

## **Director's Report for the AGM year 2018-2019**

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 2018, SPS planners responded to 65 major/sensitive cases. Over 80 per cent related to residential schemes, approximately 60 per cent of which related to large scale housing developments of between 10 and 500 dwellings. A significant concentration of these applications has been in Mid Suffolk which has been unable to demonstrate the requisite housing land supply. To date the number of applications that we have positively influenced stands at over 58 per cent, losses at around 18 per cent and the remaining 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.

SPS planners have also responded to policy documents which will affect the changing face of our County over the next 20 years including - the Waveney Draft Local Plan, the Suffolk County Waste and Minerals Local Plan, Ipswich Archaeology Supplementary Planning Document, Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan together with making representations to the AONB proposed boundary review consultation. We have responded to land-use and environmental policies and sought to protect those cherished places that are most vulnerable to change.

We have also reviewed 8 Neighbourhood Plans as they emerge through the planning process and made representations on the heritage, landscape and design policies. This is an important undertaking to ensure that the new generation of local policy is robust and effective in protecting our most valued qualities.

In addition to local development and emerging policy frameworks we have also responded to National Significant Infrastructure Projects, including the latest Sizewell C Public Consultation for a Nuclear Power Plant, and infrastructure proposals for windfarm Anglia 1 North and East Anglia 2, the next generation of offshore wind allocation. The SPS Director, supported by a number of the trustees, have been invited to sit on the Scottish Power Renewable Expert Topic Group on heritage and landscape and have attended a number of meetings with the developers, county and district

councils, Natural England, Historic England and the AONB Partnership. We are the only non-statutory consultee that has been included in this strand of work and we are pleased that we have been given the opportunity to contribute to the discussions at this early stage as the proposals are evolving.

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. We continue to contribute monthly articles to the EADT and regularly provide interviews to local journalists on planning matters. We strive to influence opinion shapers through our active engagement with all media channels. We have continued to develop our social media reach through regular contributions to Facebook and Twitter.

The SPS has continued to engage with 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. The Director has given a presentation on good design to the Conservative Group of Mid Suffolk District Council, all of whom sit on the planning committee. It has also worked with many local groups including parishes and amenity societies, neighbourhood groups, single issue campaign groups, Substation Action Save East Suffolk (SASES), Theberton and Eastbridge Action Group, the Suffolk Design Review Panel, the Suffolk Conservation Officer's Forum and The AONB Partnership.

In 2018, 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', 'media training' and 'landscaping in new housing developments'. 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 all those who have provided a venue and refreshments for our fundraising events.

SPS has also delivered a series of high quality social events for its Members including a day school at Haughley Park with Dr Richard Hoggett on the archaeology of Suffolk's landscape; Mrs Lois Hunt who hosted the AGM at Cockfield Hall with a lecture by Barbara Segall on her book the Secret Gardens Of Suffolk and, finally, an excellent talk by Sir Simon Jenkins on his new book about Historic Railway stations 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 over fifty per cent of its planning cases is testament to its *raison d'être*. 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**

**04 June 2019**