

Drinkstone Parish Council

Chairman's Report May 2018

Things will be changing in Drinkstone over the next couple of years, as Mid Suffolk District Council's new Local Plan comes into force.

Drinkstone will cease to be defined as a "Countryside Village" where no new houses are permitted, and instead will be expected to take its fair share of the new housing that the Government has decreed to be necessary. The scale of any new development in the village has yet to be determined.

In itself, such development is not necessarily a bad thing, provided it delivers the type of housing the community needs, rather than what makes most profit for the developer; and provided the housing is built in a style which enhances the look of the village, does not unduly encroach on open spaces, or constitute unacceptable ribbon development. The highest environmental standards, for example energy efficiency, should also be required in a countryside setting.

In the last two years the Parish Council has considered applications for 11 new houses in the village, almost the equivalent of a new Cherry Tree estate. We have vigorously opposed each of these, on the grounds that under current policy, Drinkstone cannot be considered a "sustainable" location.

Mid Suffolk's new Local Plan will open up the village to development. The only way we as a community can have a real say in what is built, where it is built, and how much is built is to undertake the not inconsiderable task of developing our own Neighbourhood Plan. This year's Annual Parish Meeting will be devoted to introducing the concept to parishioners to gauge enthusiasm.

So possibly big things in the future.

Otherwise it has been the year of the pothole. A change from dog fouling, though not a welcome one. The Council reports every pothole brought to its attention. It is just one voice among many these days though, no longer having a dedicated highways officer to report to.

We have also succeeded in selling the piece of land known as the Cheese Wedge. It had little or no amenity value to the community, and would have incurred ongoing maintenance costs for the large number of trees on the site. It has been bought by the adjoining properties, for inclusion in their gardens.

Finally I want to thank my fellow councillors for their hard work over the year. Councillor Thurlow for her expert chairing of meetings in my absence; Councillor Schofield for looking after the footpaths and Councillor Hembra for doing the same for the playing field and play equipment; in fact to both of them for generally fixing things that need fixing; finally to Councillor Lambert for acting as an effective trustee for the allotments. Their good condition and immaculate appearance is testimony to a well run operation. Councillor Moss has volunteered to help with any proposed Neighbourhood Plan. A brave man indeed.

Daphne Youngs