

Paul Gadd County Councillor Update

Saffron Walden Town Council – Planning and Transport Committee

12/1/23

[Note, items in italics are repeats from last month, still unresolved]

1. Flooding and drainage issues:

- a. *Essex Highways have programmed in the South Road blocked drain for major investigative work in early January 2023; This was meant to start on 9/1/23, but there is no sign of activity so I've chased*
- b. *[That leaves Bridge Street as the other long-standing issue. My drains contact is going to talk to his infrastructure team and I'll then meet him on site hopefully in a couple of months;]] I'm still waiting to hear back;]* I've chased again
- c. As before; ECC Highways are saying that the High St pavement isn't bad enough to warrant attention

2. Highways matters affecting the parish:

- a. *[The latest LHP meeting was held on 24/10. All of the schemes which had been approved are in theory on schedule, but that isn't very many of all the ones we put forward. In particular:*
  - i. *the bollards outside Lankesters should be going in soon – a design has been produced which the resident is happy with;*
  - ii. *the TPOs for the market square regularisation and pedestrianisation should be being completed; on the pedestrianisation though, it's now emerged that the scheme put forward to the LHP is just for design and not implementation – which is hard to believe – and that they are expecting me to go back next year for a separate request to get it implemented! I'm trying to get round this and get the scheme both designed and delivered this financial year;*
  - iii. *all the dropped kerbs should be going in;*
  - iv. *I'm still chasing on the various zebra crossing requests and whether we can use the Linden Homes money for some of them and am still waiting for answers;*
  - v. *Most schemes which hadn't been validated still haven't been. Essex Highways have in theory recruited someone just to do validation to clear the backlog]*
- b. On the LHP, there appears to be almost no progress. I've just received the agenda pack for the next LHP meeting, which is on 16/1/23, and I have an update call with the LHP officer on 13/1/23. The Lankesters Bollards have gone in, and I have seen a design for the 20mph in the Town centre, so hopefully that will be being installed shortly. Other than those there seems to be no progress on anything;
- c. *[I've had a request from a couple of members of public for a zebra crossing on Cromwell Rd to ease children going to school from the Winstanley Rd side – what do people think?] [My fault – we agreed that Trilby and I would have a walk around and I haven't found time to do it];* Given the lack of progress on the zebra crossing schemes we asked for over a year ago I haven't followed up on this until I get somewhere with the others;
- d. *High Street pavements – Georgia and I are chasing to see if we can get the scheme resurrected. Note however that Essex Highways seem now to have a policy of not doing*

*anything to footpaths unless there is a major safety issue. Georgia has prepared a TPO request to remove the 4 trees on the High St that ECC had identified as inappropriate and/or in poor health, and ECC have now decided that they are fine! No progress*

- e. *Debden Road / Borough Lane junction: I've been contacted by a resident concerned about recent accidents at this junction and the potential dangers particularly to SWCHS students; ECC are going to do a feasibility study; [No progress]*
  - f. *[Under the "Member Led Pothole Repair Scheme": it seems now that clusters aren't treated as one so I've quickly got through my first allocation of 18, but with another 18 to come. In Saffron Walden they should be doing the Thaxted Rd / Peaslands Rd mini-roundabout, London Road (done), Castle St and the right hand turning lane on the B1383 coming from the station to Wendens Road. Peaslands Rd / Mt Pleasant Rd has too many to do (!) so I've asked for it to be resurfaced – response outstanding!]. On Peaslands Rd I've had a holding response – will keep chasing to try to get it into the 2023/24 Capital Programme. On the potholes, London Rd and the B1383 are done but I'm still waiting for the others. I now have my next allocation of 18 – please let me have suggestions] [Castle St is programmed for 6 nights from 21 November;] [Various more smaller ones have been repaired near Rowntree Way and Cromwell Rd; Castle St failed to happen for no obvious reason and is now programmed for this week; I've still heard nothing on the Peaslands Rd mini-roundabout] Castle St second attempt was stopped by snow and a new date in March has been proposed. I've been told that Peaslands Rd mini-roundabout will happen, but am still waiting for a date. A large number of serious potholes have appeared in the last couple of months; I've reported some of them and am writing to the Cabinet Member for Highways to see if this is Essex Highway's "managed decline" in operation or what will be done;*
3. Road closures in general:
- a. *I'm not aware of anything imminent, but I have now managed to find the head of the team that tries to co-ordinate road closures when utility companies request them, so if we have issues in future I may now be able to help!*
4. SWTC funding of local schemes through s.106 monies:
- a. *As I've previously reported, ECC Highways claim that they have a process for allowing authorities to finance local schemes through s.106 monies or other local contributions;*
  - b. *In July I asked for details so that we could apply some of the s.106 monies that ECC have for Saffron Walden to some of the LHP schemes which are not progressing. I chase regularly but am still waiting for an answer;*
  - c. *I've chased again and still no answer*
5. Cycling and other sustainable transport:
- a. *I'm still waiting to hear on the LHP schemes and where they have got to;*
  - b. *[UDC have been delayed in commissioning the LCWIP because of the Local Plan issues but should now be doing it. I'm very disappointed that Essex Highways didn't ask for any cycling infrastructure in connection with the Rosconn development, and everyone who was present for the Kier presentation will have heard that they aren't proposing to offer anything. I've therefore been in contact with UDC and Essex Highways to try to get the position changed and try to persuade Essex Highways that sustainable transport connections should be a requirement of any new housing scheme, particularly as Policy SW12 of the SWNP now requires it. We had a meeting on 7/11 and I'm cautiously*

*hopeful of progress] although I haven't heard further. At the meeting on 7/11, ECC Highways confirmed that they weren't even aware of the Uttlesford Cycling Strategy, the SWNP schemes or the LHP requested schemes!*

- c. *Georgia has very helpfully produced a map of Saffron Walden clearly identifying all of the cycle routes that we have been requesting, which I have sent to ECC Highways, so many thanks for that, Georgia. I'm trying to remove any opportunity for ECC Highways not to be aware of all the cycle requests we are making;*
- d. *The ECC Place Services Scrutiny Committee that I'm on had a session in November on Sustainable Transport which was very disappointing. I then followed up with the Head of Sustainable Transport. The main feedback from the 2 meetings was:*
  - i. *ECC confirmed that they have only 1 cycling officer for the whole county. They have promised to let us know how many Cambridge have for comparison;*
  - ii. *They don't yet have any cycling targets for their sustainable transport strategy;*
  - iii. *They are still a year away from a new 20mph strategy;*
  - iv. *They get very little money from central Government from cycling;*
  - v. *They received very little ECC resource and are still a long way away from updating their transport policies which currently heavily prioritise road transport over sustainable transport and they say make it very difficult for them to request proper s.106 sustainable transport contributions;*
  - vi. *In summary it was hard to come up with anything positive from ECC on sustainable transport!*
- e. *Georgia and I have had a further conversation with the s.106 officer regarding Kier, and made the point that their proposal for another cycle path which stops at the Thaxted Road / Peaslands Rd mini-roundabout is almost useless, and we need paths along Thaxted Rd as far as Victoria Avenue and along Peaslands Rd at least to South Rd to be of any use;*
- f. *I've also followed up with the ECC Sustainable Transport officers. ECC are meant to be publishing Key Performance Indicators to measure their 2021-2025 Strategic Plan against, including progress on cycling. We're now almost halfway through the Plan and they still haven't produced any KPIs for cycling! Worse, they still do not have a record of the existing cycling infrastructure to use as a base;*
- g. *I've submitted a Written Question to the Cabinet Member for Highways to ask when ECC are going to change their Transport Policies and devote any significant resource to cycling.*