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# Suffolk View

A PUBLICATION OF THE SUFFOLK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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## The Gathering Storm –

- Water & Housing Conflicts
- Nuclear News
- Climate Change - *The Conference*



# Suffolk Preservation Society



Campaign to Protect  
Rural England

## The County Branch of CPRE

Founded in 1929, the SPS, a registered charity, (registered charity number 249981), is working to safeguard the buildings and landscape of Suffolk.

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Beach huts at Southwold, East Suffolk

## Contents

- 3 Snippets from the Cutting Room - SPS Director writes
- 4 Comment – SPS Chairman writes
- 5 A View from the Backyard
- 6 The Gathering Storm
- 8 Nuclear News
- 9 The Draft Regional Plan
- 10 David versus Goliath Development Corporation
- 12 New Cinema – Parkway, Bury St. Edmunds
- 16 The Exemplar Affordable Housing Project – Elmswell – *Part 2*
- 19 Suffolk Building Preservation Trust
- 20 Planning ‘Round-up’
- 22 CPRE in focus: Town & Parish Council Comment:  
New Members:  
Replies to Questionnaire
- 23 News from the Districts
- 27 Technical Tack
- 28 The Society’s AGM:  
SPS Suffolk Coastal District’s  
Garden Visit
- 29 Through the Portal
- 30 Views News and Reviews
- 31 Diary Dates  
Market Place - Directory

## Snippets from the Cutting Room



***SPS Director,  
Richard Ward,  
writes -***

Well it's here - the Panel's Report into the *Examination in Public* for the Draft Regional Plan (RSS14), and it arrived on the afternoon of the Society's AGM (see page 28). The Society's hard work, and that of the CPRE team in the Region, has paid dividends. Some of the changes we sought have been agreed.

The Panel especially endorsed our views that the 'Watermark' development proposal in Forest Heath was unsustainable and should not proceed; that the density of development should be determined locally; and that affordable housing was a key issue which recommended that overall average rates of 35% be established. All of this places a greater emphasis on the need to engage in the process of influencing the form and content of Local Development Frameworks (LDF's), the replacement for Local Plans. As yet the full importance of these documents, and a new working system, may not be fully appreciated.

As a result of this a Regional Workshop/Seminar is taking place on the 5th October, at which 90 places have been taken, and a County one, in conjunction with Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC), on the 14th November to ensure all who can influence LDF's have the necessary knowledge and skills. (Places on the latter are available to all Members of Town and Parish Councils – contact us for details.) However, we must not be complacent – there is still much to do in respect of the Regional Plan, and others will be trying in the next few months to reverse some of these changes to bring about inappropriate and unsustainable development. As Ministers have the final say on the Plan we need to safeguard its progress and carefully argued policy amendments all the way to final approval.

Details of the Society's important *Conference on Climate Change* on the 12th October are enclosed, and we ask you to respond as soon as you can, *but not later than Friday 15th September, 2006*. It promises to be an engaging and enjoyable day with first class speakers, so do join us!

Elmswell Affordable Housing Project progresses apace and a planning application has been submitted and will be 'determined' on 2nd August. (See Editor's note on page 18.) Contractors, O. Seman & Son Ltd. of Stowmarket, have been appointed to build the housing, and work on site should start at once provided planning permission is granted. (See page 16 for the second part of the Project Report, this time by RHM Architects.) We are now starting the process of looking for our next project to positively portray the Society's planning, design and sustainability ethos!

*Design* continues to be a major issue and concern to, and in, the Society. Very recent changes to the planning system mean that in future planning applications will need to be accompanied by 'Design and Access Statements'. The new statements are meant to ensure that what is proposed has been designed following a careful analysis of the various issues, site, area characteristics and planning policy requirements. Considerable skill and knowledge is required to understand such statements and to ensure that they have been prepared during the process of design and have positively influenced it, rather than at the end of the process and are being used to justify the design. The latter approach will not improve the general poor quality of design across the county - we need to see some inspired work, and its not all down to money!

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Caroline Cranbrook for her work in the excellent publication *The Real Choice – how local foods can survive the supermarket onslaught*, in conjunction with CPRE and the Plunkett Foundation. I thoroughly recommend it to you. (See pages 22 & 30.)

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## Comment

*SPS Chairman, Dr. Mike Coleman, writes*

Suffolk is renowned for its historic buildings, its countryside and its stunning coastline. My wife and I are fortunate to live overlooking the coast and, on a day like today with blazing sun and a gentle cooling breeze it all looks and feels fantastic. The sea, of course, plays a large part in shaping our coastline. Mankind endeavours to act out its defensive role of building sea walls and other land-retaining structures and mechanisms but all this, of course, comes at a price.

That price is now getting beyond the state purse. The Environment Agency, charged with safe-guarding us in this respect makes proposals. Therein lies a problem. It may have a national remit but the way it conceives its schemes is by dividing the coast up into small study areas. This is fine up to a point but as any school boy might tell you – long shore drift! Whatever happens at point A, further down the coast there is an effect at point B. The government made great play when it first came to power about joined-up thinking but it would appear that in this particular area things are not very well joined-up. In an ideal world this might not matter too much but the rolling programme has run out of money allegedly and schemes are being deferred. Hence, Southwold, where the defence scheme is approaching completion, should be lucky but further along our coast, proposals for other sites are being stalled - worse, the situation at these sites might be aggravated by the good works at Southwold. Surely we deserve better.

Our environment is shaped by nature but we are becoming more aware that our own actions also contribute to the role of nature. There is widespread concern that sea levels will markedly rise in this century as global warming takes its hold. It is getting too late now to reverse the changes we have put in motion and so we must accept that our stunning coastline, in its present form, is likely to be lost forever in the not too distant future. I suspect major proposals for wide-scale managed retreat will soon be forthcoming. That will put increasing pressure on our diminishing countryside. All the more reason to hope that the outcome of the Examination in Public of the East of England Plan, which our Director and the CPRE spent considerable time working on at the turn of the year, recognises that the proposals within it were not sustainable. News is expected on this front in late June.

A final note is that the Bill to create the Broads National Park is moving forward. The press has raked up arguments over its name muttering it's Norfolk Broads or it's Norfolk and Suffolk Broads, but the reality is the Bill deliberately avoids this conflict with the simple term The Broads. I think Suffolk does quite well out of this as we have the River Waveney and Oulton Broad, but for the most part both form the boundary with Norfolk and the percentage of all The Broads that are in Suffolk is small. However, an alternative interpretation might be that perhaps county identity is no longer in vogue in some departments.

## A View from the Backyard

*SPS Editorial Group Member,  
Richard Toft, writes*

Recently, a local journalist took the Society to task over its stance on various matters and accused it of “nimbyism”. Members of the Society will not need to be reminded that the term “nimbyism” derives from the expression “*not in my backyard*” which has been common currency amongst planners for many years.

Clearly the term is meant to be pejorative and conjures up the image of someone who smugly looks after his own environment but is uncaring about anything that appears not to affect his immediate environment or his way of life. In other words the term is intended to imply infinite selfishness. Does this seem to fit the bill so far as the Suffolk Preservation Society is concerned? I doubt it.

The Society’s “backyard” is the County of Suffolk, and that which affects its borders. Is pride in and concern for the County of Suffolk such a bad thing? I do not think so. The Society is interested in and concerned about the quality of both the coast and countryside of Suffolk and the whole of the built environment, both existing and in prospect.

To this end, members of the Society work voluntarily and selflessly on behalf of all who live and work in or visit Suffolk. They work on committees and in other ways across the whole of the County. They raise awareness and campaign on a wide

range of issues in order to achieve the best for the towns, villages and countryside of Suffolk. Competitions have been held and prizes awarded to stimulate the interest of young people in good design. Likewise, architectural and design practices have been invited to compete for prizes for schemes to provide solutions to particular problems, e.g. the need for affordable housing. Regular and well-attended seminars are held for local councillors and others at which guest speakers address current topics. Is all of this selfish? I doubt it.

*Concern for the countryside and the quality of the built environment is not selfish. It should be the concern of us all at all times.* Perhaps if it were there would be fewer areas of dereliction, shabbiness and ugliness. The environment affects people’s lives and an ugly environment damages the value that people put upon themselves. It damages self-esteem. It is wholly negative and its effects are pernicious. A bad environment can breed despair and despair breeds bitterness, resentment, cynicism and, possibly, anti-social or criminal behaviour. No matter how seemingly mindless, graffiti is one of the first signs of articulated protest against the state of things as they are. *Never ignore the writing on the wall.*

One way to help to produce harmony and, therefore, happiness into people’s lives is to *introduce and encourage harmony in their environment*, and where a harmonious environment already exists it is perhaps a good idea not to destroy it in the first place. Selfish? I doubt it.

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## The Gathering Storm

*The Editor considers the equation of*



Water restrictions have been imposed in many parts of Southern England. *Despite this there is something unreal about a drought in England and Wales.* Wimbledon fortnight usually has its cloud bursts, the Test matches don't normally escape without 'rain stopped play'. Families still brave it out on rainy wind swept beaches and garden visits go ahead despite the drizzle. No doubt as soon as the barbecue is in position – the storm clouds will gather.

Britain is now well into what has been an unusually dry run of weather, and after a long period without serious winter and spring rain, Southern England's reservoirs and ground water reserves are noticeably low with the result that, as I write, much of it now has hosepipe and sprinkler bans in place. Continued dry weather into the summer would give us one of the most serious droughts of the last hundred years.

While other regions have had normal rainfall, the south-east has been in trouble, and there is less water to go round in an average year than in bone-dry Mediterranean countries. People in the South use 160 litres of water a day on average compared to 140 litres by those in the North. Despite restrictions on water use in the south-east and fears of a worse shortage this year than in 1976, *3.6bn litres of fresh water are lost every day by water companies*, equivalent to 500 pints per home per day.

Remarkably, the Romans piped their water to London from Wales via aqueducts, (no planning permission needed or water-wasting leaky brickwork) so that they could continue

their ritual bathing. Although leakage has been reduced across the country it still represents *a quarter of the water supply*. Some local authorities' plans for a summer without hanging baskets in towns and cities appear disproportionate, especially when compared with water- guzzling golf courses which have not been targeted.

Changes to rainfall are more difficult to establish, there's more variability, says *Met Office climate change specialist Peter Stott*. "As climate change continues some areas will get wetter and others drier, but the net affect will be one of drying, and all seasons are likely to be stormier." Better stake those dahlias now. He goes on to add that old rainfall statistics show that *we have a history of drought* and it is important to establish the range of 'normal', showing us how dry things *can* get, before factoring in any man-driven change to the climate.

So should we, in Suffolk, be building more reservoirs to maintain the status quo? Doing so could alleviate water extraction from rivers. Lower flows in rivers, especially during the hottest part of the year, can be disastrous. Without sufficient water fish find it hard to get to spawning areas, while in low-flow rivers the oxygen levels can drop so much that fish die, harmful algae can thrive and plants that grow in and around rivers and lakes struggle.

If you are a reader of *Suffolk View* then almost certainly you do not leave the tap running while you brush your teeth. Interestingly enough, figures from the *Environment Agency* show that leaving the tap off during this exercise saves around five litres a minute. If every adult in England and Wales developed this simple habit a total of 180,000 litres a day would be saved – *enough to supply nearly 500,000 houses* –

coincidentally similar to the number of new homes proposed for part of the South-East: the area known, in planning language, as the 'East of England'!

A Bill introduced in the *House of Commons* in May by the former environment secretary John Gummer would require all new housing developments to consider the impact on water supplies before going ahead. The Conservatives believe the south-east has *not* got the water capacity to cope with government plans to build the new homes' target figures. Their vision would require all new property to be built with dual plumbing systems, which use recycled water for flushing and gardening. The water would be harvested from rain water and 'grey water' – from baths, showers and washbasins. In this respect they are seeking to assuage parts of the building industry by suggesting that planning permission to alter buildings built after 1945 be scrapped!

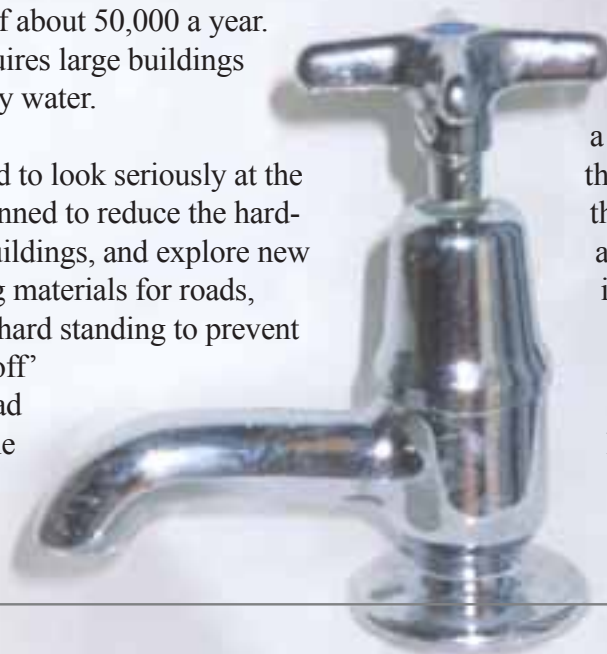
According to the *Environment Agency*, using rain water for garden watering, flushing and washing machines "can save up to 50 per cent of household water use." The use of 'grey water' could save 18,000 litres per person a year, or a third of daily household water use. In Germany, the Environment Agency says, rain water collection tanks are being installed at a rate of about 50,000 a year. Tokyo already requires large buildings to use recycled grey water.

There is also a need to look seriously at the way housing is planned to reduce the hard-standing around buildings, and explore new permeable building materials for roads, pavements and all hard standing to prevent severe 'water run-off' which would instead be absorbed into the ground aquifers,

and help prevent changes to sub-strata soil. It also goes without saying that we need to stop building on floodplains, estuaries and coastal margins.

*The House of Lords Science & Technology Committee*, reporting in June, stated that government and the Water Regulator must dramatically raise their game if they are to head off increasingly serious shortages, particularly in the south of England. Meanwhile, the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has come in for criticism for announcing plans to build a *further* one million homes in the south-east without having held any detailed consultation with OFWAT or environmental experts on the possible implications for an area where water supplies are already under strain. Lord Selborne, the Committee Chairman, said there was "*quite a muddle* in what was then the ODPM and the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs *on the projections as to what the increased water demand would be*". The report concludes that there is an urgent need to recognise the seriousness of the long-term problem of ensuring adequate water supplies, and that it is imperative that we pay much more attention to water conservation, metering, new sources of supply and securing serious financial investment and commitment.

This begs the question as to whether there has been 'quite a muddle' in the thinking behind the long term housing statistics for the south east. The sustainable approach to building more homes in Suffolk should be to meet *natural growth*. One third of all housing built over the next 20 years *will not be!* Oh and just look, its raining again!



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## Nuclear News

**SPS Chairman,  
Dr. Mike Coleman, writes**

*As promised in the last Edition of Suffolk View we will be including a few short articles on nuclear energy, nothing technical but, I hope, the issues simply explained. To start I will write generally about the present situation and what could happen, and how it may affect Suffolk.*

### **What is nuclear energy's position?**

Nuclear energy currently supplies just over 20% of the UK electricity demand. Prior to privatisation nuclear was part of a balanced portfolio of energy which included coal, oil and hydro electricity. On privatisation coal was virtually abandoned as the dash for gas took over. Gas is cleaner environmentally than coal but it is far from clean. We all use gas more efficiently at home than it can ever be used in a power station where its efficiency is governed by the thermodynamics of the turbine.

The nuclear component today is made up of three parts: the original relatively inefficient Magnox plants which are being phased out (Sizewell A and Dungeness A close this year, and the last two stations will close by 2010); the bulk of nuclear generation now comes from the high-efficiency AGRs which have a life expectancy of between 10 and 12 years; and finally the sole PWR at Sizewell B which could operate up to 2035 subject to satisfactory relicensing.

### **Is there a drive to build replacement plants?**

Energy demand is continuing to increase and the 2003 Energy Review pushing 'renewables' is now widely seen to have been a missed opportunity. The grid supply

system relies on large scale generators such as the nuclear plants for its stability. As these close down there is an increasing risk of power cuts arising from the resultant instability as well as from simple lack of supply. The government has belatedly wised up to this Achilles' heel, hence the willingness to consider building replacement nuclear plants which would be cleaner than gas and not reliant on significant import for their fuel. The snag is that we no longer have a large utility such as the Central Electricity Generating Board which had the cash flow to build its power stations out of revenue. No British utility could do that now as none have sufficient financial clout. It will be nigh on impossible to borrow the sums required for construction (about £2bn) from financial markets because the payback period is too long (unless the economics change dramatically due to the increasing rarity of fossil fuel).

### **So who will build them?**

Earlier this year British Nuclear Fuel Limited sold its major nuclear construction business, Westinghouse, in its run-up to privatisation so we do not have an in-house plant designer either. So who will build and operate any new nuclear plant? My guess is the French state-owned utility EDF (which will probably use French contractors), or perhaps the Japanese, who bought Westinghouse. Thus any plant is likely to be foreign-built and owned. Gone are the days when we controlled our own destiny – it's part of the price for privatisation and globalisation in the modern world. It's also worth noting that there is an increasing risk of power cuts whilst the design and build takes place and all other plants are ageing, so if we go nuclear we will have 10 plus years before we see any benefit. Hence, my earlier comments about the 2003 Energy Review.



### Will Sizewell see more activity?

What does this mean for Suffolk? Well, it is widely thought that new plant will be located at existing

sites, hence Sizewell is

likely to see some activity if anything happens at all. In the unlikely event that the current \*Energy Review does not support nuclear energy we will presumably go for the clean coal option, but as we no longer have the mining industry to extract the coal in Britain, this option would not be sustainable without importing huge quantities of coal. It will take thousands of tons of coal a day to keep a single large coal-fired power station going. That means a ship building boom! Realistically such a plant would not be built in Suffolk unless near Felixstowe. Life is not simple and there are hard choices ahead.

*\* Editors note: The Energy Review has supported Nuclear Energy in conjunction with 'renewables' going forward.*

### The Draft Regional Plan (RSS14) Examination in Public Panel Report

With regard to Suffolk the Report, as I suggest in *Snippets*, is helpful, but there are still problems. The overall housing figures for the County are increased from 58,600 to 61,700, but the distribution introduces changes, with the districts/rural areas of Babergh and Suffolk Coastal having lower figures. Almost half of the additional houses, 30,000 dwellings, are to be built in the Ipswich and St. Edmundsbury Districts with presumably most being located in Bury

St. Edmunds. Can the road system of both towns cope – they are already struggling and Ipswich Borough Council has said they want to keep traffic levels in the town at 1999 levels? It is difficult to see, with all the development proposed, how this might be achieved unless it relies on a northern by-pass with all that entails. While the emphasis remains on securing this amount of new build on 'previously developed land' (formerly referred to as brown-field sites) there will still be a need to develop more of the countryside. In practise, Local Development Framework's (LDF's) are not without problems, not least the impact of traffic generation especially in places like Bury and Ipswich where it is almost impossible, or most undesirable, to either build extra road capacity or to manage traffic, because of the sheer volume.

The panel have highlighted the need for the Government to commit itself to the necessary infrastructure to support this level of growth. This is very clearly missing at the present time and the government's response to the report will be keenly awaited. However, the infrastructure will bring with it its own issues and problems which we will need to consider carefully - see above.

In respect of the environment the Panel agreed with the need to protect sensitive areas and to identify, through landscape character assessments, non-nationally designated sensitive areas which add to local distinctiveness, and require a variety of controls and 'tools' to influence change. Such controls will be delivered via policies in LDF's and, therefore, the Society will be looking most carefully in the next few years at the LDF's produced by all the Suffolk Planning Authorities.

**The Director**

## Development Corporation

### David versus Goliath

*SPS Suffolk Coastal District  
Chairman, Victor Gordon, writes*

Recently I sat in on a major appeal hearing against a district council's refusal of what, in effect, would have been a holiday village in open countryside. Appellant and council were both represented by learned counsel and specialist advisers; in the end, the appeal spread over eight days. *This article is not concerned with the rights and wrongs of the appellant's case but with the financial implications of the inspector's eventual decision.*

If the inspector were to find for the appellant, the latter will make a great deal of money – and the council could lose money if costs were awarded against it. Should the inspector find for the council, the council will make no money at all, but will still, in all probability, have to bear its own costs. Right or wrong, the cash-strapped local planning authority (LPA) loses out unless costs are awarded against the appellant (historically most unlikely).

In terms of salaries, administration, research and paper/computer-work, a planning department's overheads are necessarily high, and as I understand it, the fees paid by planning permission applicants can never cover more than a small proportion of day-to-day running costs. *Nothing is left over for the cost of appeals: the extra work, the officers' time, the legal advice, counsel's fees.* In these circumstances, there is very considerable

pressure on council planners to grant approval rather than face an appeal.

Nearly all approvals make money for the applicants, even if public benefit conditions are imposed; none make money for the LPA (and rightly so).

For most developers appeal costs are, to put it mildly, far less significant than they are for planning authorities. This uneven playing field is unfair to councils and councillors, and often results in the developer being given the benefit of the doubt. When a council *is* brave enough to refuse a major development, the pressure on it to accept the 'revised' scheme that almost inevitably follows, unless there is an appeal, becomes even greater, *wrongly so.*

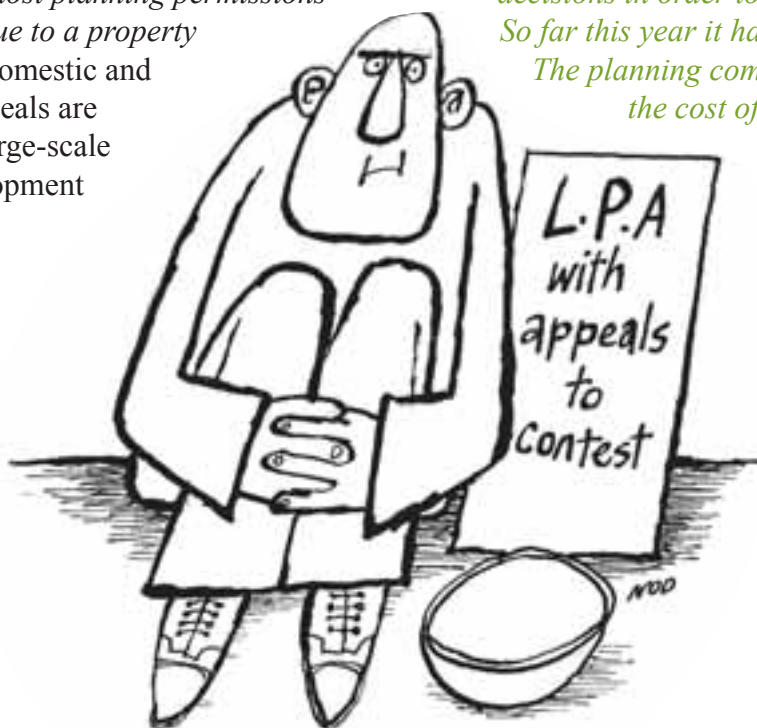
*The right of appeal, however, remains a crucial part of planning law and practice (and should, of course, be extended – as CPRE has repeatedly argued – to third parties who wish to appeal against planning permissions that have been granted). Appeals, however time-consuming, are important in that they test and promote good planning decisions; contrariwise the speeding-up of planning determinations, as enjoined by the former ODPM, must make poor decisions more likely – what is a fortnight saved at the planning stage*



in relation to projects that are going to be enjoyed or regretted for decades, centuries even?

*One way of reforming the present system would seem to be simple. The rule should be that the appellant normally bears the planning authority's costs as well as his own.* This would allow district council planners to consider each case on its merits (within local plan or framework) without looking over their shoulders at the finance department. It should also deter further unjustified applications or appeals. The inspector (or appeal court) would retain the power to award costs against the council if it was decided that the original refusal had been mischievous, contrary to plan, or illegal.

Now it may be argued that this reform, while appropriate for Goliath Development Corporation, would be unfair on Mr. & Mrs. Bloggs who only want to build a retirement bungalow in their garden, or on Farmer Bloggs who wishes to convert 'redundant' farm buildings to residential use. *Yet the principle that most planning permissions add instant value to a property still applies.* Domestic and small-scale appeals are cheaper than large-scale property development litigation, and if the Bloggs' application for a council-



*granted licence to 'grow' money in garden or farmyard costs them a little extra, they will still, if successful, be richer (or less poor) than they would be were permission refused.*

**Editor's note:** *The East Anglian Daily Times reported in June that a legal bill of £150,000 had been footed by West Suffolk taxpayers to fight controversial development plans. Each year between 20 and 30 disgruntled developers take on Forest Heath District Council over the decisions made by its planning committee. The Council has now counted up the cost of its battles against developers and, in some cases, the costs of bringing in lawyers and external consultants amounted to £20,000. In total, the Council had spent £148,829 contesting appeals against its decisions in the past five years – and there were still 21 planning appeals in the system that had not yet been dealt with.*

*When the Council turned a planning application down there was an automatic right of appeal. The Council needed to win 60% of all planning appeals made against its decisions in order to meet stringent targets. So far this year it had won 75% of appeals.*

*The planning committee were aware of the cost of defending decisions but because developers employ expensive barristers to argue their case the Council felt obliged to do the same.*

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## New Cinema – Parkway, Bury St. Edmunds

### - a Critique

#### *Two Architectural and Planning Professionals write*

#### **Introduction and Background**

Bury finally has its new cinema on Parkway. It is a building that we can all now see and judge. Is it a success? Undoubtedly we all have our own opinions on its appearance but planning and architecture are about more than mere opinions. Both can be articulated and analysed and this article aims to do just that. The Society described the new cinema at the planning application stage in its letter to the Borough Council –

*“as like unto a poor quality US shopping mall”.*

#### **The Planning and Architectural Policy Context**

This is primarily set out in the Council’s Local Plan adopted in 1998. With regard to new buildings and design, Policy D1 states –

*“The Borough Council will seek high quality development in accordance with the location and context of the proposal.*

*Encouragement will be given to –*

*(a) modern architecture which is sympathetic to the townscape or landscape setting: or*

*(b) designed to reflect the Local Suffolk Vernacular.*

*Proposals which represent poor design and layout and are out of scale and character with their surroundings will not be permitted.”*

Government has, through a number of Planning Policy Statements and ministerial statements, expressed concern about modern design and architecture. It has sought to ensure that the planning system delivers good design and to facilitate this it has established The Commission for Architecture in the Built Environment (CABE), which is available to offer expert advice to Local Planning Authorities on proposals where design is important.



## The SPS Perspective on the Proposed Cinema

The Society did not object to the principle of a new cinema, or indeed a building on the site in Parkway. It wanted to ensure that the cinema was of the highest architectural standard and was of a form and scale appropriate for the site. It suggested that this would best be achieved with a bold contemporary design and this appeared consistent with the Council's stated objectives in Planning Policy D1.



*The cinema's siting at the road junction – 'a bright, vibrant and active frontage'?*

Details of the design first came to the Society's attention when they were reported and reproduced in the East Anglian Daily Times in October, 2003. The Society immediately wrote to the Council and expressed its concerns about the design and made the positive suggestion that the development of the site warranted an *architectural design competition* and that CABA's advice should be sought.

## The Borough Council's Perspective

The Borough Council was involved with this development both as owner of the land to which the project relates, and as the local planning authority responsible for

determining the submitted application. At its Development Control Committee Meeting on 4th December, 2004, the Officer's Report stated in relation to the planned design:

*"... the aim has been to achieve a bright, vibrant and active frontage that would integrate better with the town centre."*

*"The site is outside the Conservation Area and the architect should not be deterred from proposing a design in a non-traditional idiom and of a scale that would be compatible with the adjacent multi-storey car park and the B & Q Building."*

Such statements do not make it clear as to whether the proposal complies with or is contrary to Policy D1, nor does it give a detailed rationale for the design approach other than it "fits in". Because this is an edge of town development and outside the conservation area the Report gives an impression that this is not a highly regarded site requiring good, thoughtful architectural design.

In response to the Society's request that an *architectural design competition* should be pursued, and that the advice of CABA be sought, the St. Edmundsbury Borough Council stated in November 2003:

*"CABA is not a statutory consultee in the planning process. While the organisation is charged with helping to achieve improvements to the design of the built environment, it has a finite capacity and is not able to comment on all applications. For this reason, I understand that it wishes to be consulted about selected projects that are significant in some way." ...*

*"Furthermore, the location of the site adjacent to a multi-storey car park is unlikely to establish the form or architectural quality for the development of adjacent land." ...*

*“The local planning authority has been discussing the design of the building with the applicant in order to secure improvements especially to the front elevation. Design concerns were identified at an early stage and the architect has sought to respond positively to the criticisms that have been made.”*

## **An Architectural Appraisal**

*Let’s just ask a few questions.*



*1. Does the huge Cineworld display board suggest we are all visually impaired?*



*2. Parasols invite us to eat outdoors – in a cloud of car fumes? Chairs and tables grouped around a central square might have been preferable to this road side location: what about some planting in the central reservation?*



*3. The clutter of different barriers at the road edge make pedestrians feel second-class – there must be a better way of taming traffic, or if not, why encourage people to sit in such a hazardous and unattractive spot!*



*4. The entrance to the cinema is through a long tunnel, which falls from the road level – is this disability access gone mad? Surely a good building should stand above the ground to give a sense of arrival and not of entering a black hole in the ground?*



*5. The corner unit steps back to provide a little extra visibility at the exit from the car park – but the fence obscures car drivers’ sight lines. Also a canopy runs over the whole frontage – is this trying to tie the fragmented façade together? It certainly will not keep out the rain.*

And now for the real fun – go inside the cinema and you are faced with a low quality void with no sense of composition and with a bar crammed into one corner. There is no focus to the space – are your spirits lifted by the building?

### A Planning Appraisal and Analysis

Like Lavenham, Bury St. Edmunds has a national status for its built environment. Great care needs to be taken on all sites when determining new development proposals. It is important that the highest possible standards are achieved and that we avoid double standards. The Council's comments suggest that the site is not an important one and is unlikely to establish guidance or a precedent for the standard of future development in the area.

The Borough Council has always sought to achieve good modern architecture in the town to complement that which it has inherited. Planning Policy D1 is clear in the guidance it gives and establishes a benchmark against which planning proposals have to be judged. It takes out of the planning system aesthetic judgements on design grounds by establishing a criteria-led approach.

The Parkway area of the town has changed, and this process will continue. The form and appearance of future change are dependent on decisions on individual planning applications and their collective impact. The cinema design appears to have been more influenced by existing architecture in the area than by any new desire to maximise the site's potential or to set a higher standard. Furthermore, the Council's desire to secure the additional cinema, as soon as possible, regardless of design, was a material consideration when the application was determined by its Members. Comments were made at the Meeting that the town had waited long enough for the new cinema.

### Conclusions

The Council's own planning policy could have secured an outstanding design for this site. It could have sought independent expert assistance and advice on the design, but declined to do so. The Society did not receive a response to its suggestion that a design competition should be used to obtain an exemplar building.

Now the new cinema is built *the opportunity to achieve a truly outstanding example of architecture has been lost*. The current building will be seen by other developers as an example of the standard the Council is happy to accept and approve. The issue is not only about the design of the cinema, but also about the approach the Council adopted both here and elsewhere in the area. Their next major test is likely to be the *re-development of the Cattle Market*. Again, the Society has agreed with the principle but expressed concerns about the design approach. Also, the use of a single architectural practice to design such a vast area of the town in one go could lead to a uniform appearance, lacking those *subtle* but essential changes of style that give the impression that the buildings have developed incrementally over time.



*So what do you think of Bury's new architectural creation?*

Outstanding architecture should be the norm, not the exception. We have a long way to go if this is to be achieved, and in the meantime the public has to make do with these bland and awful buildings.

# The Exemplar Affordable Housing Project – Elmswell

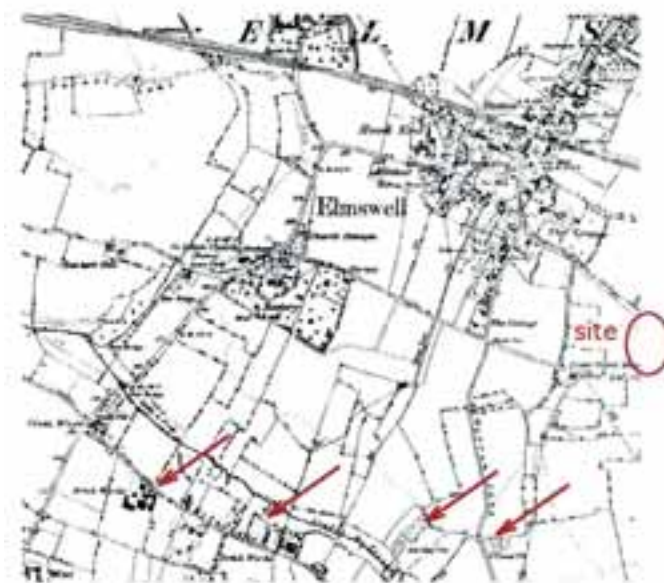
## Part 2

*In this second part of the article we hand over to Riches Hawley Mikhail, the competition winners, to take us through the thinking behind their project to show what inspired them to produce the winning design.*

**Cathy Hawley, Riches Hawley Mikhail, writes**

### Introduction

Following the competition process the project for new, affordable and sustainable housing in Elmswell is now well underway and a planning application has been made. The development will provide 13 two-bedroom and 9 three-bedroom houses and 4 1-bedroom flats for local people. Half of the site is retained for public use but re-landscaped, whilst the rest is developed with a mixture of new housing, public spaces and gardens. This exciting project, currently short-listed for an ‘RIBA Sustainability by Design’ Award, is due for completion at the end of 2007.



*Elmswell – the historical map used for research*

### Historical Background

We started the project with some historical research. The old clay pits and brick kiln sites around Elmswell gave us a first clue to early construction techniques around the village and to the suitability of local building materials. We want to build new houses that are genuinely connected to the landscape and architecture around them. Local clays, earth and chalk will be used to build the main walls using material directly from the site.

A new manufacturing technique will allow us to make unfired earth building blocks which will be insulated and have an external finish of traditional lime render. Unlike bricks these blocks require no fuel for firing and therefore have very little embodied CO<sub>2</sub>. Because of their weight they absorb heat, keeping the houses cool in summer and warm in the winter.



*Elmswell – the site for the new affordable home*



*Block-making machine showing earth building blocks*

### Suffolk Legacy of Materials

English rural vernacular tends towards a simplicity that expresses its direct relationship to the qualities of the materials it employs. This legacy of simplicity, which allows a clear relationship to be made between cost and construction, form and materiality, is something this project aspires to continue. We are aiming to source all the materials locally. The roofs and sloping walls are to be covered in wooden shingles, whilst elevations to the gardens will be timber slats or weather boarding; various timbers (larch, sweet chestnut, cedar and oak) may be used – we are looking at local, sustainable suppliers.



*Side elevations with allotment garden*

Nowhere in the houses will concrete or steel be used thus minimising their carbon footprint. Natural materials, highly insulated, make for healthy environments with low bills. In addition we will be using new sustainable technologies - solar collectors sit on roofs and the heating and hot water is provided by a biomass or wood chip boiler. This uses fuel that, again, is locally sourced and is in keeping with Suffolk's move towards using this type of sustainable energy production.

### Situation and Form

The arrangement of houses is non-hierarchical, with distinctive groupings of buildings. The form of each block has been designed to minimise overshadowing and maximise use of the sun's free energy. Sloping elevations, with 'roof' type construction, minimise the visual impact of the new buildings. All the houses are orientated north-south and have dense ground floor surfaces to allow for solar heat absorption and radiation. Interiors will be sunlit and relate directly to gardens and shared spaces.



*The arrangement of the houses is non-hierarchical*

Each house has its own private garden whilst low maintenance communal gardens give spaces to cultivate, but also to relax and socialise in, and allow access for the wider community. These include a wildflower meadow, an orchard of Suffolk apples (with play equipment for small children under the trees) and allotments.



*Diagram showing shadowing and maximising the use of the sun's free energy.*

Cars can enter the site but not drive through it and parking is provided under trees near each group of houses. By designing-in natural surveillance windows and balconies which overlook every space, the possibility

of misbehaviour is minimised. Curved walls define the extent of the private gardens and give a sense of privacy and enclosure.



*Side elevation and flower meadow*

## Landscaping

The landscape design avoids the municipal and looks for its own rural vernacular. Across the site a series of 'swales', dips and hollows, provide natural drainage, organise planting, movement and play, and recall ancient field patterns formed through cultivation. Paths are raised as piers through the landscape, slowing traffic and prioritising the pedestrian over the vehicle. These corrugations adapt to different conditions preserving and

encouraging localised habitats. The whole project aspires to a low maintenance, sustainable, durable and gentle ecology.

It has been presented to the parish and to the Elmswell community and we hope to work closely with prospective tenants to make it a successful enjoyable place to live.

### Project Team:

Architects

*Riches Hawley Mikhail Architects*

Landscape Architect

*J & L Gibbons LLP*

Structural Engineer

*BTA Structural Design Ltd*

Services Engineer

*Buro Happold*

Contractor

*O. Seman & Son Ltd.*

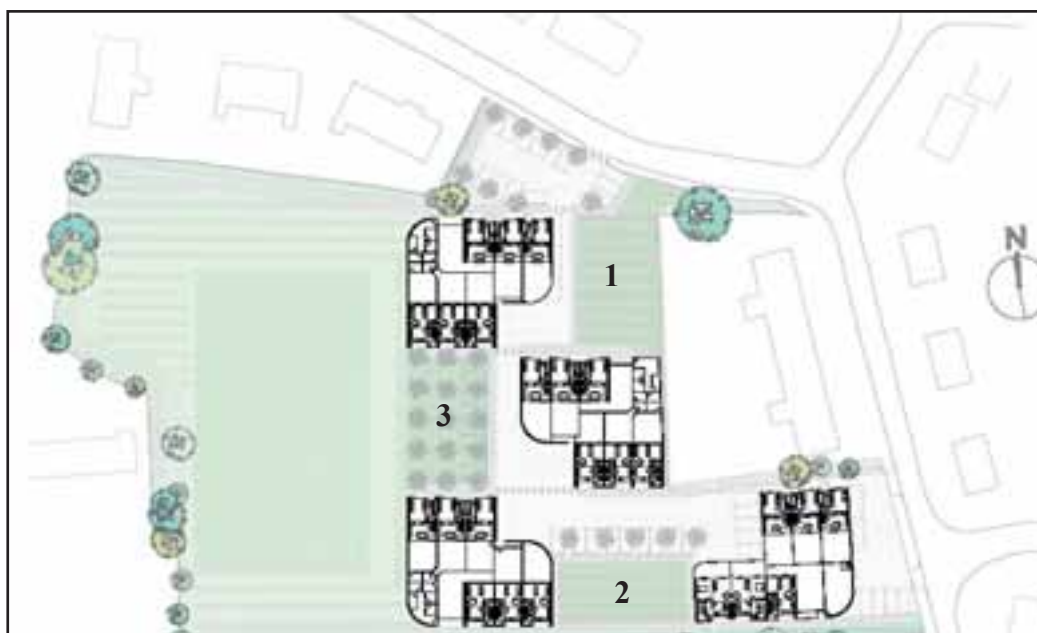
### Client:

*Suffolk Preservation Society*

*Elmswell Parish Council*

*Orwell Housing Association*

*Editor's note: This planning application was approved by Mid Suffolk District Council on 2nd August, 2006.*



*Plan of the site showing curved enclosure walls to private gardens, and the relationship of the 'three gardens' – allotment, wild flower meadow and orchard.*

## Suffolk Building Preservation Trust

### *SBPT Chairman, Sue Tamlyn, writes*

Those of you who have visited Pakenham Water Mill this year will have been impressed by the clear, deep water in the pond following the massive de-silting operation (moorhens abound), by its sparkling exterior recently lime washed, and by the shingled car park!



*The newly lime washed exterior of Pakenham Water Mill*

Once again volunteers have worked indefatigably, not only continuing to improve the Miller's House both inside and out but also holding a succession of themed activities, the last at the beginning of July on stationary engines and vintage agricultural machinery.

In May, Mrs. Sue Bain, the widow of our twice-over generous benefactor who died in January, unveiled a plaque in the Mill in his memory.

*Sue Bain pictured after the unveiling with Chairman of the Trust Sue Tamlyn.*



Fundraising continues apace with our priority now to reinstate the first floor of the Miller's House as residential accommodation for letting.

An invitation to visit Highgrove's Garden followed the visit to Little Hall last summer by Their Royal Highnesses Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall. Two dozen volunteer gardeners, guides and curators spent a most enjoyable day there in May.



*The happy group who visited Highgrove's Garden.*

The Little Hall Museum and garden in Lavenham continue to attract large numbers of visitors. Volunteers are always pleased to welcome SPS members, the admission fee for whom there and at the Mill is waived!



*The Solar (or bedroom) at Little Hall.*

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## Planning 'Round-up' – the Society's Director writes

*These are a diverse range of applications and give a flavour of the Society's work in respect of planning across the County.*

### Abattoir, Yaxley near Eye

A rather unusual application these days! Following a refusal on another site for the same proposal, the applicant sought permission to build on a green-field site north of the B1117 in a landscape of particular quality. The main building would be 11.8 meters high. The Society objected on the basis that it represented development in the open countryside and that it was contrary to the Government's aim "to protect the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty". If permission had to be given for the proposal, preference should have been given to the previous application site on an industrial estate.

### Golf Course, Onehouse

The nine-hole course would be visually dominant in an area of open countryside. The Council had made provision for a golf course on another site in its Local Plan which had not been developed and which would have had less of an impact on the countryside. The Society stated the proposal was contrary to the Council's own Local Plan which states "The landscape quality and character of the countryside will be protected for its own sake. Proposals for development in the countryside should be sited and designed to have minimal adverse effect on the appearance of the landscape..." and therefore should be refused. It was, in fact, approved!

### 20 Gun Position Range, Stowlangtoft

This is another unusual application. It was unclear, and still is, if the principle of using the quarry for the firing of guns has approval. The application represented a major intensification of use, but the main area of concern was the hours of operation and the impact associated with those hours. For example, firing as proposed

in the winter could continue to 5.00 pm and by implication would require lighting to function and be safe. Starting at 10.00 am and with 20 positions in the range, residents faced a constant noise issue. The Society asked the Council to commission an independent report on the impact noise factor. Access to the site was poor. The Society concluded that this use was not compatible with protecting the countryside quality and character for its own sake and asked for the application to be refused.

### Westbury Avenue, Bury St. Edmunds

The proposal involved the demolition of Number 3 Westbury Road to enable access to the land at the rear, to erect 14 semi-detached houses. The Society's main concerns related to the apparent lack of regard or attention being paid to the existing trees and vegetation on the site. Some of the trees were already the subject of Tree Preservation Orders, (TPO's). There was no indication of how the applicants would deal with the existence of important trees, and their existence was not reflected in the design layout of the site. The Society was also concerned about the long-term impact of the development on the future of the trees and requested a comprehensive Tree Report, to include an assessment of the impact and requirements of individual residents, who often apply to have the trees overhanging their property cut back or, regrettably, felled. The Society is waiting to be consulted on the specialist tree report.

### Adnams Site, Southwold

This application, just received, related to the redevelopment of the Adnams Distribution Centre in Victoria Street. It is a major proposal with a café, new public square and 34 dwellings and will impact quite significantly on the town. National architects have been employed. The Town Council have already recommended that the scheme is not good enough. The Society has written and emphasised the need for the local

community to be engaged in the design process and not merely consulted, and for the proposal to be of the very highest quality – an exemplar one as the town deserves nothing less. It has set out the characteristics of Southwold against which the proposal should be judged. It concluded that while the proposal exhibits many positive elements such as a public square and excellent mix of house types, a number of major elements require further attention: the very high density; possible overlooking problems; lack of strategy to address car ownership and parking on the site; the ‘massing’ of the flats in the middle of the site; problems with the window fenestrations. The Society recommended that more work was required on the design and layout of the site, and if the application had to be determined at this point, it should be refused.

### Wingfield Castle - Barn and Outbuildings

Wingfield Castle and its environs represent one of the most majestic examples of heritage buildings in the entire County of Suffolk, if not East Anglia. It is a site many of you might well know. The proposal involved the conversion of barns and outbuildings, listed separately and acknowledged as forming an important group of buildings with the castle, into residential use. They are in separate ownership to the castle. Unfortunately the fabric of the buildings has deteriorated and in some areas the damage is quite significant and serious.

The applicants claimed that residential use was now the only viable option. The Society pointed out that no marketing of the buildings appears to have taken place and, therefore, the viability argument was not tested. It referred to government policy and guidance for such circumstances, set out in PPG15, which states “..the aim should be to identify the optimum viable use that is compatible with the fabric, interior, and setting of the historic building. This may not necessarily be the most profitable use...” It also made reference to the impact on the setting of the area that would follow from a residential conversion, because of all the damaging paraphernalia associated with a planning change of this kind such as - access roads with wide

visibility splays and kerbing; parking areas; garden areas often landscaped; ponds; fences to demark ownership; garages (often two) with parked cars and sometimes a caravan; sheds and washing lines; places to hide the fuel tank and wheelie bins (in the latter case two or three!); and aerials and satellite dishes.

This is in addition to the alterations to the barn to physically accommodate the changes of use, such as additional window openings (along with the problems of meeting the insulation standards of Part L of the Building Regulations), doors, internal walls, heating vents, chimneys, gutters, down pipes etc. The Society concluded that the conversion was likely to destroy the thing it was trying to preserve - the character of the buildings and their setting. It also concluded that the impact on the castle would be adverse.

### Pier Pavilion, Southwold

The new Pier was awarded the Alfred Williams Prize in 2004 (*see page 16 of the Summer Newsletter No: 97*). The application which relates to the Pavilion is to extend the café and convert the upper floor to 12 holiday apartments by raising the height by 1½ storeys. Following receipt of further information and details, the Society objected to the proposal on the basis the building’s character would be lost.

*Editor’s note: Awards were presented to last year’s winners of the Alfred Williams Prize 2005 at a special gathering at Little Hall on Monday, 15th May. The Award centred on 21st Century Architecture of Excellence, as reported in Suffolk View, Summer 2005, Issue 100. Joint first prizes of £2,000 each were presented by the Society’s Chairman, Dr. Mike Coleman, to Terry Foster for ‘Marshfields’ at Snape, and Brooks Stacy Randall for Ballingdon Bridge, Sudbury.*

*Society’s Chairman, Dr. Mike Coleman, presenting an Award to Brooks Stacy Randall for Ballingdon Bridge, Sudbury.*



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## CPRE in focus

### The Real Choice - how local foods can survive the supermarket onslaught

This excellent report by Caroline Cranbrook and the CPRE is based on surveys by Lady Cranbrook over eight years monitoring a broad area of towns and villages in East Suffolk. It reveals that local foods are flourishing and growing since a planned Tesco Superstore was turned down. East Suffolk's experience of a thriving local food network should inspire action across the country. For a copy of the Report please telephone 020 7981 2800 or email [info@cpre.org.uk](mailto:info@cpre.org.uk)



*Editor's note: see 'Letters' on page 30  
See also [www.friendsoftheearth.org.uk](http://www.friendsoftheearth.org.uk)  
'Shop Local First'.*

CPRE East of England are running a one day workshop for Parish and Town Councils and Local Amenity Societies on Thursday, 5th October, 2006 at Hinchingbrooke Country Park, Huntingdon. Its subject "**Local Development Frameworks – getting the best for your community**" will enable participants to engage better in their formulation, and to influence the content for the benefit of their local communities. Because of demand, a second workshop has been arranged for 17th October at the Free Church, St. Ives. Details from; 01480 396697.

## Town & Parish Council Comment

Is your local authority charging too much for planning information? A council charging 50 pence a sheet for photocopies and £6.50 for each copy of a 'decision notice' has been found 'unreasonable' by a Tribunal

under the 2004 Environmental Information Regulations. *What does yours charge?*

## New Members of the Society

*(From 1st April – 31st July, 2006)*

*(CPRE)*

Mrs. A.J. Ferrari, Ipswich  
Mrs. J.A. Mann, Creeting St. Mary  
Mr. I. Hazelwood, Newmarket  
Mrs. J.C. Adams, Ipswich  
Mrs. G. Delaney, Kentford  
Mr. R. Mayes, Washbrook  
Miss S. Jenkins, Mr. C. Johnson, Bedfield  
Mr. & Mrs. L.H. Weeks, Gt. Whelnetham  
Mrs. L.A. Doe

*(SPS Friends)*

Mr. A.P. Cook, Beccles  
Mr. S. Dorling, New Barnet, London  
Mr. & Mrs. M.E. Davies, Bungay  
Mrs. J.S. Sibley, Mildenhall  
Mr. & Mrs. K. Sears  
Mr. & Mrs. S. & J. Rodda  
Mr. D. Burnett

## Replies to Questionnaire

In May we sent some 1,250 letters to members asking for confirmation of your details for payment of membership fees, seeking your views on our newspaper publicity, etc. and your comments on events, and requesting volunteers to help with events. I am very grateful to the 361 members who have replied and for the useful suggestions they have made on events, and particularly to those who have offered to help.

**Reminder:** *to those who have not yet replied can you please now complete the form which we sent to you so that we can at least bring our records up to date. Hopefully, you will make further suggestions for events.*

**Thank you.**

**John Paton, Membership Secretary**

## News from the Districts

### SPS Waveney District Report

*District Chairman, Mike Coleman, writes*

The last few months have been relatively quiet, planning wise, so apart from the Adnams Brewery Site Application, Southwold, (*see Planning Round-up*) this is an opportunity to tell you about the small part of the Society's income that comes from its ownership of two 'goings' (common land) given by Kathleen Bowerbank, at Outney Common. There are 100 'goings' in total and the owners every year carry out an inspection to ensure that the reeves are doing their job maintaining our asset. We sit on straw bales on a farm cart pulled by a tractor for this inspection. There are many facets to the common. Part is let as a golf course, and this is the major source of income, and part is let to farmers for cattle. There is an ongoing programme of land management and you will never begin to know the vagaries of when is a tree not a tree! It's all to do with girth and if it's not a tree you can do what you like with it. Advantage has been taken of this distinction to return much of the common to better grazing after removal of undergrowth. *Natural England* is helping considerably in this respect. Of course, one other issue is the 'right to roam' and this has caused a few problems, but we seem to have eventually overcome them. I am pleased to report that the inspection this year has not revealed any problems and our asset is doing well and looking better than ever.

A visit to Sizewell A has been organised for 21st September, *see Diary Date on page 31*. If you would like to attend please contact me **before the 31 August**. There will be no charge but we would appreciate donations. Places are limited to 20 so please recognise it will be first come, first served.

The Annual Meeting of the Waveney District will be held on Thursday, 7th September at 7.30 in Beccles Town Hall and all Waveney District members and friends are warmly welcome to attend, but please advise me by Monday, 4th September, if you intend to come.

*The District Chairman can be contacted at The Grange, Nightingale Road, Lowestoft, NR33 7AX, telephone number 01502 518708, mobile number 07747 623276, email address [mikecoleman@supanet.com](mailto:mikecoleman@supanet.com)*

### SPS Suffolk Coastal District Report

*District Chairman, Victor Gordon, writes*

Our planning sub-committee continues to meet fortnightly, considering an average application rate of about 50 per week. It is assisted by enthusiastic planning monitors to whom we are most grateful.

Proposed development at the important Felixstowe South Sea Front area, which has a listed Martello Tower as its focus, continues to cause concern. The SPS planning policy committee visited the site on 12th June, together with the Landscape Partnership (LP) whom the Society has commissioned to analyse the Bloor Homes Scheme, and suggest improvements or alternatives. We are presenting the LP views and indicative drawings to Suffolk Coastal District Council. We are also considering the possibility and advisability of putting in *our own* outline planning application for the area. This might put the councillors on

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something of a spot - or, indeed, even set a cat among the sea gulls?

There is no new news on the Notcutts front in Woodbridge. The SPS Director and I, together with representatives of the Woodbridge Society and the Town Centre Management Group, found a good deal of mutual agreement at a meeting we had with Bob Chamberlain and Martin Price, the planning officers chiefly concerned. It seems probable that the current McCarthy & Stone proposals will be deemed unacceptable.

Finally the good news: after a long drawn-out inquiry at Waldringfield, the appeals against Suffolk Coastal District Council's refusal of planning permission for an enormous 'log cabin' holiday development at Brightwell have both been refused by the Inspector. SPS played an active part in the campaign to save Waldringfield and district from this development, but congratulations are due to the District Council for having the guts to make a stand on the issue and having the wit to employ a really first-rate Counsel.

***The District Chairman can be contacted at 10 St. John's Street, Woodbridge, IP12 1E, telephone number 01394 387881, email address [gordon.gordon@btopenworld.com](mailto:gordon.gordon@btopenworld.com)***

## **SPS Forest Heath District Report**

***District Chairman, John Howell, writes***

### **Planning Matters**

The East of England Plan Panel Report, Chapter 5 - Sub-Regions/Locations, released on 23rd June is **Good News** for Forest Heath. The work of our committee and the vigorous submissions made by Richard Ward and the Local Villages Protection Trust to the Examination in Public at Ely appear to have been effective. It states -

*“Section 2. 5.167*

*In Forest Heath the draft Plan provision of 6,400 dwellings or 320 per annum is above the existing Structure Plan rate of 260 and much further above the rates achieved in recent years since 1996, although this is expected to change with completion of major development at Red Lodge.*

*There were development sector arguments for increasing the provision to provide for more growth, notably the proposal for the Watermark development, for a new settlement of some 4,500-5,000 homes in combination with a major leisure facility. While we recognise Forest Heath District Council's aspiration to secure a regional scale leisure facility in the district, we consider the new settlement proposal poorly related to the sustainable development principles of the strategy both in terms of location and in other ways such as its potential impact on the water environment and reliance on car-borne commuting.”*

However, the continuing growth of the originally acceptable Forest Heath District plans for Red Lodge is causing concern and a close watch is being maintained on this development.

The latest threat to the landscape of West Suffolk and East Cambridgeshire, the plan for a proposed wind farm based on Wadlow Farm, West Wrating, has now been submitted and a local poll of the residents of the surrounding villages has revealed a surprising overall acceptance of this plan. This application is for thirteen 2.3 Mw turbines placed on the 70 to 100m. contour lines on the north facing slopes of the East Anglian Heights with an overall blade height

of 120 metres. However, this application has yet to be considered by the Officers and Members of the Parish and District Councils.

The latest piece of 'breaking news' is the submission to Lord Coe by a private consortium backed by the Forest Heath and East Cambridgeshire District Councils of a multi-million pound project that would put Newmarket at the heart of the 2012 Olympics. The *plan, centred on a 100 acre green field site* on the Duke of Sutherland's Estate just off the Stetchworth Toll Roundabout, part of which has already been granted planning permission for an equine hospital, is for a *training and receiving centre* for all equestrian competitors. This will provide stabling for around 150 horses, accommodation for grooms and support teams and specialist training areas for dressage, show jumping and three day events which will be staged at Greenwich Park in London, about an hour's travel down the M11.

The legacy of this development would be the formation of a National Equine Institute that would bring together the worlds of horseracing and equestrianism similar to that of the world famous Kentucky Horse Park in the United States.

### **Committee Work**

The attendance by Jill Buckingham as a co-opted member of the newly formed Futures Group meetings at Little Hall has prompted some 'lateral thinking' about our role as a District Committee. This is to be discussed at our next meeting and will focus on our quest for a more effective form of 'planning watch' and the selection and organisation of events. Finally, it is pleasing to report a modest increase in our District Membership.

*The District Chairman can be contacted at 29 The Avenue, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 9AY,*

*telephone number 01638 662582,  
email address: john@  
howelnewmarket.fsbusiness.co.uk*

## **SPS Mid Suffolk District Report**

*District Chairman, Douglas Evans, writes*

What do villagers do when they learn that a huge abattoir is about to descend on their rural neighborhood? Or when others hear that a nearby gravel pit is to be converted into a police rifle range, thus shattering the tranquillity of their landscape for miles around? Or where cottage residents learn that their neighbouring golf course is considering a new golf driving range for the public involving endless car noise and lighting pollution?

These are typical of the planning proposals recently drawn to our attention. We firmly opposed the second and third, whilst the first posed greater difficulty. The downside of meat-eating is the necessity for abattoirs – premises nobody wants to know about – and Suffolk does not have large tracts of uninhabited landscape in which to lose them. The proposal stressed the difficulty of siting and went to some lengths to 'bury the building in a wood'. Unfortunately, the sheer scale and length of the building militated against this. We expressed our objection to the principle of the proposal on grounds of Planning Policy but, anticipating that the pro-agricultural lobby might support it we added, unusually, the caveat that if objections are over-ridden a more compact plan should be adopted, together with much higher and graduated 'bundling' and serious afforestation.

The proposal is currently at Outline Planning Permission stage. We recognise its adoption would inevitably involve increased expenditure for the Applicant, but it is our view that if developers/users are going to benefit from resiting in sensitive

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locations, they must expect to compensate the environment in a comprehensive way, *restoring equivalent amenity* for the damage they will potentially create. The outcome is awaited. (*See Planning 'Round-up'.*)

## **SPS St. Edmundsbury District Report**

Dan Pillar, the District's Chairman for many years has now retired from this position and is succeeded by David Rees, a district committee member and former Chairman of the Bury Society. David said "Taking over from Dan will be no easy task." On behalf of the Society **we thank him for all his hard work on behalf of the Society.** David now looks forward to the challenges ahead as he takes up the baton.

### ***District Chairman, David Rees, writes***

In Bury, the Manor House's future continues to dominate the planning scene. The Borough Council remains inflexible in its refusal to allow the Steering Group to take over the running of the museum and its collections. Are financial concerns more important than retaining this important facility and collection? They remain absurdly entrenched in their opinion that the closure of the museum is being done to improve the presentation of the collections, denying any financial motives yet insisting that the steering group is financially in profit from day one. It is indeed worrying that they consider that the will of Frederick Gershom Parkington allows his substantial bequest to be used for almost any purpose rather than specifically for maintaining or adding to his clock collection. The steering committee is trying hard to find a way of keeping both museum and collections intact and easily accessible to the public. When the prosperity of England grows increasingly dependent on tourism and heritage it is a paradox that the Borough Council wants to slaughter a principal layer of the golden eggs the Borough so much needs.

The Cattle Market redevelopment has gone rather quiet recently but the results of the tendering process are due soon and the future of the 'public building' must be in doubt as numerous councillors have refused to consider the possibility of further cost inflation or down grading of its facilities, in particular the elegant but expensive tiered seating that can be rapidly adjusted to give a flat floor. Recent presentations by the architect, Hopkins, suggest that they are taking considerable efforts over the detailing of the whole scheme but there remain some doubts about the long term weathering of the wood and if the "sacrificial staining" proposed will prevent unsightly water marks.

In Haverhill there is opposition to the proposed Tesco Store on the railway station site – members are probably aware of Lady Cranbook's work in East Suffolk showing the widespread benefits to all by preserving and encouraging local shops. A multiplex cinema is also being discussed – hopefully the architecture will be an improvement on the woeful one at Bury. It is rumoured that the developer is not confident of a successful investment and that the Council is planning to invest millions while at the other end of the Borough a fraction of this is being fought over at the Manor House. It is hard to understand their strategy!

***The District Chairman can be contacted at 44 College Street, Bury St. Edmunds, IP33 1NL, telephone number 01284 754618, email address [david.rees@talktalk.net](mailto:david.rees@talktalk.net)***

## Technical Tack

### Original Boundary Ironwork – Re-instatement of traditional techniques and materials

#### Part 2

Wrought iron has not been available since the 1960's, although recycled material can still be obtained. The term 'wrought' has become increasingly used to describe any kind of ornamental work in mild steel when wrought steel would be a more accurate description.

When instructing an architect, engineer or surveyor to draw up plans and specifications for boundary ironwork it is important to first agree what materials are to be used before discussing the design, installation method and paint specification, and note who is to retain the ownership of the pattern if a new one is to be made.

Also ascertain whether formal planning permission is required prior to work starting on the site. Listed Building Consent will be required if your building is Listed, and it is worth contacting your local planning authority as traditional regional repair techniques do vary.

Ironwork should be secured into the boundary wall into pre-cut sockets using hot poured lead which is then tamped down when cool. There are some health and safety issues arising from the use of hot lead, but a reputable contractor will have experience in this area. The stone should be dry and clean for the operation. Using lead is a reversible approach, and it will contract and expand at roughly the same rate as the iron. It also offers a degree of corrosion resistance to the iron. The lead should be finished around the fixing to shed water away from the railing root into the stone.

The main problem with ironwork is surface oxidation – rust. This occurs as a result of exposure to damp and is exacerbated by pollution, particularly sodium chloride or road salt which

causes pitted surfaces and then the splitting of the iron into flakes. Rust occurs where the iron is exposed: the iron oxide then expands and cracks the stone or brick into which it is set. Even where such damage has occurred repaired historic ironwork is preferable to replacement.

Old ironwork should be thoroughly cleaned of rust using appropriate methods, see English Heritage's technical handbook. (Only exposed iron needs attention: sound layers of paint need not be removed.) This thorough preparation for painting is most important and should be followed by a coating of primer undercoat, and two topcoats in hard gloss oil paint. A good painting specification for iron work might include Zinc, the rich primer coat, Micaceous Iron oxide build coat, plus two top coats. Zinc, is not a finishing coat and today is wrongly used as such.

Boundary ironwork did not usually display highly decorative colour schemes: it was often painted a single colour. In fact, 'smalt' was a popular colour in the Victoria Period. This strong blue colour was made by pulverising glass coloured with cobalt to a very fine powder. Gilding was unusual, and the use of gold paint to railing heads is not recommended, unless on grander town houses where there is clear historic evidence of previous gilding. It is historically inaccurate for many properties and usually tarnishes quickly to brown.



*Smalt – the strong blue colour popular for railings in the Victorian Period.*

*Editor's note: for more information English Heritage's pamphlet 'Ornamental Iron Work: Gates and Railings' may prove useful.*

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## The Society's AGM

Well, those of you who did not attend this year's Annual General Meeting in June missed a treat, but the sixty or so members who did, enjoyed an absorbing evening with good food in convivial company in the lovely surroundings of Haughley Park.

This year's speaker was Brian Morton, a Civil Engineer with 40 years' experience of working with historic buildings. He was awarded an MBE in the 2005 New Year's Honours List for Assisting the Heritage in Conservation Engineering. In fact, his attributes abound, but suffice it to say that he has contributed both locally and nationally to the protection of historic buildings and structures with the rare philosophy of only doing what really needs to be done, with the right materials, and doing it sympathetically.

Brian, through narrative and slides took us to as far away as Singapore and then back to the length and breadth of the country, looking at a catalogue of problems which were solved with various sympathetic solutions. I liked the property in Coalbrookdale sold for £1 in Staffordshire by the Coal Board to The Wedgewood Company because it was deemed irreparable. You should now see it: I bet the CB are kicking themselves. Brian, for his sins, has also advised on around 400 churches and saved many of them from unnecessary destructive alterations and repairs. It was heartening to learn that Brian's son is following in his footsteps with the same philosophy, so we can look forward to their same sensible and sensitive approach to the care and repair of old buildings for some years to come.



## SPS Suffolk Coastal District Garden Visit and Cocktail Party

*By kind permission of Debby and Amédée Turner*

This was a garden visit with a difference *but you had to remember to pack your imagination*. In July, twenty or so members, ably facilitated by Juliet and Victor Gordon, enjoyed a fascinating adventure into a series of symbolic gardens dominated by trees: an eclectic mix of artefacts using various materials including rocks, concrete, wood, metal, glass and cane as well as nickel plate, were transfigured into imaginative and touching symbolic representations, both mythical and real, from ancient times to the present day.

We wandered off into the woodland garden, clutching an explanatory leaflet, heading for the *Mycenaean Palace of King Nestor at Pylos in the Peloponnese (Homer fans note) created in 1956!* In another time-warp *The Blue Stone Circle 1991* – “configuration and size of original stone circle at Stonehenge, lift doors from ICI Headquarters, London”. On a religious theme we journeyed along the *Thorn Path 1988*, Ugandan Thorn Tree crucifixes made by the Blue Sisters of Entebbe. Back to the present was the *Ground Zero Cross 2002*, made from steel girders in Ground Zero by the New York Police, to name a few examples.

We enjoyed the scary African masks on pillars in the *Yew Square 2004*, and were touched by *Kampala Cathedral 2002*, designed in accordance with native architecture (a grass roof) to the exact scale of the first Anglican Cathedral in Africa, built in 1896 and destroyed in the same year by lightning.

As for King Nestor, well he missed out on the wonderful cocktails and nibbles!

*\* "That Monday morning feeling"*

## 'Through the Portal'

### The Office

On the 26th April we said good-bye and *thank you* to Henry Gold, the Society's Honorary Treasurer for nine years. Henry's dedicated service over those years could not go unrewarded without a glass of champagne and the obligatory chocolate cake! Henry is in line for duties with his Livery Company and will now be fully occupied on their behalf, and we wish him well. We are, however, very fortunate to have Patrick Corney, also a Chartered Accountant, who has assisted Henry since last Spring, (*see Issue 100*). He is now the Society's new Honorary Treasurer.



We also wish to offer a special *thank you* to Dan Pillar for all his hard work over many years. He has retired as Chairman of SPS St. Edmundsbury Committee, but remains a Vice President of the Society.

### The House

If you look very carefully at this photograph you will notice that the gable end is covered with 'pebbledash', a mixture of concrete and small stone which was fashionable at the beginning of the 20th century.



'Pebbledash' facing on the gable end of The Great House Restaurant, which adjoins Little Hall.

This is the gable end of The Great House, the building which adjoins Little Hall. Little Hall at this time was divided up into cottages and both buildings were coated in this way. On the advice of Mr. A.R. Powys of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, this outer coating was stripped off the 'cottage end'. Mr. Powys found that this part was, in fact, all one house and identified it as having originally been a fifteenth-century house with an open hall. This 'coating' remnant on the adjoining building still remains, and there are some very good photographs showing the former state of these two joined buildings in the ladies cloakroom on the first floor of the Great House Restaurant – sorry chaps!

### The Garden

Sunday, 18th June was the 'Hidden Gardens of Lavenham Open Day' and, true to form, Little Hall's garden was open and looking stunning as usual. Many visitors came and admired the planting and aspect, as well as touring the house.



We're ready! Beryl and Leonie, volunteer gardeners, await the visitors.



Visitors admire the garden at Little Hall on Lavenham's Gardens Open Day.

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## Views, News and Reviews – your letters – stop press news – book reviews

### Book Reviews

#### Oil Paintings in Public Ownership

in Suffolk - published by The Public Catalogue Foundation, soft cover price £25: free postage for orders before the end of September – quote SPS to order: telephone 08701 283566



*We are advised that any surplus funds will be returned to the participating collections to finance painting conservation and gallery education.*

#### SPS Editorial Group Member, Jane Allen, writes

How much would you pay to buy the essence of Suffolk? I suspect that it would be more than £25 (soft cover), but for that remarkably reasonable sum you can purchase a copy of this extraordinary collection. There are small colour reproductions of nearly every painting listed, expertly photographed by Douglas Atfield, and just to flick through the pages is to experience a tour of our county.

We start with the worthies of Aldeburgh and move on to marvel at the skill of Mary Beale, Suffolk's 17th century woman portrait painter, the aircraft of the Second World War and W.J. Leggett's paintings of the now-demolished buildings of Ipswich (represented in the fine and extensive art collections in the Ipswich Museums and Galleries). We meet the county's industrialists, the Gurteens of Haverhill and the Garretts of Leiston, the fishing boats of Lowestoft, the race horses of Newmarket, and Gainsborough's elegant subjects, champion Suffolk Punches, and much more.

There are some full page illustrations amongst the 'thumbnails'. Happily incongruous juxtapositions occur where R.S. Reeve's *The Felixstowe to Ipswich Coach* of the 1940's drives through the 18th century elegance of the paintings in Gainsborough's House in Sudbury, and there is a dramatic rescue at sea in the midst of the thoroughbreds on Newmarket Heath.

It is the boast of the volume that it 'brings together all oil paintings in public ownership in Suffolk'. This is not quite true, but it is an enterprise which deserves applause and support.

### Your Letters

#### SPS Member, Victor Gordon, emails

#### Markets – and Supermarkets

“On 26th June the CPRE launched a report entitled *The Real Choice – how local foods can survive the supermarket onslaught*. The report was inspired and largely written by Caroline Cranbrook, a long-time member of SPS. It describes how a local 'food web' has been found to spin to the enormous benefit of farmers, food producers, retailers and consumers in East Suffolk. Lady Cranbrook's research goes back over eight years, and originated with fears that a new Tesco at Saxmundham would have a potentially disastrous impact on the local economy. Happily the Tesco application was refused, and the local food web – evermore self-aware – has strengthened and expanded.

Speaking at the Report's launch at the Farmers' Club in London, Lady Cranbrook stressed the interdependence of farmers, small food manufacturers, farm shops, farmers' markets, and independent retailers; she also looked at the important social function of local shops. The role that local planning authorities can and should play in resisting the supermarket onslaught to the benefit of their Districts was well illustrated by the Suffolk Coastal District's Retail Policy, though the pressures on planners, not least because of their limited resources as regards Appeals, remained very real.

The CPRE Report, published with support from the Plunkett Foundation, has attracted extensive press, radio and TV coverage. It's to be hoped that its message will help to restore a fairer balance between the independent sector and the Big Four.”

### Stop-Press News

On Friday, 4th August in the evening, a New Members' Party was held in the garden and house of Little Hall. We welcome you all and hope to see you at future Society events.

## Diary Dates

### BABERGH GROUP ANNUAL MEETING

**Thursday, 7th September, 2006 6.00 – 8.30 pm**

Come and see Suffolk's FIRST carbon negative building featuring numerous deep green systems including solar, rainwater, reed beds and wood boiler. Bring a picnic supper and enjoy a late summer evening with us. There is no charge but a donation to the Green Light Trust would be appropriate. We will meet at the new Green Light Trust building, Bury Road, Lawshall IP29 4PJ (about 300 yards from Lambs Lane cross roads). *For more information please contact Ralph Carpenter 01284 761141(day) or 01284 830251(evening), or email ra.carpenter@btconnect.com*

### SPS MEMBERS - INVITATION TO VISIT THE MEDIAEVAL TOWN OF KING'S LYNN

**Wednesday, 13th September, 2006 - our guide is Dr. Paul Richards**

*We meet for coffee and our tour starts at 10.30 am with a stop for lunch at 12.00. The tour will continue after lunch, ending at about 3.00 pm. Car parking is available - full details obtainable from Little Hall – please ring for an information sheet and booking details - 01787 147179. Cost £8.50 per person including morning coffee. Lunch will be taken at the Green Quay Visitor Centre (price not included).*

Aptly described as “the Warehouse on the Wash”, its ‘golden age’ between 1300 and 1500 saw commerce generate the wealth for many fine buildings. Kings Lynn today retains many notable secular and ecclesiastical buildings from the Middle Ages as well as those from the renaissance and classical period. It was a major seaport and market for centuries, with access to twelve counties via the Ouse River System. *Join us if you can for a fascinating visit to this most interesting Norfolk town.*

### SPS WAVENEY DISTRICT VISIT TO SIZEWELL A

**Thursday, 21st September, 2006**

Our successful first tour has prompted a second visit to this fascinating site before decommissioning at the end of the year. We will meet at the Gate at 1.30 pm. *For more details contact Mike Coleman 01502 518708, email mikecoleman@supanet.com*

### SPS AUTUMN CONFERENCE - ‘CLIMATE CHANGE – WHAT CAN YOU DO?’

**Haughley Park Barn, Haughley, near Stowmarket - Thursday, 12th October, 2006**

This important CONFERENCE will focus on the facts and trends of *Climate Change*. Firstly it will clearly identify what is happening and what changes we can expect in the future. It will then examine the impact of those changes on different aspects of our environment. Finally, the aim will be to set out measures that we might be able to adopt to help lessen the impact for Climate Change. Society will need to adopt a range of measures, which will affect our daily lives, to live within a sustainable footprint to ensure the future of our planet: **and this we surely must**. *See the Conference Programme for more details and return your reply slip to us by latest Monday, 11th September, 2006.*



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## **Suffolk View is a publication of the Suffolk Preservation Society and is published three times a year.**

The Society works to protect and enhance the countryside, towns and villages of Suffolk. Its volunteers in the Districts, with a Chartered Planner at Little Hall in Lavenham, combine effective local action through the planning system with the promotion of building conservation projects, encouragement for sustainable planning, and campaigns and awards which support this ethos.

Help us to protect the rich diversity of the County – its countryside and coastline beauty; its tranquil places; its rich complexity of buildings and architecture; its historic market towns, country villages and farm hamlets – its special character.

If you are not already a Member consider joining us today and become part of the campaign to protect Suffolk and ensure changes value its natural and built heritage and promote sustainable planning for a better future.



A PUBLICATION OF THE SUFFOLK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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