

Paul Gadd County Councillor Update
Saffron Walden Town Council – Planning and Transport Committee
14/12/23

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

1. Flooding and drainage issues:

- a. *[South Road broken drain – Essex Highways are still chasing Openreach to effect a repair]*
You may have seen my update on this in the Walden Local last week – BT Openreach have now moved their duct but Essex Highways now need to clear the remainder of the drain; they are aware of this and hopefully works will happen soon – there unfortunately has again been flooding in the meantime;

2. LHP schemes:

- a. *We have now had an indication of this year's budget and it looks as though it will effectively be negative! We're still waiting for confirmation, but it looks as though ECC is refusing to carry over the schemes from last year, and it looks as though the new money being offered this year will be considerably less than the value of the schemes now being cancelled. We have been promised a breakdown of the budget so we can understand how much money is available, but we are still waiting for it;]**[14/12/12 – I have chased again but with no response; we have an LHP meeting on 14/12/12 and I'll update you afterwards]*
- b. In terms of the LHP schemes that were due for delivery by 31/3/23 but weren't delivered:

- i. the following should have been completed but haven't:

1. *the TPOs for the market square regularisation and pedestrianisation – I've chased yet again for Essex Highways to let us have a method statement for SWTC to agree to for the road closures, which seems to be the only hold up. In the meantime we have had a draft TRO for the market square regularisation (they refuse to do both schemes in one TRO), which was incorrect, but have just had a corrected one. [14/12/23 - Essex Highways have produced 2 drafts of the market regularisation TRO, but have yet to draft it correctly. On the Market Square closure, the LHP says that a design is to be produced in mid-December – despite my continued chasing, I still haven't been able to get Essex Highways to talk to me or SWTC to understand our wishes, so I hope the design will reflect our wishes. I have asked again that SWTC are involved in the design;]*
2. *[George St / Hill St build outs – just when I thought I was making progress, the latest update from the LHP says – “Work due to start in January 2024. An issue with the condition of the road surface has been identified during onsite checks, we are hoping the Capital Team will undertake carriageway surfacing as part of these works - waiting for a cost for the surfacing work and agreement from the Capital Team”]*
3. *[9/11/23 - On the Great Chesterford to SW cycle path, the Sustrans scheme was on the west side of the B1383 because ECC Highways hadn't told Sustrans that there were s.106 arrangements to bring a path from*

Great Chesterford to Little Chesterford on the east side of the B1383. I'm now trying to get the LHP to re-commission the design of the scheme so that the Little Chesterford to Littlebury section is also on the east side;][14/12/23 - According to the papers for the LHP meeting on 14/12/23 this has been commissioned and should be prepared in the first 3 months of 2024]

4. *[Street clutter – I still can't get a date for when this will happen] [8/6/23 – no update] [13/7/23 – seems to have gone nowhere – I'll chase][9/11/23 – I still can't get a date][14/12/23 – the LHP is now saying that the scheme will go over budget! I'll see what I can do]*
5. *[Water Tower Place – design work apparently now being carried out but I can't get a date for completion;] [8/6/23 – no update][13/7/23 – seems to have gone nowhere – I'll chase] [9/11/23 - I received a draft update raising issues including that the ramp was in a conservation area – I've pointed out that it's next to but not in a conservation area and asked them to progress the design!][14/12/23 – Essex Highways have rejected the request – I've cut and pasted below their response:*

“The difference in level itself it is only 0.6m and as we previously said installing a long ramp the slope% required by legislation can be achieved. However, unfortunately, there are other issues that represent impediments on its realisation. Please see the bullet points below:

The UST (statutory equipment in the highway) survey that has confirmed there are a large amount of utility equipment running in this area LV/HV (electricity cables – depths between 400mm and 860mm) and communication cables (depths between 360 – 970mm). To give you an idea, to install a concrete ramp we need a foundation depth of at least 800mm, therefore the construction would require this equipment to be relocated.

A minimum clear width of a public ramp should be 1200mm, the existing footway width it is 1.77 (See the image below) so what we also need is to widen the footway (1.2m+1.2m) to 2.4m (as minimum, then you need to consider the space needed for the handrail installation which would require 250/300mm more) doing this will have an impact on the carriageway and the opposite footway as well, as we will need to take footway from this side to account for what is needed on the side requiring the ramp and then realign the carriageway. The carriageway here is already quite narrow and therefore we will not be able to reduce this by much, the increased width required will need to mainly come from the footway opposite.

We can consider installing the ramp at the large space upper the wall but in both cases, we would need relocation of the existing street lighting and drainage system (we can't provide an estimated cost for these works as this will be provided by the suppliers).

Due to the installation of the ramp, relocation of the street furniture and utilities, we need to take into account the impact on the conservation area and the listed building located in the vicinity of the works area (applications on both needed).

Also, I would like to bring to your attention that there are parking spaces close proximity the works area and it means increasing chances for collisions between pedestrians and vehicles (as highways authority, formally, installing a ramp here it means it needs to be safe to those using it).

The consequence of all these design issues is going to mean that the construction costs for this scheme are going to be extremely high.”

- c. *[8/6/23 - In terms of the schemes which hadn't even got to validation, 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. I haven't yet had any new validations. The LHP officer said that all LHP schemes were deliberately paused for about 6 months to save money, although we were never told that, and that Essex Highways are now trying to get the design team to full strength to focus on validations, but I've been told that at least 3 times in the last 9 months by the Cabinet Member for Highways, including when I wrote to him this time.] [13/7/23 – no change; still no new validations][11/8/23 – no change][9/11/23 – still no change I'm afraid][14/12/23 – the only new validation was to reject the Water Tower Place ramp! No obvious progress on anything else - I am chasing;*
3. Highways matters affecting the parish
 - a. Pothole scheme – I am chasing up the ones notified to me - thanks;
 - b. *[9/11/23 - I've talked to Essex Highways about speed cameras; unhelpfully, their rules seem to preclude speed cameras pretty much anywhere. I've asked them to see whether they can install one anywhere on the B1383 through Great Chesterford, on the basis that if they won't do that, I can't see them doing any in Saffron Walden][14/12/23 – I've chased again]*
4. Cycling, walking and other sustainable transport:
 - a. LHP schemes – see above;
 - b. *UDC have commissioned the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, so that's progress; [14/12/23 – still ongoing. I'm keen also that it includes the SW / Ashdon former railway line as a future walking / cycling scheme]*
 - c. *[14/12/23 – we had a presentation from ECC Sustainable Transport officers in November, and helpful changes are proposed to move away from the existing “cars first” policy. However, it looks as though the DfT are being extremely slow in confirming their requirements for Essex Highways' draft new policy so it's not clear when it will be submitted to the DfT for approval, or when approval will be granted, and Essex Highways are still woefully under-staffed in terms of sustainable transport resource, so I fear that it will be a long time until we see significant change. ECC did say that they are trying to change their approach to their existing highways policies, so I will keep pushing;]*
 - d. *[14/12/23 – My request for a cycle path in front of SWCHS to link Saxon Way and the Wenden Rd cycle path is “in validation”]*