

Kickstarting some young careers

Suffolk Coastal MP **Therese Coffey**



Kickstart got off to a flying start last week as, with the chancellor Rishi Sunak, I launched another of our jobs programmes focused on helping young people into work. The new £2bn scheme will give young people at risk of long-term unemployment work placements for six months - with their wages paid for by the government.

Applicants will be referred into the roles through their Jobcentre Plus work coach and can be created by any size of business or organisation. Household names like Tesco have already signed up and I'm encouraging businesses and organisations to apply. I'm speaking to Suffolk Libraries later this week and I think there is good opportunity across our county for the private, public and voluntary sector to help young people get onto the first rung of the jobs ladder. There is no limit on the number of places the government will support. If you want to take on a small number of young people over the next 18 months, you can do so using a special gateway - an intermediary.

Our county council, LEP and local business organisations are already working together with DWP on establishing that gateway locally. If you are interested, more information is online at www.gov.uk/Kickstart.

The tourism and hospitality industry supports a lot of jobs here on the Suffolk coast, which is why I was so pleased to see the success of our government's Eat out to Help out scheme. The half price meals on Monday to Wednesday throughout August seem to have gone down a storm locally - good for residents, visitors and the people running and working in our restaurants, cafés and pubs. In Suffolk Coastal alone, 161,000 discounted meals were claimed for to the tune of £881,000. This was another successful scheme targeting a part of the economy which needed a boost and have also been helped by the temporary cut in VAT. I hope people will have got into the habit of eating out again and keep it going. Great food, great service and no washing up. What's there not to like?

Finally, it is the second week of schools being fully re-open for all pupils which is great for children and for all working parents. Getting out of the learning habit can have a negative impact on children's futures. That is why we have a new Catch up fund of £1 billion to help children across the country. Again, I want to thank the teachers and other staff who have done so much to get our schools up and running again.

opinion

Government's White Paper rings alarm bells on many levels

Fiona Cairns of The Suffolk Preservation Society expresses concern at a new motion that restructures the planning system in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic



The prime minister seemed to be crystal clear when he called it the most "radical reform unlike anything we have seen since the Second World War."

Key members of the Royal Institute of British Architects agreed, but not from a perspective supportive of its main aims. One senior architect has been quoted as saying that: "The government are proposing to hand volume housebuilders the right to build whatever they want. This is unlikely to be either beautiful or affordable."

By contrast, the trade association of said housebuilders, the Home Builders Federation, seem to have made no comments at all, either on their website or via media outlets. Perhaps they felt that they've got pretty much everything they were after and saying anything would only antagonise others?

If you didn't know already, the 'it' in question is the government's new White Paper, called Planning for the Future.

White Papers seeking to change this country's planning system are not that unusual: they usually come round once every five or six years. But this particular piece of proposed legislation is significant because of its timing and content.

The timing is clearly down to Covid-19 and, in particular, the economic impact of the pandemic. The government clearly wants to boost the economy comprehensively and quickly.

The content seems to be that of a long cherished ambition by some to remove many of the checks and balances that give as many interested parties as possible, a voice in planning issues that affect them and their communities.

It is the initial opinion of the



The White Paper could mean it would be harder for the public to challenge potential developments

Picture: GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Suffolk Preservation Society, for we are still working through the details, that in some areas the White Paper proposes some encouraging changes that we have long been calling for. These include a greater emphasis on improved design, comprehensive resourcing of planning departments and effective use of design guidance.

However, we fear that these positives are significantly outweighed by the potential negatives. In essence, the White Paper represents an unacceptable centralisation of planning which will severely undermine the key local voices in any area.

For example, the proposals introduce a system zoning of land into three areas of Growth, Renewal and Protection and the introduction of standardised Development Management policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework, rather than in Local Plans. This zoning would effectively remove the planning application stage, leaving public involvement in planning proposals solely at the plan making stage.

The society also has grave concerns about the implications for community involvement and the ability for local people to influence planning decisions that directly affect them. One of the

great success of the planning system over the last few years has been the proliferation in Neighbourhood Plans, where local communities and parish and town councils are able to identify the locations for housing and other developments, whilst preserving other, more vulnerable plot of land.

We are very concerned that just as Local Plans would be largely sidelined under the White Paper, so would some of the key functions of Neighbourhood Plans. This could be especially true if these plans have to merely accept handed down to them the national allocations of land into the three categories above, regardless of local knowledge.

In short, the society is concerned that the government is acting in an over hasty manner and is in danger of creating a highly centralised planning system that will ignore local issues and could result in swathes of inappropriate and unsustainable new housing developments across our county.

Consultation on the White Paper closes on October 29. We urge every amenity group in Suffolk to make their views known before then.

For more information: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future