

Paul Gadd County Councillor Update

Saffron Walden Town Council – Planning and Transport Committee

13/7/23

[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] [13/4/23 - BT Openreach have now admitted their responsibility – they laid a cable through the drainpipe! In theory they are repairing it, but seem to be taking a long time – I'm chasing] [8/6/23 – I'm still chasing, and ECC are chasing Openreach][13/7/23 – ditto, but some progress – Openreach seem to be programming it in]*

2. LHP schemes:

- a. 13/7/23 – after months of chasing, finally some progress. The LHP chair finally convened an LHP meeting on 6/7/23, only 6 months after the last one. It wasn't particularly satisfactory, but getting a meeting was at least something. The main points coming out were:
 - i. We have now been told what the budget for the year is;
 - ii. Much of the budget is being reserved for certain pavement improvement schemes. Unhelpfully, two completely different lists of pavements to be repaired have been circulated – one is largely pavements on little used streets that I wouldn't choose to do, but the other includes the High St – and it's not clear what the status of either is, or whether schemes will only be implemented if the money is there. I've asked for clarification;
 - iii. Whilst we were told that all unfinished 2022/23 schemes (and the unfinished schemes comprise the bulk of the 2022/23 budget) would be rolled over with their funding, this is now not necessarily the case, and is dependent on a Cabinet meeting later in the month, so that money may or may not be stolen back by ECC;
 - iv. Very few new validations of the schemes requested in December 2021 have been carried out;
 - v. We therefore decided to use the 2023/24 budget to pay for the 2022/23 schemes still outstanding together with a few other schemes. The one exception is the proposed Thaxted Rd west side pathway, which was going to be very expensive and which is covered by the new Kier planning permission s.106 agt, so I suggested dropping that to free up some money elsewhere. The hope is that we will finally get some validations through in the next month, and can use the rolled over money (assuming it is approved) to fund those;
 - vi. As there is so much outstanding, I'm pushing for more LHP meetings, and we have agreed to have another once the Cabinet decision on the funding rollover has been made;
- b. In terms of the LHP schemes that were due for delivery by 31/3/23:

- i. the following have gone in: Lankester bollards; the town centre 20mph and the dropped kerbs;
- ii. the following should have been completed but haven't:
 1. *[8/6/23 - the TPOs for the market square regularisation and pedestrianisation – ECC have clearly only just started looking at the latter. Georgia and Terry had a zoom with the design engineer so hopefully progressing;][13/7/23 – I chased on this; Essex Highways seem to be dragging their feet because it relies on the bollards being moved by SWTC staff, but that is no different from the market place closures currently. I'll keep chasing. The design work for the market regularisation has been done and no reason it can't now be advertised]*
 2. George St / Hill St build outs – they have produced a design now for both build outs which I've shared with Cllr Eke. On the George St one, I've had a number of comments about blockages on George St when people park badly in the loading bays on the south side, so I've asked Essex Highways to reduce the enlarged pavement width by 20cm, which I don't think will affect pedestrians materially. The scheme will need Environment Agency consent as the culvert sits beneath it. I've also now had confirmation from the fire service that they are happy with built out pavements as long as they don't have bollards on them;
 3. *[8/6/23 - Review of SW cycle scheme options and Gt Chesterford to SW cycle path – I've now had both back. Instead of the review of SW cycle scheme options requested, Sustrans have done a quick and dirty LCWIP, which doesn't cover most of the schemes we requested them to look at, and overlaps with the LCWIP that UDC have commissioned; I've asked for an explanation of why we haven't got the report I asked for.][13/7/23 – no progress] [8/6/23 - The Gt Chesterford to SW cycle path report is very un-user friendly – there's no summary of the scheme or explanation but instead a suite of documents totalling 180Mb! I've sent them to Georgia if anyone would like to see them. Georgia is also going to organise a meeting with the various other parish councils on the route for us to discuss the scheme collectively – the Sustrans scheme was prepared without any reference to anyone locally][13/7/23 – we've now had the meeting; a lot of the rationale for the design is unclear so I've sent a series of questions back to the LHP and asked for a call to discuss];*
 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]*
 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]*
- 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]

3. Highways matters affecting the parish

- a. Broken street lights seem to be slowly being mended;
- b. A number of the historic potholes seem to have been fixed (eg South Rd, Rowntree Way) but others seem to be taking their place. Please let me know any that you're aware of.
- c. As I said at Full Council on 10/7/23, Essex Highways are operating their member led pothole scheme again, so I'll be allowed to nominate 2 lots of 18 potholes! My first window of opportunity will be mid August, so any particularly bad ones, let me know. When you do, please include location, at least 2 photos and the reference number from when it has been reported – if any haven't been reported, please report them first - [Tell us - Essex County Council \(essexhighways.org\)](https://www.essexhighways.org);
- d. Essex Highways have launched a consultation on their proposed electric charging point strategy – if you would like to respond, see **“Read more about the Essex Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy in our [public consultation brochure](#) and have your say by completing our [short consultation survey](#).”**
- e. I've had a request for double yellow lines at the Rylstone Way entrance onto Thaxted Rd, which seem to make sense, and which I'd like to advance to NEPP if the Planning Committee is happy;

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; [8/6/23 – still ongoing. I'm keen also that it includes the SW / Ashdon former railway line as a future walking / cycling scheme]*
- c. *[8/6/23 - nothing positive from ECC on sustainable transport – the Place Services Scrutiny Committee that I'm on is due to have a presentation on 22 June 2023 on Essex Highways' "Road Hierarchy Review", so I hope that may shed some light on their future proposals.][13/7/23 – the presentation was cancelled! Now to be in October 2023]*
- d. I've been in contact with SWCHS; they would be very keen to have a walkway / cyclepath on the south side of Audley End Road outside the school, so I've asked UDC to look at it in the context of the LCWIP and see if we can make progress on it