffolk to ensure as wide a reach as possible. S106 and CIL funds – Active Suffolk, among others - may of course be available to supplement projects benefiting from this fund.
Warm, safe homes for council tenants given £2.9m boost	Work to make council homes warmer and bring down energy bills for tenants across Babergh and Mid Suffolk have received a £2.9m boost in government funding. The funding is to be added to the £8m already committed by the councils to install energy saving measures in social housing, taking the total investment pledged for retrofitting and decarbonising to almost £14m across both districts over the next 4 years. This work not only helps lower income households by delivering warm and energy efficient homes, but also lifts tenants out of fuel poverty by helping to save money on energy bills. Work is already underway to tackle 100 council properties with the lowest EPC (energy performance certificate) ratings by adding a range of improvements, including cavity and loft insulation, new windows, PV panels and air source heat pumps. This week's announcement means plans can now be made for the next 150 homes, helping the councils to meet their aim of ensuring all properties achieve a good state of energy efficiency by 2027.
Local government reform	Two or three unitary councils are best placed to deliver tailored services and protect local democracy, according to councillors at Mid Suffolk District Council. Councillors overwhelmingly supported an interim plan developed jointly by all five of Suffolk's district and borough councils that would see the creation of either two or three unitary authorities to deliver all council services for residents across manageable geographic areas. They agreed that a multiple authority approach is the only way to ensure the differing needs of Suffolk's diverse communities can be met effectively and efficiency – and that local people continue to have a say in decisions that matter to them.

	As part of the Government's English Devolution White paper, councils nationally have been asked to look at reorganisation of local government, which will include disbanding county, district and borough councils and their services being delivered by newly created unitary authorities.
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	Suffolk County Council has stated its preference for a single 'mega-council' delivering services for the whole of Suffolk – but district councillors feel an authority covering such a vast rural population and geographical area would be too large to work effectively and too remote for residents to be heard. A 'one size fits all' approach fails to meet the needs of Suffolk's varied communities.
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