

Paul Gadd County Councillor Update

Saffron Walden Town Council – Planning and Transport Committee

7/8/23

*[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

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. Not really any progress since the 6/7/23 meeting I'm afraid:

- i. We've had no scheme validations through;*
- ii. We're still waiting for confirmation that the 2022/23 budget which was unspent because Essex Highways didn't complete the schemes for the year can be carried over – confirmation was due before the end of July;*
- iii. I've had no word of progress on anything else;*

- iv. I have put in a new request for a scheme to install a cycle / pedestrian path along Audley End Road on the south side from the entrance to SWCHS to the zebra crossing and on the north side from the zebra crossing to Saxon Way;
- c. 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 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
    - 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; No change*
    - 3. 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. Essex Highways have confirmed that their request to Sustrans to investigate the SW cycle schemes was as I requested, but Sustrans took it upon themselves to do something completely different. They have also forwarded my list of questions on the SW / Great Chesterford cycle scheme to Sustrans and have scheduled a call for 14/8 with Sustrans
    - 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]*
  - d. *[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]*
- 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. The request for double yellow lines at the Rylstone Way entrance onto Thaxted Rd, is moving forwards through Georgia and Dan McBirney;
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. Chesterford Research Park have submitted a planning application to construct 4 new buildings, and in return are offering to complete the cycle path from Little Chesterford to the new housing estate south east of Great Chesterford. This is only 300m, so doesn't seem much of a contribution, and they are offering nothing to help sustainable transport from south of the site. The Application was heard by UDC Planning on 2/8/23 and at my request was deferred pending further discussions with Essex Highways – until I had had a conversation with them, Essex Highways said that they were unaware of the SW / Gt Chesterford cycle scheme! Potentially that makes a material difference to their considerations so I have asked them to revisit the Application;
5. Road closures:
- a. Cadent are replacing the iron gas mains throughout the country with plastic ones. Having done the easier ones, they are now doing the more disruptive ones. Last week they were planning to close Ashdon Rd for many weeks, and they have a road closure for Highfields for 54 days. I'm trying to find out whether these long periods can be justified, and how they can be mitigated in the case of streets like Ashdon Rd where there is no easy diversion