

Somersham.

August is usually a quiet month, and this August has been no different. Planning activities have continued at pace but with no major developments affecting Somersham.

MSDC response to the changing COVID 19 situation

The council is actively monitoring the changing COVID situation and taking action as required. The Tactical Management Team continuing to meet on a weekly basis to assess and respond to the impact of Covid on council services and to interpret and implement Government guidance. They respond to reports from corporate managers report on the status of their services includes information about key partners such as Serco.

A recent report to our group stated “We consider the number of absences, the reasons for them and in addition the numbers of staff who need to self-isolate. Whilst we have seen a few more absences during the current wave, to date this has still been fairly limited and so has had minimal impact on services. The vast majority of people who have had to self-isolate are able to work from home normally, so again this has had minimal impact.” Staff will be redeployed to an agreed priority list of services if additional support is required

The team continuously reviews business continuity plans to make sure they are on top of any developing situations. As an example, the lack of HGV drivers which recently affected the ability of waste services to cover sickness and leave.

This all sounds positive with an active response still underway, but it is quite difficult to understand why residents continue to suffer delayed collection of waste bins. Councillors are maintaining pressure for improvement, but the HGV driver issue is driven by a lack of training as well as BREXIT.

Planning**Gateway 14**

Planning committee A approved the council’s wholly owned company’s outline application for the site opposite Tesco at Stowmarket. This included a substantial increase in the area and height of the buildings, changes to the road connections compared to the 2016 approved application and reductions in landscaping. We were uncomfortable that the council was approving its own application for such a large site in which it has invested a major sum and in the face of vocal opposition from residents. However the economic benefit of the proposals won the day with some changes to environmental standards and landscaping we hope at the reserved matters stage.

Valley Ridge

The developer appears to have woken up to the continued presence of the adjacent landfill site now that there is an application with the County for an extension to the waste sites life. Not exactly a surprise as much waste now goes to the incinerator. Opinions on this change differ: does the landfill site stop a development many don’t want as we doubt its viability or dislike the traffic it will generate or are we swapping a £500 million development for continuation of unattractive and environmentally damaging landfill?

Solar Farms and major Infrastructure

I hope you have seen Bron Curtis’ latest briefing on this issue, so I won’t try to cover all details however comments of note:

- “We are yet to receive the submission of the EDF solar farm application at Bramford. We understand there is an issue with the payment of the Planning Portal fee. We expect this to be resolved and to receive the application shortly.

- Today we have received amended / additional information for the ENSO application and our support team are in the process of starting the re-consultation exercise.
- A non-material change for EA3 has been submitted. There is no change to the onshore elements of the development.”

The council has produced a new web page for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and large-scale energy projects which is now live at <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/planning/development-management/applications-of-district-wide-interest/large-energy-projects-and-nsips/> (is that the longest www address ever?). They would appreciate any feedback for anything they can do differently to improve it.

If you have queries, please phone me on 07756292320 or email me at: john.field@midsuffolk.gov.uk