

Director's Report for the AGM year 2017-2018

The SPS has sought to achieve its charitable Objects in two principal ways: firstly, participating in the planning process, responding to Suffolk-based planning policy consultations, major or controversial local planning applications, as well as national policy documents; and, secondly, on shaping opinion of both decision-makers and communities in regard to threats and opportunities to our heritage and countryside.

In 2017, SPS planners responded to 75 major/sensitive cases. Approximately 55 per cent related to major residential schemes, 20 per cent specifically focussed on applications related to listed building alterations. Of the casework, 25 per cent related to a miscellany of application types which had significant landscape implications, such as the extension to the industrial plant and the Greater Anglia maintenance depot developments in the Dedham Vale AONB. To date the number of applications that we have positively influenced stands at 46 per cent, losses at 34 per cent and the remaining 20 per cent of applications have yet to be determined. However, in view of the pressure on local planning authorities to deliver housing, particularly those authorities who have not achieved a five-year housing land supply, it is anticipated that the number of approvals for major housing schemes is likely to increase, thereby overall reducing this success rate.

In 2017, the Government issued the White Paper, *Fixing our Broken Housing Market* which set out to address the nation's housing crisis. This identified the need to not only allocate more land for housing but, also, to apply increased pressure on local planning authorities to deliver that housing. CPRE nationally, and SPS locally have sought to campaign against the inherent weaknesses of this approach. This White Paper has been reflected in the Draft NPPF which has been launched for public consultation this Spring 2018. At a more local level, SPS planners have responded to policy documents which will affect the changing face of our County over the next 20 years including - the Bury Masterplan, the Waveney Draft Local Plan, the Ipswich Draft Local Plan, the Joint Babergh/Mid Suffolk Local Plan, Issues and Options and the Suffolk County Council Draft Minerals Plan. We have responded to land-use and environmental policies and sought to protect those cherished places that are most vulnerable to change.

In addition to local development and emerging policy frameworks we have also responded to National Infrastructure Projects, including the latest Sizewell C Public Consultation for a Nuclear Power Plant, and infrastructure proposals for windfarm Anglia 1 North and 2 Scoping Report, the next generation of offshore wind allocation.

SPS planners have dedicated increasing amounts of their capacity to engage with stakeholders across national and local government, media and the local community to raise awareness of the threats and challenges to our County as a result of the more permissive approach to planning.

The SPS has written to all the Suffolk MPs calling for changes to the planning system, better resourcing of planning departments, greater weight to neighbourhood plans to allow the community to have better control over their neighbourhood, and a greater push for better quality design of housing development in the face of a substantial increase in the demand for homes across all parts of Suffolk. It has engaged with senior political leaders and officers across the County calling for better engagement with SPS and reminding them of our shared objectives in delivering high quality development in the right places. It has also worked with many local groups including parishes and amenity societies, neighbourhood groups, single issue campaign groups, including the Ipswich Building Preservation Trust, Theberton and Eastbridge Action Group, the Suffolk Design Review Panel, the Suffolk Conservation Officer's Forum and The Tree Council. The SPS has also sought to engage with the next generation and presented a lecture to West Suffolk College, Historic Building Conservation Scholarship students on the *Historic Building Types of East Anglia*.

In seeking to engage directly with the residents of Suffolk on a number of levels we have written a monthly column in the East Anglian Daily Times, also monthly articles on *buildings at risk* in Suffolk in the Bury & West Suffolk Magazine, as well as producing our in-house much respected bi-annual publication, *Suffolk View*. This year we ran the first photographic competition entitled *~Suffolk Beauty* to stimulate a debate about what makes our County special. This was a positive and successful vehicle for SPS, with its media sponsor the EADT, to regularly promote Suffolk and exhort local people to 'be engaged'.

In 2017, SPS continued to develop its outreach role by providing training to parish councils and other stakeholders to support them in their statutory role of responding to planning applications. It held three training seminars on 'heritage planning', 'archaeology' and 'urban design'. These sessions, run by professionals in the field, have been well regarded and are developing an increasing following being delivered at no cost to the delegates. SPS is grateful to those who sponsor these events, including Mr Robert Williams of Haughley Park Barn, speakers who have either gifted their time or offered a much reduced rate, and Southwold Town Council who provided the venue and lunch for the urban design training.

SPS has also delivered a series of high quality social events for its Members including a lecture and award evening at Haughley Park with Fiona Reynolds referencing her book *Fight for Beauty* and presenting the SPS/EADT awards for the *Suffolk Beauty* photographic competition; the Duke and Duchess of Grafton who opened their home to allow SPS Members to appreciate the wonderful art collection at Euston Hall; the Ipswich Society who kindly hosted a visit to the wonderfully restored Holywells Park & Orangery and,

finally, an excellent talk by Professor Williamson on *Trees and the Suffolk Landscape*, at the beautiful new pavilion at Framlingham College. We are indebted to all those who support our work.

From the foregoing Members will appreciate that, for a small team, this has been an extremely busy but exciting year. Its ability to reach out to other professionals in the field with common goals has achieved much. And it is gratifying that they in turn are approaching the SPS for support in this difficult planning climate. The fact that the SPS planning team achieved positive outcomes in nearly fifty per cent of its planning cases is testament to its *raison d'être*. Many of these could have been lost but for the SPS intervention. This in turn makes a difference to how Suffolk looks and feels. This fact should encourage much support for the SPS as it fights on to achieve an attractive and sustainable County conscious of its valuable heritage.

F Cairns

13 April 2018

