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From: ESPA 2023
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Sent: 18 August 2023 16:26
To: undisclosed-recipients:
Subject: East Suffolk Planning Alliance Update - August 2023

Dear Affiliate.

This is an update of ESPA news and developments over the past two months.

East Suffolk Planning Alliance (ESPA) was formed as a result of a meeting held last February between a number of parish councils and resident groups during which many concerns and issues were raised that clearly set out an urgent need for immediate action.

Since that early start 40 Town and Parish Councils and 6 Resident Groups from across the regions of East Suffolk have unanimously agreed to affiliate with us.
You have made it clear to us that we have much work to do!

ESPA does not have any political agenda other than our commitment to advocate for change in the current culture of planning procedure which we believe to be outdated and private sector development and landowner led, without addressing the underlying considerations for the required infrastructure and biodiversity needs of sustainable development.

ESPA does not request membership or any financial commitment. Our steering committee is made up of a small number of experienced individuals from varied walks of life and we all work collectively on a voluntary basis. Our aim is to provide a new bridge of communication between the ESC council and the communities they are elected to

represent. If any of our individual affiliates feel they could offer help and support to our steering committee, that would be most welcome.

We had a constructive and frank meeting with East Suffolk Council CEO Chris Bally and the council leader Caroline Topping on June 27th, during which many issues and concerns that have been put before us from our 46 affiliates and members of the public were discussed. It was agreed that a series of ongoing meetings should be held between ESC senior management / ESPA Steering Group + interested others, examining different planning themes to aid and support better understanding of the planning process.

Topics will include:

Community Engagement & Statement of Community Involvement
Biodiversity - Net Gain
CIL - Community Infrastructure Levy
Local Planning Process and the issues of deliverability, openness and transparency.
Role of Highways in the Planning process

The question of private sector outline planning dual applications was raised and Caroline Topping was asked if she would support a motion to stop this practice (as it has been by many other authorities across the UK). She responded by saying that a motion was probably not required as the new council will stop this practice. As yet ESC have not changed their policy. It is our intention to continue to press for this to happen imminently as ESPA strongly believes that this practice is perverting democratic planning procedure. This has been confirmed by many of our affiliated parish councils and resident groups across East Suffolk.

Mr Bally has suggested we write a joint letter from ESPA / ESC seeking clarity of the Sec of State's plans for reform of the Planning System (and asking about progress of the Levelling Up Bill if not through Lords by then). However, we are aware of announcements by Michael Gove and the Government regarding substantive and material changes to the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) and the incorporation of environmental policies. These proposed legislative policy changes are

complex and considerable and have presented us with much to do, but we would like to push ahead and finalize this letter.

Chris Bally and Caroline Topping will be holding a site visit in the Trimleys this month with two members of our steering committee, a representative from each of the two parish councils, and Ward Councillor. They will be walking around and looking at current developments together with the locations for future approved and proposed huge developments in this particular area of the district and can consider the impact upon its communities.

One of the many concerns we have is that site visits are seldom carried out by the ESC planning committee before momentous decisions are made and applications approved. We feel strongly that the committee members are not able to make a clear and informed decision if they have not witnessed the reality of the situations that communities face.

During a recent ESPA committee meeting, concerns raised were that members of the public and town/parish councils are often not listened to, either by determining case officers in their recommendations, or delegating and decision making officers when applications are made by office report recommendations or by senior delegating and decision making officers when applications are made by officer determination. So as a consequence there is a likelihood of poor decision making for those applications that go before the ESC planning committee.

Many of you have stated that you believe the ESC local plan as it stands is not fit for purpose and have called for a review. We agree, and would go further in saying that due practice and good practice according to the local plan has in many cases not been followed. Michael Gove has repeatedly stated that councils must work with communities and that new developments must reflect and provide the required benefits and needs of each community. You have let us know that this most certainly has not been happening in recent years.

We are planning to hold a third meeting to which all our affiliated members will be invited, hopefully this coming October. At this

meeting we will all have the opportunity to discuss these issues further and share ideas and concerns as we move forwards.

We are deeply appreciative that so many of you have agreed to affiliate with us and we look forward to moving on to a better and more inclusive future for communities across East Suffolk in the near future.

With warmest regards,
The ESPA Steering Committee.

East Suffolk Planning Alliance (ESPA)

