



Little Blakenham Annual Parish Meeting

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held at the Church on Tuesday, 20th May 2025 at 7pm

PRESENT: Cllr W Binder (PC), S Wright (PC), L Keen (PC), J Latham (PC), B Palmer (PC), A Brown (PC)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs J Blackburn (Clerk), County Councillor Chambers, District Cllr Marriott and four members of the public.

LB01/25/26 - CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman of Little Blakenham Parish Council, Cllr Wally Binder, welcomed those present.

LB02/25/26 - APOLOGIES

None had been received.

LB03/25/26 - MINUTES 21st MAY 2024

The minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting, held on 21st May 2024, were approved as a true record and were duly signed by the Chair.

LB04/25/26 - REPORTS RELATING TO THE PARISH

Representatives of the following organisations were invited to speak and answer any questions. Where received, their reports are attached to the Minutes.

- a) **Little Blakenham Parish Council** – *Cllr Wally Binder*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Binder read through his report, which would be published on the village website.

- b) **Mid-Suffolk District Council** – *Cllr Adrienne Marriott*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Marriott went through her report which had been circulated prior the meeting and would be published on the village website.

- c) **Little Blakenham Parochial Church Council (PCC) and Village Recorder** – *Michele Kenningale*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Michele Kenningale was not present at the meeting. Her PCC report had been circulated prior to the meeting and would be published on the village website.

- d) **Suffolk County Council** – *Cllr Chris Chambers*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Chambers' report had been circulated prior to the meeting and would be published on the village website.

He briefly reported on Devolution and the proposal to have an elected Mayor with one Council working for all of Suffolk. He handed out a leaflet which showed the savings that would be made once a Unitary Council was up and running.

Cllr Wright asked how the new Mayor would be funded, to which Cllr Chambers confirmed that it had not yet been decided.

Cllr Binder asked what the Unitary Council would mean for Parish Councils. Cllr Chambers explained that Parish and Town Councils would not be affected, although there was a chance that those Councils would become more powerful and gain responsibilities.

On local matters Cllr Chambers reported that the Port One application for the Snoasis site had been submitted with assessment such as Archalological taking place.

LB05/25/26 - PUBLIC FORUM

No matters were raised.

The meeting closed at 7.31pm.

Chairman Date

Chairmans Report May 2024

Your council has carried out the required number of meetings and councillors have always given their apologies with the required reasons if they have been unable to attend

This year our agenda item for parishioners questions has been well supported

And been very beneficial for the councillors

I would like to ask the clerk to document our thanks for her contribution to our council keeping us legal I know this has been even though she has had a very difficult personal year

The saga of the leather bottle hill light is over and the light has been fitted and again this has been in no small part by Jennies continual flow of emails

I am pleased to report that the village sign is with us and the foundations are in place and I would like to again thank Michelle for her effort and councillor Palmer for his work with the foundation

I can also report that pound lane pot holes have been repaired and they have all had a tar and chipping covering and it looks good

I would also like to thank councillor Keen for her effort with the village hall booking they seem well organised now

I have recently noted that our great footpaths in little blakenham have been mowed and I would like to thank councillor Laytham for arraigning this to be done for us all

The developments at Elm farm are moving on and although we have had several road closures we seem to begin to have something to look at

The development on the old 1113 seems to be going ahead and they seem to be trying to help us

This brings me onto my final item the replacement of the village hall this looks like it will go ahead and I will give more details in due course

Chris Chambers - County Councillor for the Gipping Valley Division Mob : 07595310290 E-mail :
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April 2023

99% of pupils receive a preferred primary school place on National Offer Day

99.18% of children were offered a place on National Offer Day at one of their three preferred primary schools and 95.78% were offered a place at their first preference school.

Suffolk County Council received 7,056 applications from parents and carers indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2023.

Families who applied online can log on to the Admissions Portal from today to see the school their child has been offered. They will also receive an email to confirm this offer. Letters will be sent to parents who made a paper application by second-class post today (17th April 2023). Once school places have been confirmed, parents need to consider how their child will get to and from school. If their child is eligible for Suffolk County Council funded school travel, they will receive an email by 12 May 2023 with details of how to opt in. Any parents or carers with a child born between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019 who have not yet applied for a school place should make an application immediately.

Information on how to make an application can be found on the [School admission pages](#) or by contacting Suffolk County Council on **0345 600 0981**.

May 2023

Revised policy agreed to protect Suffolk’s water supplies

Suffolk County Council Cabinet has today (16th May) agreed to a revised infrastructure policy to support water security in the region.

As part of its focus on adapting to a changing climate, Cabinet members agreed a revision to the Energy Infrastructure Policy to cover future projects needed to protect and maintain water resources, including reservoirs, pipelines, and water recycling plants.

This new policy addition lays out how future water infrastructure projects will be managed and the council’s role with stakeholders, such as the water companies, Ofwat and the Environment Agency. It also sets out how the council will recover the money it has to spend in the planning process for infrastructure projects. To reflect the changes, the policy has been renamed the Energy and Climate Adaptive Infrastructure Policy. In February 2021, the Cabinet of Suffolk County Council adopted an Energy Infrastructure Policy, that set out the Council’s approach to major infrastructure projects for energy generation and transmission, with a

particular focus on those consented under the Planning Act 2008, known as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.

As part of that decision, it was agreed that the policy would be revised after two years.

Library services protected as Suffolk County Council approves additional funding

Suffolk County Council has today (16th May) underlined its commitment to library services in Suffolk. Suffolk County Council has underlined its commitment to library services in Suffolk, as it approved plans to increase its funding to Suffolk Libraries, to enable the service to continue operating at its current level, until the end of the contract in July 2024.

Suffolk Libraries currently receives £5.9m per year from Suffolk County Council, however the service is forecasting a deficit of £60k per month from April 2023. The service has cited increases in service costs, a reduction in income opportunities following the Coronavirus Pandemic and rising inflation, as causes of the deficit.

This means it is no longer possible for the service to continue operating at its current level of service, within its current contract value.

At Suffolk County Council's Cabinet meeting, the council has approved plans to absorb this cost pressure, funding Suffolk Libraries an additional £720k per year, through to the end of the current contract in July 2024. This additional funding will support Suffolk Libraries to continue delivering its highly valued services to Suffolk Residents.

The council has previously made a commitment to continue to support Suffolk Libraries. At Suffolk County Council's full council meeting in February, the council agreed to fund an additional £250k in the first quarter of the 2023/24 financial year to help with the increased costs highlighted by Suffolk Libraries. This £250k for the first quarter of the year is included within the overall figure agreed by Cabinet, of an additional £720k for the 2023/24 financial year.

The council also supported Suffolk Libraries with £155,000 for initiatives to support residents with Cost of Living and support for Digital Inclusion in the 2022/23 financial year.

In addition, the Council continues to successfully access Section 106 funding to support ongoing building developments required to ensure buildings are fit for purpose and support service delivery.

Spotlight on improving air quality as county-wide strategy launched

Suffolk County Council has set out its plan for improving air quality in Suffolk following results from a recent air quality survey, as its county-wide Air Quality Strategy is published.

Air quality continues to be an important public health issue and a driver of health inequalities which disproportionately affects some of our most vulnerable residents in Suffolk.

The county council recently engaged with Suffolk's residents about their thoughts on the impact poor air quality has on their quality of life. The survey received 338 responses and had a particular focus on Ipswich residents, because Ipswich makes up four of Suffolk's eight Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAS). AQMAS are areas where national target levels of Nitrogen Dioxide are being exceeded. Some of the results of the survey showed that there is a need to increase awareness about how residents can reduce pollution by reducing indoor burning of wood and coal, encouraging businesses to replace their fleet with low-emission or electric vehicles, reducing short journeys by car and considering more sustainable forms of transport such as walking, bike or bus. Vehicle idling when stationary is also a contributor to high levels of air pollution, an area the strategy will focus on going forward.

A key element of the Air Quality Strategy is a public engagement plan which is being developed to increase public awareness of the health impacts of air quality in Suffolk, enabling individuals to make choices that protect both their health and the health of others from the harmful effects of pollution.

The delivery of the strategy will be closely monitored by the council to ensure it is accomplishing what it has set out to do. The strategy will also feed into the collective work of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

June 2023

Suffolk Fire Service to bring control room back to the County

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has announced plans to create a new fire control centre here in Suffolk. Since October 2011, Suffolk has shared a control room with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire and Rescue Service in Huntingdon. The joint project has worked well, saving both fire services money and enabling greater cross-border resource sharing.

However, the company behind a project to deliver a new IT system, initiated in 2019, has run into technical and financial problems, causing a significant delay. This, in addition to advancements in technology, has led to the decision to bring fire control back into the county by the end of 2024.

A new, Suffolk-based control room, with its own market, tried and tested fire engine mobilisation software, will mean modernised IT systems and improved public and firefighter safety in Suffolk. The proposed new control centre will be brought to Suffolk County Council's Cabinet for approval in September 2023.

Help for Suffolk Pre-payment Meter customers

A package of support has been created for pre-payment meter customers in Suffolk who are struggling with their energy bills.

Warm Homes Suffolk is a Suffolk-wide Council partnership service, delivering energy efficiency support to low-income households affected by cost-of-living pressures.

Supported by Suffolk's Collaborative Communities Board and funding from Public Health Suffolk's Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), the service is now able to offer specific help for households struggling to pay their energy bills via a pre-payment meter, in addition to its existing support.

The support covers the whole of Suffolk and is available for all residents, whether they are in social housing, council tenants, owner occupiers or private renters.

The Warm Homes Suffolk Service can check eligibility and support applications for grants to increase household energy efficiency, with measures such as loft and wall insulation to air source heat pumps, draught-proofing and more.

It is estimated that more than 24,000 people in Suffolk are pre-payment meter customers.

The service will work with each individual to understand the pressures on their finances and the impact this is having on their lives. The service can carry out a home visit, as well as providing advice over the phone and by email.

The COMF funding of £180,000 will enable this project to run for 12 months to provide the following:

- Income maximisation (through grants and benefits)
- Budgeting advice
- Help understanding bills and heating systems
- Support to reduce energy expenditure (By promoting social tariffs and support to switch suppliers)
- Improving household energy efficiency (By installing insulation, draught proofing, heating systems and solar panels)
- Facilitating switch away from prepaid meters if appropriate

Pre-payment meter customers who would like support can contact prepay@eastsoffolk.gov.uk to find out more, or call: **Prepay West at 07769 365796**, or **Prepay East at 07769 366229**.

Referrals can be made directly from households, the voluntary sector, and professionals to find prepay households who can benefit from an independent look at their bills.

Warm Homes Suffolk also offers support and advice for residents who are not pre-payment meter customers. To find out more about the support on offer, visit: <https://www.warmhomessuffolk.org/>

Ancestry appointed to digitise Suffolk's popular family and local history sources

More than 400 years of fascinating historical documents held at Suffolk Archives are to be digitised and made available online, thanks to an agreement between Suffolk County Council and Ancestry.

Suffolk Archives will work alongside the family history website Ancestry to create high-quality, full-colour digital images of millions of baptism, marriage and burial records from parishes within the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

The earliest records being digitised date back to 1538 and include events in the lives of notable historical figures, such as the 1776 baptism of landscape artist John Constable, and the 1846 burial of Thomas Clarkson who devoted his life to the abolition of slavery.

It is hoped that Suffolk's main parish records will be published online in early 2025 with other collections of local interest to follow. Public access will be free of charge in Suffolk Archives branches or at any Suffolk Library. Anyone with an Ancestry subscription will also be able to access the records as part of their research from their own computer or device.

Further details about the project can be found on the [Suffolk Archives website](#).

£100m broadband investment in Suffolk under government's Project Gigabit

Better broadband is on its way for around 80,000 properties across rural Suffolk in a £100 million investment under a £5 billion government infrastructure programme.

The county is one of three to benefit from Project Gigabit and was chosen to host the launch of the announcement by Minister for Data and Digital Infrastructure, Sir John Whittingdale.

Similar projects were also announced for Norfolk and Hampshire as Sir John was joined in Orford by Suffolk Coastal MP Therese Coffey and Councillor Matthew Hicks, the leader of Suffolk County Council.

Project Gigabit is the government's £5 billion mission to roll out gigabit-capable, reliable broadband across the UK.

Improved connectivity unlocks new opportunities and fuels innovation, supporting the Prime Minister's priority of growing the economy by creating better paid jobs.

Around 62,000 homes and businesses in Norfolk stand to benefit from £114 million of Project Gigabit investment, across locations including Buxton, Castle Acre and Horning. A further 8,000 premises in the northwest of the county are being reviewed for inclusion subject to survey in the next six months.

This project is managed by BDUK who in turn have contracted CityFibre to do the actual work of installing the cabling.

CityFibre, the UK's largest independent full-fibre provider, will deliver gigabit-capable infrastructure for around 218,000 homes and businesses having secured £318 million of Project Gigabit funding after a competitive process. The provider will also be making a private investment of £170 million to deliver the project.

Decisions on where broadband infrastructure is installed will be made by BDUK and not by SCC.

Survey work in all three counties commences immediately, with the first installations in the New Year and the first live connections expected by summer 2024.

Once connected, residents and businesses will enjoy access to broadband services over a network capable of supporting speeds of up to 10Gbps.

July 2023

Norfolk and Suffolk councils given authority and funding to help nature's recovery

Suffolk and Norfolk County Councils have been formally appointed by Government as responsible authorities for preparing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for their respective counties.

This means that they will be working together to help improve wildlife habitats and reverse the decline of biodiversity across the region, working with local communities to develop a tailored nature recovery strategy for their areas.

They will also work with other local planning authorities, the Broads Authority, Natural England, and a wide range of stakeholders and partners, including farming and landowner groups.

This is all part of Government's ambition to further drive nature recovery, with 48 individual local authorities across the country receiving allocations from a £14 million funding pot. Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils will receive £333,000 and £282,000 respectively over two years to fund this work. With the best ways to support nature recovery depending on local character and geography, Local Nature Recovery Strategies will help communities map out the action needed in their area to restore nature.

The Norfolk and Suffolk councils have already been working closely with each other, jointly hosting the Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership, and a host of other stakeholders and interested parties to prepare for this moment. The two authorities have pooled resources and expertise and to ensure that strategies effectively join up across the two counties to the wider benefit of nature and people.

The Strategies will focus on how to improve habitats and protect the natural environment across the region, with local approaches tailored to the specific circumstances of each area. Norfolk and Suffolk are home to a variety of beautiful and unique landscapes, from the chalk streams of the Norfolk Coast to the Stour estuary at the southeast of Suffolk and across many habitats in between, and specific policies will be drawn up to best protect and nurture each location.

Future plans will include working closely with other neighbouring counties, to identify and support opportunities for nature recovery at sufficient scale to really benefit wildlife.

Suffolk receives £1.49m funding for walking and cycling pilot

Suffolk County Council has received more than £1 million from the government to fund participation in a national pilot scheme to promote cycling and walking as part of a more active lifestyle.

The county is receiving £1,495,506 over three years as one of 11 local authorities taking part in the £13.9 million Active Travel England social prescribing scheme.

Social prescribing is a national pilot scheme to promote cycling and walking as part of a more active lifestyle.

The project, launched in August 2022, is helping councils run trials to evaluate the impact of active travel on an individual's physical and mental health, such as through reduced demand for healthcare appointments and reliance on medication due to more physical activity.

This also includes allowing doctors and health workers to prescribe walking and cycling to improve patients' physical and mental health. As the scheme progresses, GP surgeries in the pilot areas of Ipswich and Lowestoft will be invited to take part.

Work is already underway with Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board and Suffolk Information Partnership to link some referral systems.

Suffolk will use its funding for projects that will see patients in parts of Ipswich and Lowestoft offered free access to guided walks, cycle training and bike loans.

Introductory walk and cycle groups are taking place now on Friday mornings in Ipswich at Murray Park and Holywells Park. In Lowestoft, they are operating from Normanston Park.

These will be available through July and August, with participants offered 1-1 journey planning, 1-1 buddy walking, or cycling and bike maintenance training.

From September, walking and cycling groups will take place across Ipswich at Whitton, Chantry, Gainsborough, Wherstead and Central Ipswich.

In Lowestoft they will be taking place at the Seafront, Normanston Park, Nicholas Everett Park and Sparrows Nest. Other venues will develop as the pilot progresses.

There will be varying levels of activity depending on health needs, with each activity lasting up to 90 minutes with a rest break and free drink in a local café.

There will be plenty of rest stops based on the needs of the participants. Equipment can be provided to include walking aids, bicycles, or e-bikes.

All activities are led by experienced and qualified cycle and walk leaders.

Later in the year other activities are planned in the form of community events, themed walks, or cycle rides, cycling courses and a digital walking app featuring challenges and treasure hunts focused on the areas of Ipswich and Lowestoft.

Participants within the target areas can be referred through a GP or voluntary group or a self-referral by contacting thewaytogosuffolk@suffolk.gov.uk or calling 01473 260060.

For more details about the scheme go the [Way To Go Suffolk](#) website.

Suffolk County Council has also received £545,528 over three years from the Government's Capability Fund to develop and invest in cycling initiatives.

This includes setting up an accessible cycling scheme in Stowmarket for those unable to use a bicycle and working with a selection of organisations offering their staff a free six-week e-bike trial - [launched with Associated British Ports at Port of Ipswich last November](#) - and which now has almost 30 bikes on trial around the county.

[Suffolk's Archive Service Achieves Full National Accreditation](#)

The service achieved Provisional Accreditation in March 2019 and today the UK Archive Service Accreditation Committee has moved Suffolk Archives from provisional to full accreditation status.

Accreditation is the UK quality standard which recognises good performance in all areas of archive service delivery. Achieving accredited status demonstrates that Suffolk Archives has met clearly defined national standards relating to management and resourcing; the care of its unique collections and the service it offers to a broad range of users.

Archive Service Accreditation is supported by a partnership of the Archives and Records Association (UK), Archives and Records Council Wales, National Records of Scotland, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Scottish Council on Archives, The National Archives, and the Welsh Government through its Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales division.

The Accreditation Panels are composed of Committee members nominated by the seven Accreditation partners and openly recruited from the archives sector.

The Archive Service Accreditation Panel "supported the move to full accreditation following the successful move to new premises at Ipswich. The Panel commended the determined efforts made by Suffolk Archives in developing and delivering community engagement across the county."

[August 2023](#)

[Formal opening of £1.3 million Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service training centre](#)

The Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Training Centre at Wattisham Flying Station near Stowmarket has recently undergone a £1.3 million upgrade.

It now boasts a tactical firefighting facility, which uses real fire and an LPG-fired facility to simulate incidents firefighters may be faced with.

The most recent addition is the modular office complex, which features additional classrooms and welfare facilities for all delegates and staff.

The centre was formally declared open at the annual base families' day on Thursday August 24 by Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Jon Lacey of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, and Colonel Toby R Moore MBE, Station Commander, Wattisham Flying Station.

The fire service training centre has been at Wattisham since 2011 and occupies a 17-acre site that previously housed the Bloodhound missile system from the Cold War.

The training centre is used throughout the year for a wide range of training requirements which include refresher and ongoing assessments by all staff.

Inflation, SEND school transport and care costs contribute to council's predicted overspend

Inflation, school transport for children with SEND, and looking after children in care are the main factors for SCC forecasting to spend £22.3m over its £688.1m budget for this year.

This is a similar story for many councils across the country, due to higher demand for their services, inflation remaining higher than expected for longer, and interest rates rising to levels not forecast by financial markets.

[Recent research by the County Councils Network](#) suggests that England's largest councils will need to make at least £1bn in savings to balance their current 2023/24 budgets.

A [BBC investigation](#) also reported that councils expect to be £5.2bn short of balancing budgets by April 2026, the average council facing a £33m predicted deficit by 2025-26. Suffolk County Council projects a 4% overspend (£29.3m), to be partially offset by an additional Section 31 grant from Government, and additional income from the pooling of business rates with the district and borough councils in Suffolk, totalling £7m.

Details of the main areas of overspend are:

- **School transport** - forecast to overspend by £11.4m (39% of the overspend), with £8.3m of this being travel costs for children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). This is largely due to more children with SEND needs, transport operators being in limited supply, and rising costs from those operators who are also feeling the impacts of inflation, especially fuel costs.

- **Children in care** - forecast to overspend by £8.2m (28% of the overspend). The council has a responsibility to provide care for children and young people under the age of 18. Some of these have incredibly complex needs requiring 24-hour care from multiple carers. There is currently an unexpectedly higher number of children requiring this support, with this costing an average of £22,700 per week, per child.

- **Adult care services** - forecast to overspend by £3.5m (12% of the overspend) for purchasing care, due to increases in demand, and staffing costs in the sector. The fees paid for residential and nursing placements remain high with 64% of new residential and nursing packages being above the published rate of £806 per week, with some specialist packages being over £1,500 per week.

- **Inflation** - inflation and interest rates have been higher than experienced in a generation, with the legacy of COVID-19 continuing to have a significant impact on various services. As an example, there is an estimated £3.0m (10% of the overspend) pressure as pay settlements continue to be above historical norms as inflation has remained stubbornly high during 2023 so far. High interest rates mean it has been more costly than anticipated to borrow money, which the council does to help fund big projects, such as upgrading highways, maintaining schools or developing household recycling centres.

In addition to the net overspend of £22.3m from this main budget, the council is forecasting an overspend of £15.8m against its £256.5m budget from the Dedicated Schools Grant and Pupil Premium Grant. This is money from Government specifically to fund schools and services for pupils. This overspend comes solely from resources spent on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision, not including school transport. Suffolk, like many other local authorities, is seeing a continuous increase in demand which is not being met by the same level of increase in funding.

Despite these challenges, council departments continue to make savings. This year's budget identified £25.1m of savings to be made, and the latest figures show that £20m of this is projected to be achieved. The Cabinet at Suffolk County Council will discuss the Q1 2023-24 Revenue Budget paper, at its meeting on 12 September 2023. [Cabinet papers are published on the Suffolk County Council website.](#)

Councils unite against National Grid pylon proposals

In a [joint letter to National Grid](#), the leaders of the three councils address the extensive impact on landscapes and local communities that the scheme would bring.

They also highlight that an offshore solution has not been sufficiently investigated, and the opportunities that this could bring to co-ordinate with other large-scale energy projects off the region's coast.

The Norwich to Tilbury project would see 114 miles of electricity pylons weave their way through the three counties. Only a small percentage of this cabling would go underground, an issue which the councils also raise, stating that more would be needed particularly in the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and near Diss and the Waveney Valley.

National Grid held a second, non-statutory consultation, which closed on 21 August 2023. It is expected that a statutory consultation will take place in 2024.

October 2023

New highways services arrive in Suffolk as multi-million-pound partnership goes live

The new contract, which is worth in the region of £800 million - £1 billion, will deliver highway projects and improvements across Suffolk for up to 20 years, including maintaining roads, pavements and rights of way, improving drainage, hedge trimming, construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting and much more.

Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services, was awarded Suffolk's new highways services contract back in February and since then has been working with Suffolk County Council to mobilise the new contract ahead of it commencing on 1 October.

When seeking a new highways partner, the county council wanted a keener focus on delivering greater social value, building on the council's commitment to carbon reduction and protecting the environment, using local skills and talent, and giving young people the opportunity to work in the sector.

With this in mind, the new partnership was built around six key contract objectives, which will form the basis for all that Suffolk Highways delivers going forward. These objectives are:

- Collaboration and Partnership
- Social Value
- Environment and Net Zero Carbon
- Customer Communication and Engagement
- Commercialism and Enterprise
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

To read about the new Suffolk Streetlighting contract with McCann, visit: [Go Live! Suffolk County Council Street Lighting Services Contract Gets Underway - McCann \(mccann-ltd.co.uk\)](#)

Developers risk "treating Suffolk communities with contempt" as the latest round of large-scale energy projects in Suffolk emerge

Energy developers who are bringing forward large-scale energy projects without speaking to councils or communities, were criticised heavily today (October 11th) by Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader of

Suffolk County Council and Cabinet member for Finance and the Environment, following the latest publication of National Grid's Transmission Entry Capacity (TEC) Register.

The TEC Register is a list of projects, which often end up as large nationally significant infrastructure projects (called NSIPs), that have secured the right to connect to National Grid's network if they are consented, under the Planning Act 2008 by government, not local councils. These connection offers, which form a legally binding contract with National Grid, are routinely published and made, prior to the development and consenting of electricity generation or storage projects.

The current list of connection offers published by National Grid shows that new projects have been offered connections at National Grid's sites in Suffolk, at Bramford near Ipswich, and at Yaxley, near Eye, in north Suffolk. These new projects are large-scale solar panel and battery storage proposals in the same style as the recent SUNNICA scheme in West Suffolk, which is a proposal to create a 2500-acre Solar Farm on the Suffolk Cambridgeshire border.

Suffolk County Council, which is recognised by the Government as a centre of excellence when it comes to managing the impacts of big energy schemes, has previously outlined its concerns over the way large energy developers treat communities. In July this year, Cllr Rout wrote to the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, to outline the significant shortfalls of the West Suffolk SUNNICA application, described as "the worst example of what can go wrong" when developers mistreat local communities.

These projects can now be brought forward by the respective developers for consideration under the NSIP programme and, if they meet the criteria, will be considered by the planning inspectorate for approval in due course. Due to the size of these proposals being like the SUNNICA proposal, if they do come forward, their planning applications will be ultimately decided by central government, not local councils.

New fund delivers digital boost for Suffolk

Almost £250,000 of funding was announced at an event today (October 25th), giving a boost to the county's ambitions to reduce the number of people excluded from the benefits of digital technology.

Suffolk County Council has contributed £100,000, with £143,000 coming from District and Borough Council funding, earmarked for digital inclusion projects.

Suffolk's Digital Inclusion Fund will be open to bidders from early November for initiatives that will support people of all ages, but particularly those who are at risk of being disadvantaged by being excluded from accessing digital support and information.

The fund has been created as a collaboration between Suffolk County Council, district and borough councils, voluntary and private sector partners and Suffolk Community Foundation. It is a direct result of Suffolk County Council's Policy Development Panel, held in 2022, which recommended a series of actions to reduce digital poverty and its effects in Suffolk.

The event called on key partners to support the new fund, making a further commitment to playing their part in the ambition for a digitally enabled Suffolk. Prospective bidders are encouraged to apply through Suffolk Community Foundation's website www.suffolkcf.org.uk

Evidence suggests that by not having the skills or the means to use online services – everything from online shopping, looking up important information and advice and using transactional services such as applying for bus passes – people are at risk of poorer health, reduced income and even a lower life expectancy.

In 2021, Healthwatch Suffolk, who participated in the event, co-produced principles for digital health and care. These principles provide important guidance for organisations intending to deliver health or social care services using digital to ensure people have a meaningful choice over how and when they access information and it is available to them in the format they need.

Speakers at the event included Cllr Bobby Bennett, Cllr Faircloth-Mutton, Stuart Keeble, Director of Public Health, Nick Khan, Strategic Director at East Suffolk Council and Andy Yacoub, Chief Executive of Healthwatch Suffolk, Melanie Craig, Chief Executive Officer of Suffolk Community Foundation and Tim Holder, Director of Development and Communications at Suffolk Community Foundation.

Healthwatch Suffolk's ***Digital Care and Health: Guiding principles for health and social care providers and commissioners planning or delivering digital care in Suffolk and northeast Essex*** is available at www.healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk

November 2023

Cabinet approved £10 million new funding to resurface residential roads

At Suffolk County Council's Cabinet meeting (7th November), Cabinet approved an extra £10 million to repair and resurface local roads in villages and residential areas across Suffolk.

The funding will nearly double Suffolk Highways' £11 million annual road maintenance budget but be targeted at smaller residential streets which are typically maintained less frequently than busier A and B roads.

Over recent years, the county council has recognised the importance of improving roads for residents, this new proposal follows the successful £21 million contribution towards the resurfacing of 1,000 miles of road between 2017 and 2021, and more recently the committed £21 million between 2021 – 2025 to increase pavement maintenance, deliver drainage improvement schemes and repair road signs.

It is hoped that the extra £10 million boost to resurface some local roads, minor rural roads and urban cul-de-sacs would result in a reduction of new potholes, which in turn will reduce the overall financial burden on the council's emergency and reactive repair budgets. Between 2020 and 2023, 2 out of 3 pothole repairs were carried out on local roads, minor rural roads, and urban cul-de-sacs. During that period, more than half of all defects reported by the public were on these types of roads.

The extra investment will make use of more sustainable materials such as warm mix asphalts that have a lower CO2 footprint than traditional hot mix asphalts and which include recycled materials to reduce raw material use; resulting in a more positive impact on Suffolk's environment.

Government backs A12 road improvements with funding commitment

The government has confirmed (on 31st October) funding for a transformative package of improvements as part of Suffolk County Council's A12 Major Road Network scheme.

The scheme will see upgrades to the key roundabouts from the A14 at Seven Hills, east of Ipswich, north to the A1152 at Woods Lane, and a new dual carriageway section replacing the existing single carriageway bottleneck at Seckford Hall between the B1438 and B1079.

It will also deliver improvements to bus links and walking and cycling connections to reduce the issue of severance for communities on either side of the A12 – for example, where the A12 separates houses from local employment and retail areas. The Department for Transport has committed to funding up to £ 54 million of the scheme's estimated £ 64 million total cost. The remainder of the cost will be funded by local development contributions, including from Sizewell C and Brightwell Lakes.

Extra £108 million for Suffolk's roads welcomed

Suffolk County Council has welcomed the Government announcement - which is part of a Department for Transport plan to pump £609 million into highway maintenance in the East of England. £107,590,000 has been ringfenced for Suffolk over the next decade, including £3.4 million in this financial year.

The funding is part of the Government's Network North plan, with money redirected from HS2 funding. Transport Secretary Mark Harper MP today set out his £8.3 billion national long-term plan to resurface 5,000 miles of roads across the country.

Other projects in the East of England set to benefit from the Network North money includes the transformation of the Ely Junction to give an extra six freight trains per day access to the Port of Felixstowe and [upgrades to key roundabouts on the A12, from Seven Hills to Woods Lane](#). A new dual-carriageway section will be built to replace the existing single-carriageway bottleneck at Seckford Hall between the B1438 and B1079.

Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care service rated Good overall by Care Quality Commission

Suffolk County Council has been awarded an indicative overall rating of "Good" for the quality of its Adult Social Care services.

Following a period of intense inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Suffolk County Council has become one of the first councils nationwide to achieve this standard.

Earlier this year CQC announced that 5 local authorities with responsibility for adult social care, including Suffolk, had volunteered to be part of a Local Authority Assessment Pilot, to help CQC develop the new model of inspection to help assess councils against the requirements of the Care Act. This model would then be rolled out across the country with all 153 Local Authorities with responsibility for Adult Social Care being inspected by the commission.

The assessment process began this summer with a request for information to each local authority taking part in the pilot. This collected the written evidence needed to allow CQC to understand how each council is delivering its adult social care services. Following on from this initial ask, the County Council was then required to arrange over 40 different meetings including 4 staff drop-in sessions, with over 150 people, including staff, partners, providers, carers, and people with lived experiences. These meetings allowed the CQC inspection team to meet people directly and ask questions to help further evidence the quality of social care services provided. CQC's final report rated the overall quality of Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care services as "Good" and highlighted areas of strength including, the quality of its leadership, the culture of learning and support for staff, the range of digital care options available, the good relationships between social care and health colleagues and locality team knowledge and understanding of community needs.

Almost £1 million extra committed to investigating significant flooding following Babet

Suffolk County Council has committed almost £1 million of funds to bring in additional flood investigation specialists as the response to Storm Babet continues.

Since the storm, targeted recovery work has been carried out across the county to ensure damaged highway infrastructure is repaired, those whose properties were flooded get help and that investigations can start which will identify how to reduce flood risk.

As lead local flood authority, the county council has a duty to investigate significant flooding under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act. These investigations help to establish the source of flooding, factors which may have caused or exacerbated the flooding, the impacts on people, services and infrastructure and any actions which could be taken to increase resilience to future storm events.

In any usual year, Suffolk County Council carries out around three or four of these investigations. Following Babet, up to 100 look set to be needed.

The Government has now confirmed the arrangements for the DEFRA-funded scheme which means flooded property owners can apply for up to £5,000 to help make their homes and businesses more resilient to future flooding. Suffolk County Council will therefore start to promote, administer and audit the scheme.

Council's Centre of Excellence to go nationwide

The council has successfully bid for £99,000 from the Government's Innovation and Capacity Fund, which will be spent on more events and materials to upskill and share good practice with councils around England, with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

Suffolk's Centre of Excellence was established in August 2022 and has already engaged with 16 local authorities across the East of England, with 429 representatives attending webinars and a conference, held at The Apex in Bury St Edmunds. The new funding will now extend these offers across the country.

The council was recognised by the Government last year for its knowledge and expertise when engaging with NSIPs such as Sizewell C, Lowestoft's Gull Wing, National Grid upgrades and offshore wind farms. The county council has long recognised that town and parish councils, who have limited resources, can easily be overwhelmed by the magnitude of NSIPs - the new funding will enable bespoke guidance to be published in partnership with Suffolk Association of Local Councils.

The funding will also allow previous work to continue, such as updating and creating more accessible guides for local authorities, and progress guidance materials for developers.

December 2023

More public money for adult and children's care, but difficult decisions are needed to balance the books

In the next two years, Suffolk County Council needs to pump almost £74 million extra into protecting the county's most vulnerable residents.

- £74 million extra needed to protect the most vulnerable over two years
- £64.7 million savings to be made over two years
- Council set to reduce workforce, services and use savings

As part of financial plans to prioritise those in greatest need, an additional £42.7 million for children's services and £29.9 million for adult care are being proposed.

Along with local authorities up and down the country, the council has been hit hard by inflation and rising demand for services such as children's care, special educational needs and disabilities and home to school transport. It means having to make difficult decisions about the services it provides, including £64.7 million of savings in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

The two-year savings proposals, which have been [published on the council's website](#) today, include:

- £11 million of staffing costs through changing the way services are delivered and restructuring across the council.
- £30.6 million of additional savings from an extension of the council's hugely successful Adult Social Care Transformation programme, which has focused on reducing demand for more expensive social care options by boosting people's independence and ability to stay well for longer through innovative methods including cutting edge care technology. This transformation programme has already saved £30.7 million over the last six years

- £0.5 million of savings by stopping core funding to Art and Museum sector organisations. To assist with the transition, £528,000 of COVID recovery money will be made available to Arts and Museum sector organisations for 2024/25 which will fully cover the funding reduction for one year. £140,000 of savings by centralising Suffolk Archives to The Hold and closing the branches in West and East Suffolk. In February 2023, the council committed £3.4m to relocate the West
- current location would have required over £5 million to protect the historic records and meet modern archive standards. West Suffolk Council has since decided not to progress with the Western Way development, ending that opportunity. Centralising the three branches into one brings Suffolk in line with the majority of archive services across the country and is better value for taxpayers' money.
- £15.9 million of reserves will be used to balance the 2024/25 budget.

Following the recent funding announcement from the Government, Suffolk County Council will not receive enough funding to keep pace with inflation or the level of demand for services. The council has joined national calls for additional funding and lobbied the Chancellor of the Exchequer directly.

[Full details of Suffolk County Council's financial plans for 2024/25](#) will be presented to its Scrutiny Committee meeting on 11 January.

The proposals would give the council a budget of around £752 million for 2024/25, made up of funding coming from Government, business rates, charges for services and council tax. The proposed budget would require a 4.99% increase in council tax in next year. This would be made up of a 2.99% increase in general council tax and a 2% increase dedicated to funding adult care.

This means the costs for a household would be:

- Band B property: £23.50 per week (£1.12 per week increase from 2023/24) (Band B properties are the most common in Suffolk)
- Band D property: £30.21 per week (£1.43 per week increase from 2023/24)

[The budget proposals](#) will be discussed at the council's Scrutiny Committee and then presented at the Cabinet meeting on 30 January. At the Full Council meeting on 15 February, the proposals will be debated, with a vote taking place on the budget for 2024/25 – the first year of the two-year budget proposals. The Scrutiny Committee meeting will be available to stream on [Suffolk County Council's YouTube channel](#), and public questions can be submitted in advance, details available at www.suffolk.gov.uk

January 2024

Visitor attractions invited to join 'Good Journey' scheme

Suffolk Growth Partnership and Suffolk County Council have teamed up with the national organisation 'Good Journey' – the UK experts in car-free leisure – in a push to cut carbon emissions and widen access to our leisure, culture and nature for more people.

The initiative, launching in March 2024, supports Suffolk's Greenest County journey towards a carbon net zero visitor economy and will welcome car-free visitors to an array of attractions across Suffolk.

Around 25 local tourism and visitor attractions are now invited to join the Suffolk Good Journey scheme offering residents and visitors discounts and incentives to leave the car at home and explore more of the county on foot, by bike or using public transport. Suffolk visitor attractions participating will be supported and feature on goodjourney.org.uk – providing easy travel information and discounts to domestic and international visitors.

Visitor attractions participating in the Suffolk Good Journey scheme will also form part of a marketing campaign showcasing sustainable tourism visits to Suffolk, offering adventures by train, bus, bike and foot to suit all ages and tastes – from exploring the towns, coast and countryside, and local food and drink delicacies to discovering the cultural and heritage attractions and film locations.

Visitor attractions and venues interested in joining Suffolk Good Journey county can find out more details by contacting Loretta Jones at Good Journey on loretta@goodjourney.org.uk or info@suffolkgrowth.co.uk

Council to propose new funding for arts & heritage in Suffolk

Suffolk County Council is today (26th January) announcing its intention to create a new funding pot open to all arts and heritage organisations in the county.

- Core funding for nine arts and heritage organisations still to cease after 2024/25
- New £500,000 funding pot proposed from 2025/26, open to all arts and heritage organisations in Suffolk
- Proposal to be tabled at Cabinet meeting on 30 January

Following this week's announcement from government that £600 million of further funding will be available to local councils, the council intends to propose a new £500,000 project fund to which all Suffolk's arts and heritage organisations can apply.

However, this does not alter the difficult financial decisions the council is having to make so that it can prioritise spending on services like SEND, home to school transport and children in care. An extra £74 million is still needed over the next two years to protect the county's most vulnerable adults and children.

Proposals to end the core funding of £528,000 of nine arts and heritage organisations after the 2024/25 financial year, are still in place. This funding will be replaced with the new £500,000 project funding pot, open to all arts and heritage organisations, from April 2025.

The new £500,000 fund would contribute to delivering on the council's ambitions such as looking after the health and wellbeing of Suffolk's residents, particularly those most in need of extra support to live as safely, independently, and healthily as possible.

The impact of the government announcement for further funding for councils will be discussed at Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Meeting on 30 January 2024, where proposals will be explored.

February 2024

Public consultation on Suffolk County Council's proposed devolution deal started on 18th March

A 10-week public consultation on our proposed devolution deal with the Government will start on 18th March and run through until 26th May. The consultation will be in two main parts – an open survey, hosted by Suffolk County Council, that any residents can complete and a sample survey of 1000 Suffolk residents conducted independently by Ipsos Mori. The consultation will be available through our website www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution and social media. There will also be media coverage highlighting the consultation.

Dragon Patcher lands in Suffolk to bolster response to rural potholes

Suffolk Highways has welcomed the new pothole-repairing machine to help fix the growing number of potholes experienced nationally during the winter season, with a trial set to initially target defects in rural Suffolk.

The Dragon Patcher is a machine that releases compressed air which cleans the surface of the road, before heating the surface to a temperature that enables repair material to bond effectively with the road surface, allowing the pothole to be repaired with an aggregate and hot bitumen material.

Compared with the traditional approach of repairing potholes, the Dragon Patcher can work five times faster. This trial is in addition to the potholes being repaired around the clock as part of our routine repair programme, during the past two months Suffolk Highways has repaired 2,851 potholes across Suffolk. Fuelled by the biodiesel, HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil), the patcher reduces raw material use and creates zero waste and has shown to provide significant carbon savings when compared to traditional patching techniques.

Once the trial ends in Suffolk, a decision will be taken on whether to roll out the technology across the county.

Council budget approved with a focus on protecting the most vulnerable

Suffolk County Council has confirmed its financial budget for 2024-25.

The £752.8m package was approved at the Full Council meeting on Thursday 15 February 2024, with the priority to protect vulnerable adults and children across the county.

Despite the recently announced uplift in government funding and asking residents for the maximum Council Tax contribution, it is still not sufficient to cover the rising costs imposed by inflation, or the increasing levels of demand for services - in particular children's care, special educational needs, and disabilities (SEND) and home to school transport.

However, as a direct result of the government's recent intervention to provide further funding, the following proposals were approved:

- £500,000 of project funding will be made available to all arts and heritage organisations in Suffolk from April 2025 – it is intended that this funding will be available every year going forward
- £528,000 of core funding to nine arts and heritage organisations in Suffolk will end in March 2025
- £45,000 will be reinstated to support the County Music Service from April 2024
- £9 million of reserves will be used to balance the 2024-25 budget

To provide care and services for vulnerable children and adults, the next two years will see an additional £42.7 million allocated to children's services, and an additional £29.9 million for adult services. However this means £64.7 million of savings needs to be found at the same time.

These significant savings over the next two years include:

- £11 million of staffing costs through changing the way services are delivered and restructuring across the council
- £30.6 million of additional savings from an extension of the council's hugely successful Adult Social Care Transformation programme

The council's budget will increase by 8.6% (from £693.0 million to £752.8 million), some of which is generated by a 4.99% increase in the council's share of Council Tax, and additional Government funding. The increase of 4.99% to Council Tax is made up of a 2.99% increase in general Council Tax and a 2.00% increase dedicated to funding adult care. This will see the council's share of a Band B property's bill rise by £1.12 per week, compared to last year.

More of Suffolk's tree cover and orchards to be restored

Suffolk County Council has secured funding of £201,213 from the government's Local Authority Treescapes Fund on behalf of Babergh District Council, East Suffolk Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Ipswich Borough Council and West Suffolk Council.

The funding will go towards the planting of the trees, many of which are 'standards' around six feet in height when planted. The funding also covers three years of maintenance to help the trees become established.

The Fund aims to restore tree cover in non-woodland areas which may have been impacted by issues such as disease, habitat degradation or ageing tree stock. Many of the proposed projects will involve their local community and pupils from local schools. Creating more orchards is one of the themes across the planting projects. Nationally, there has been a decline in the number of orchards because of commercial pressures and increased imports.

This loss of orchards has impacts on the species they support, with less blossom and fruit for food, and less shelter and shading. It also means we are losing some of our heritage varieties and reducing genetic diversity.

One example of this is the creation of a community orchard in Woods Meadow Country Park, near Lowestoft. Local varieties of apple, plum, gage and cherry trees will be sourced from the Suffolk & Apples & Orchards Project. The trees will be cared for by wardens, the Woods Meadow volunteer group, the local primary school, and local residents. The fruit will be available for the local visitors to the park to pick and eat, but also a good source of food for birds and wildlife.

Council to review weed control for roads and pavements

In February 2022, the council agreed to stop using glyphosate in its routine weed treatment programmes, to find more natural alternatives to help protect the local environment.

However, the alternative products proved unable to meet requirements, which was further exacerbated by exceptional growing conditions. Multiple applications were sometimes needed which could introduce other negative environmental impacts.

It has proved a challenge to reduce high-performing treatments, whilst significantly mitigating the environmental impact. Other local authorities locally have experienced a similar situation.

Regular weed treatment on our highway network will continue using a variety of methods, with plans for glyphosate being considered only when appropriate – the ambition still remains to reduce the use of glyphosate as far as possible.

Teams will continue to monitor and research the different approaches being used to remove weeds on our roads and pavements. Where needed, glyphosate would be used responsibly as it is one of the most cost-effective and long-lasting solutions.

£4.4 million to be spent on additional staff to strengthen SEND reform

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet confirmed that 60 new members of staff will be recruited to drive forward important reform to the way special educational needs and disability (SEND) services are delivered in Suffolk. New Cabinet Member for Education and SEND, Andrew Reid, today reaffirmed Suffolk County Council's commitment to ensuring improvements to the SEND service go further and faster. This includes an increase in permanent SEND staff of nearly 15%. These new posts will support the improvement of the quality and timeliness of assessments, plans, reviews, and communications with families.

In January, a report by Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) found significant concerns with the way SEND services are delivered by the NHS and Suffolk County Council. In response to this, the Local Area Partnership, made up of Suffolk County Council, the NHS Suffolk and Northeast Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) and NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB, must submit a Priority Action Plan by March 7 outlining the improvement programme. In order to support this improvement programme, an additional £4.4 million was signed off during the budget discussions at Full Council on February 15. Of this, £3.4million will provide 46 new full-time posts – a increase of 14.76% in current staffing levels. An additional £1million will be spent in 2024/25 to fund 14 temporary posts. Cabinet today agreed to delegate authority to approve the priority action plan to be submitted to Ofsted and CQC on March 7 to the statutory director of children's services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and SEND. The priority action plan is also being approved at the Suffolk and North-East Essex ICB Executive and the Norfolk and Waveney ICB Executive on 4 March 2024.

March 2024 Funding boost for new and existing bus services across Suffolk

Suffolk County Council is to spend £3.6 million of Government funding over the next two years on strengthening and expanding Suffolk's bus network.

The council has been awarded £1.8 million per year for two years – a total of £3.6 million – from the Department for Transport's Bus Service Improvement Fund Phase 2 (BSIP 2, renamed from BSIP+) to deliver improvements to public transport in Suffolk.

Suffolk's Enhanced Partnership, which represents the county council and local bus operators, has agreed to allocate the first year's funding in three ways.

First, following an open call for suggestions, £1.2 million will be allocated to support operator- and local community-led proposals for new or enhanced services across the county.

Submissions were reviewed against criteria including value for money, the number of passengers that could benefit, how they integrate with existing services, and their likely long-term financial sustainability after the BSIP 2 funding ends.

Schemes awarded funding include:

- Enhancements of the 84 and 753 services connecting Sudbury to Colchester and Bury St Edmunds
- Enhancements of the 521 service connecting Halesworth, Saxmundham and Aldeburgh
- A re-route of the 14/15 service from Haverhill to Bury St Edmunds to serve West Suffolk Hospital and to increase frequency
- Enhancements to the Buzzabout community transport service serving villages north of Lowestoft
- New services connecting villages between Stowmarket and Mendlesham and surrounding villages
- Development of a new demand-responsive transport service to connect Brett Valley villages with commercial services in Hadleigh and Lavenham
- New services from Bramford to Ipswich and Stowupland to Stowmarket
- Enhancements to the operation of the Beyton/Thurston/Elmswell/Woolpit taxibus

A full list of the successful schemes can be found [here](#).

All schemes are expected to commence operations between April 2024 and September 2024. A further £450,000 has been allocated to commercial bus operators in order to support and stabilise the existing bus network and maintain essential social and economic transport links for local communities.

The final £150,000 will be used to develop bus priority schemes, creating opportunities for smoother and more convenient bus journeys and making bus travel a more attractive transport option.

It is proposed that funding for the successful schemes will continue into the second year using a similar proportion of that year's allocation.

A decision on how to spend any remaining funding will be informed by further reviews of the existing commercial bus network in collaboration with the operators and continued feedback from partners and communities.

Suffolk to benefit from huge £7.3 million EV investment

Suffolk County Council has secured millions of pounds of funding to help develop electric vehicle (EV) charging across the county.

The county council has been allocated the money after successful bids to the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund, which supports local authorities to plan and deliver charging infrastructure for residents without off-street parking.

Suffolk residents without off-street parking will benefit from £5.9 million to support EV charging, and a further £1.4 million will be used to develop the county's existing EV charging network in community locations.

Homes without a driveway face challenges when it comes to charging an EV - in some cases it is just not possible, and it is unsafe and hazardous to run cables across pavements. Along with inconvenient access to public charging, these are common reasons that people give for not choosing an EV.

However, the funding will start to provide solutions to some of these issues, with opportunities to develop:

- kerbside charging points
- community charging hubs
- car park charging points

- fast and rapid charging point infrastructure improvements

Suffolk residents are invited to 'nominate' their street for consideration for on-street charging points, using [this online form](#). Although not every road may be suitable, suggestions from residents will help indicate where there is demand for charging points. This investment continues the council's contribution to the [Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan](#), which identifies that the decarbonisation of vehicles in Suffolk is a key aspect of meeting the net zero by 2030 target for the county.

Complementing the new funding, is Suffolk County Council's recently published [Suffolk Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy](#). It has been written with the input of all borough and district councils, aiming to improve the EV charging experience for drivers in Suffolk.

Even more potholes filled as Roadmender trial hits Suffolk

The Roadmender has arrived in Suffolk, as the county sees a 34% increase in pothole repairs through extra investment, more resource, and new ways of working.

The county council has been working to repair the increasing number of potholes which have been breaking out following very wet and cold weather recently. One way in which the council is increasing its repair rate is by trialling new methods of fixing potholes.

Suffolk Highways welcomed 'Highway Workforce' with their Roadmender Elastomac solution - a repair method which results in sealed, longer-lasting pothole repairs; which are quicker to carry out.

The trial which began on 11 March, is eco-friendly and lowers the carbon footprint of repairs by 80% is effectively supporting Suffolk Highways in its fight against the rising number of potholes on the county's roads.

The 'Roadmender' works on both asphalt and concrete roads and is designed for repairs to all types of road defects and is capable of overlaying areas with multiple defects in a single visit. The process is more efficient, reducing material and waste by 90% and avoiding unnecessary disruption on roads.

April 2024

Over 400 Suffolk roads set for upgrade as largest ever surfacing project gets underway

Residents across Suffolk are set to benefit from 421 newly surfaced roads this year - almost doubling the number of roads completed last year, as Suffolk Highways' largest ever resurfacing programmes get underway.

With the start of the surface dressing programme beginning this week, 102 roads will be surface dressed, whilst a further 319 sites will benefit from a full machine resurfacing during the year.

Surface dressing is an efficient, sustainable and cost-effective maintenance treatment that prolongs the life of a road surface – it restores skid resistance and seals the road surface from water, whilst removing potholes and improving level differences of the road.

The surface dressing project sits alongside the programmes for reactively repairing potholes and machine resurfacing roads, all complementing one another. During the past six months, Suffolk Highways has repaired over 9,000 potholes and resurfaced 41 roads, with a further 278 roads planned for resurfacing in this financial year.

New for this year, Suffolk Highways' supply chain partner, Hazell & Jefferies, has invested in new vehicles which allow the new surface to be laid in a safer and more efficient way. For example, the new vehicles eliminate the risk of hitting overhead cables or structures.

- For more information on surface dressing and to view this year's programme, please visit: [Surface dressing](#)
- For more information on machine resurfacing and to view this year's programme, please visit: [Road Resurfacing](#)

99% of pupils receive a preferred primary school on National Offer Day

99.36% of children were offered a place on National Offer Day at one of their three preferred primary schools and 96.52% were offered a place at their first preference school.

Suffolk County Council received 6,844 applications from parents and carers indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2024.

Families who applied online can log in to the online service from today to see the school their child has been offered. They will also receive an email to confirm this offer unless they have indicated that they do not wish to. Letters will be sent to parents who made a paper application by second class post today (16 April 2024)

Once school places have been confirmed, parents need to consider how their child will get to and from school. If their child is eligible for Suffolk County Council funded school travel they will receive an email by 10 May 2024 with details of how to opt-in.

Any parents or carers with a child born between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020 who have not yet applied for a school place should make an application immediately. Information on how to make an application can be found on the [School Admission pages](#) or by contacting Suffolk County Council on **0345 600 0981**.

For further information on how to view your offer online and guidance on what to do if you have not received your preferred offer, please read the [School admissions FAQ page](#).

New Independent Chair appointed to drive forward SEND reform

Suffolk County Council announces that Kathryn Boulton has been appointed as the new independent chair of the Local Area Partnership's SEND Improvement Board.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision is delivered by the Local Area Partnership in Suffolk, which includes Suffolk County Council, NHS Suffolk and North-East Essex Integrated Care Board and NHS Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board.

The SEND Improvement Board was set up in response to the inspection of SEND services in Suffolk in November last year by Ofsted and CQC and is a requirement of the Improvement Notice that will be issued to Suffolk by the Department for Education. Made up of senior leaders from the council and NHS, board members will oversee the implementation and review of plans and services aimed at improving the way SEND services are delivered in Suffolk. It will also ensure the successful delivery of the Priority Action Plan, which was co-produced following the inspection and has been agreed by the Department for Education. [You can read that plan online](#).

The new chair of the board, Kathryn, has 37 years of experience across children's services. With an education background and success in several senior leadership roles, Kathryn has significant experience of transforming SEND services in local authorities and ensuring the voices and experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families are central to the design and delivery of SEND services.

In addition to Kathryn's appointment, the Local Area Partnership will receive an Improvement Notice from the Department for Education. This was an expected outcome after the Ofsted and CQC inspection. It means that advisors from the Department for Education and NHS England will work with the Local Area Partnership to support and monitor improvement plans until further notice.

Highway Report and Statistics

Since Storm Babet in October 2023 (which generally coincided with the commencement of the new highways contract with Milestone) there has been a substantial increase in the number of customer reports received by Suffolk Highways.

Annual data from 2022/23 (40,003 customer reports) and 2023/24 (60,043 customer reports to 23 February) shows there has been an **increase of over 20,000 reports so far in 2023/24**.

If this continues at the same rate, it is expected that the volume of customer reports could top 65,000 **representing a 63% increase** on last year.

Between October and February, Suffolk Highway completed in total **10,533 safety defect repairs**, a 45% increase on the last 2 years. **7,328 road defect repairs** have been completed since October.

During the period October to February, the average number of reactive gangs provided is **20.2 per day** (excluding Dragon Patcher). For the same period during 2022/23, the old contract provided an average of 12.6 reactive gangs per day.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S ANNUAL REPORT MAY 2024

Since winning the Blakenham Ward for the Liberal Democrats in May 2023 I have been on a steep learning curve. All new recruits are required to attend a great deal of training from MSDC, which was very time-consuming. However, the bulk of the training is now finished with the exception of updates with regard to Planning.

I am on the Council's Audit and Standards Committee and a sub-committee related to Councillor conduct; a Clinical Governance Review Working Group (looking at boundary issues) and a Biodiversity Working Group. I took the Overview and Scrutiny training and the Planning Committee training and have on occasion, stood in for my fellow Lib Dem councillors who are on those committees.

I have enjoyed being a member of the Biodiversity Working Group. We have been looking at endangered animals, birds and insects as well as their habitats, discussing ways of preserving them and their habitats. I was interested to learn that the Blakenham/Somersham area has quite a strip of calcareous grassland which could host many scarce wild flowers. The group discussed adopting "mascot" species and we are focussing on hedgehogs, toads, swifts and bumblebees.

I have also enjoyed attending Parish Council meetings and Parish Meetings and hearing about their plans and their obligations and issues. I feel more connected to the parishes through them.

Unfortunately not every issue brought to me by parishioners is instantly solvable. I was pleased early in the year to be able to help a resident of a flat in Great Blakenham. She was disabled and found it difficult to access the bins on the ground floor but when she did so, she found them overflowing and crawling with maggots. I emailed the head of Public Realm and the bins were emptied the next day.

Last summer I went on a ward walk around Blueleighs (mobile home) Park with Sarah-Jane Hatt, community funding officer, Mark Emms, Operations Manager, Kelly Taylor, Food and Safety Technical Officer and two local residents of Blueleighs. The Council had previously been in touch with Wyldecrest homes, owners of the park, regarding breaches of the Caravan sites and control of development act 1960. After the visit a letter detailing the residents' issues was sent to Wyldecrest Homes.. Soon after a site map appeared on the notice board and bags of rubbish and rubble had disappeared from the entrance. Kelly noted that this was "a marathon and not a sprint" and I am reminded that I should chase up current progress.

Another longstanding issue is that of enforcement at "The Pit" in Flowton. The enforcement order dates from 2012. The owner of the clay pit is continually burning unpleasant substances and dumping rubbish onto his and his neighbour's land. He and

his sons have threatened villagers and, on one occasion, dropped tacks across the road. It is only noted that the enforcement officer has made one visit; however, he now tells me that he is working with the county council and the environment agency towards issuing an injunction.

I have had a couple of “neighbour issues” to deal with. One resident of Somersham at Cherrytree Cottages felt very intimidated by her opposite neighbour who shone a CCTV camera right into her bedroom. He was also quite threatening if she or her son tried to park in the layby outside his house. The man’s partner was actually the council tenant and the complainant told me that he was known locally as a fraudster.

The complainant had installed a CCTV camera herself as she was worried about the actions of her neighbour. However, this was turned against her when I raised the case with a local policewoman recommended to me by Cllr James Caston. Apparently the neighbour said that he was intimidated by **her** camera.

Another “neighbour” problem relates to owners and tenants of Park Cottages, Somersham. These were originally all council houses but some residents have bought their house. There is a shortage of parking and two residents (one owner, one tenant) were driving along a track designated a “path” to access their homes. However, another owner objected to them driving across a very small corner of her land. I have been working to get the Council to fulfil a covenant created in 1946 allowing them to surface this track. However, the tenancy services manager says that the Asset Management Team whom he reports to, are unwilling to spend money on this. I have copied all correspondence to the Leader of the Council, Andrew Mellen as the objecting owner had contacted him and in the hope that he might raise this issue with his fellow Green councillors.

A third “neighbour” issue related to a resident of Little Blakenham whose garden backed onto a footpath and another garden across the footpath. The owner of the garden had dumped an enormous pile of manure right by the fence, providing an ideal environment for flies and wasps as well as an unpleasant smell. I have emailed two environmental protection officers about this but have received no reply. Now that (hopefully) the weather is changing for the better, I will raise the topic again.

To turn to more pleasant topics I have given out all of my Locality Grant money for 2024:

Outdoor play equipment for Somersham Youth Club – Sarah Freeman – replacing existing, damaged equipment and replacing with new. Over thirty children attend the club.

New L.E.D. lights for Somersham & District Community Shop – Jennie Hutchinson.
Groundwork East had carried out an energy review and recommended that the shop lighting should be upgraded from filament light bulbs and fluorescent tubes to reduce energy consumption.

New external signage for Somersham & District Community Shop -Jennie Hutchinson.
Current signs were either broken or their lettering had faded. New signs are:

- 2 x free-standing metal signs at either end of the village
- Board to be displayed on the roadside adjacent to the shop
- 1 new sign outside the shop showing shop opening hours.

Gipping Valley Bowls Club, Great Blakenham – Michael Roberts
Ditch rubbers around the bowling green to catch wayward bowls.

Adrienne Marriott
Blakenham District Councillor
1st May 2024

Annual Report and Fabric Report
1st January 2023 - 31st December 2023



Chris Chambers

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Attached separately.

Rector's Annual Benefice Report for the Benefice of Bramford with Little Blakenham, Baylham and Nettlestead 2023

It's the time of year in our churches when we take stock of the previous year. We hold annual meetings in all our churches, at which we elect our churchwardens and receive reports on the activities and financial position of our Parishes.

As Rector of 4 Rural parishes, I am asked sometimes if I enjoy what I do, are you thinking of leaving? I reply I have been called to serve in these parishes, which is a privilege and blessing. We have been here amongst you all for three years, arriving during the lockdown period in 2021.

Our pattern of worship has settled into a regular routine following some tweaks, with a main Sunday service in one of the churches in the Benefice each Sunday.

I find it interesting to look at our visitor's books and see what people think of your Parish churches. A regular comment is always how lovely it is to find them open. On one occasion I meet a couple in St Mary's Bramford, who had been looking at our notice board. They wondered why a village the size of Bramford only had an electoral roll of 20. All I could say was that on major celebrations people do come, but life is so busy for many. Coming to church on a Sunday morning is no longer a priority in their lives. This is of course true of each parish. I have in the past year attempted to be present and be seen, and people are very polite and talk to me, but the often-repeated quote is, I used to go but don't anymore. I continue to pray for growth.

Another area which continues to be a issue is church finances. I am extremely grateful to our four church treasurers for their diligence. We continue to find it challenging to cover the costs of running our church buildings. Not helped with the cost of fuel in 2023.

Our parishes hold regular fundraising events and these are essential if we are to keep our churches open. But we need to find ways of encouraging more regular giving in our parishes if we are to sustain the churches.

As you know I am a House for duty Priest, who is contracted to work two days a week plus Sunday. For this I am given accommodation, but no salary. The Diocese requested of the benefice a payment of parish share of £23,600 for 2023 which we managed to pay. If in the future you were to get a full-time paid priest without a doubt this would rise to close to £65,000, which clearly based on current income would not be achievable.

Also, alongside Parish share we have general running cost for each parish. I continue to pray that a way may be found for a revival in generosity to the church in all parishes too. Let's look back at what has been done.

Services

A Sunday service at least once a month in one of our churches in the Benefice. 8am Book of common prayer Communion,
Morning prayer said everyday Monday to Friday in a church. Midweek Holy Communion every Wednesday at noon at Bramford.

Others Services during the year

Ash Wednesday, Lent course, Holy week services of meditation, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday walk of Witness, Easter Saturday, Easter Day, Pentecost, Harvest. Remembrance, Carol and crib Services, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Pet Service All Souls Service

Events in the Benefice

Easter egg hunt, Bramford Fun Day
Lt Blakenham Snowdrops, Lt Blakenham Jumble sale, Lt Blakenham Village fete and Dog Show
Harvest supper in all four churches
Talk by Roy Tricker at Baylham, Talk at Baylham about Bats followed by BBQ (Not Bats)
Coffee mornings at Baylham, Bramford and Lt Blakenham
Christmas bazaar at Bramford and Little Blakenham
Ipswich wind band concert at Bramford
Community churchyard tidy at Baylham

During the year I visit Bramford Primary School on a weekly basis and Bramford Church School visited the church for Easter, Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas services.

I visit Baylham Care home every Month for a short service and also offer home communion to a number of our parishioners who are unable to come to church.

There are regular services at Cherryfields in Bramford which are in the most run by The Methodist church, but on occasions I lead the service. We had a joint service in Cherryfields at Christmas.

During the year, we enjoyed a number of Baptisms in the benefice, and several Weddings. Funerals continue to be a large part of my ministry in the Benefice.

There has also been a major piece of work undertaken for St Mary's Nettlestead. Following on from the replacement of the roof tiles, rainwater goods and drainage, the second phase of the project has progressed with plans close to approval to for a reordering of the west end, which includes the provision of a small kitchen area and new storage. Removal of several pews at the west end on both the north and south side, and the font relocated and the plinth reduced, alongside this the font is to be taken away for restoration. There are plans to update the lighting and heating, and to remove the internal render up to window height and render with new lime mortar and lime wash. There is also plan to remove some of the unsightly concrete render on the exterior of the church. I wish to thank the PCC at Nettlestead for all their hard work in this endeavour, but especially Dr Maureen Gardiner.

We continue also to investigate the East end of Little Blakenham Church, relating to potential movement in the structure, all of which is dependent on funds being available.

We were pleased to receive a donation of £500 to renew the lighting on the spire at Bramford with new low energy fittings, we also repaired a leak in the roof and led work on the roof of the tower.

I am pleased that each of our churches has a Church Warden and wish to thank, Paul (Bramford), Viv (Baylham) Pam (Nettlestead) Michele (Little Blakenham) for their hard work and support.

May I also thank all members of our four PCCs for their work over the past 12 months. We are always looking for new members, please contact me if you are interested?

Finally, I was pleased in this third year in the benefice to finally lead Christmas Eve services in every church in the Benefice for the first time since I arrived in 2021.

I continue to minister to you all and pray that our parishes remain a focal point for the residents of each parish in our Benefice. I thank all those who have supported our churches during the year.

Reverend Eric Falla
Rector

2023 Little Blakenham Annual and Fabric Report

Population Little Blakenham

How many people live locally?	Children Under 16	Working Age Adults (16 to 64)	People Aged 65 +	Dependency Ratio
295	68 (23.0%)	179 (60.7%)	48 (16.3%)	0.65
Males: 48.5% Females: 51.5%	Mid Sflk Avg = 18.4% England Avg = 18.9%	Mid Sflk Avg = 61.5% England Avg = 64.7%	Mid Sflk Avg = 20.1% England Avg = 16.3%	Mid Sflk Avg = 0.63 England Avg = 0.55

Source: Little Blakenham Housing and Population date profile Mid Suffolk District Council, 2019. <https://www.babergh.gov.uk> › Parish-Profiles

The Parochial Church Council (P.C.C) are Charity Trustees governed by the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956. PCC members hold office in accordance with the Church Representation Rules either ex officio, by election or appointment at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting or by co-option.

This Annual and Fabric, Goods and Ornaments Report of St Mary the Virgin Church is a significant document which reflects the life of our village church in accordance with The Church Representation Rules (Rule 9(1) (b)) which requires 'an annual report on the proceedings of the parochial church council and the activities of the parish generally.'

Aims and Objectives

The sole charitable object of the PCC is the 'promotion of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England' and has a statutory responsibility to co-operate with the Vicar in promoting in the parish, the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

As Charity Trustees, PCC members have a duty to meet the 'public benefit' requirement and to demonstrate that our aims are for the public benefit through the advancement of education, religion, or relieving poverty, alongside being lawfully responsible for the maintenance of the fabric of the parish church and churchyard and to consider how to manage maintenance issues, including those arising out of the Quinquennial Inspections.

Our first objective is Christian fellowship through regular provision for worship and promotion of the Gospel to our community, alongside enabling individuals to receive spiritual guidance and education in the Christian doctrine and to use that strength to serve God and contribute towards a better society and financial stability for the future vision of our parish church.

Our main aims this year have been:

- Promote the Christian doctrine through regular services and reintegrate our church back into the community and beyond.
- To support and work in partnership with Reverend Eric Falla.
- Promote and deliver fundraising events to the community to assist building relationships, friendships, and financial resources to aid our churches financial stability.
- Continue addressing List, A items on the 2020 Quinquennial Report, compiling a maintenance plan but specifically the monitoring, management and continued maintenance of the East wall.
- Encourage and welcome new members to our congregation, volunteers, and new PCC members.

PCC Membership and Roles



The PCC APCM was held on 28th May 2023 and the following persons have served as members for all of the period.

Priest in Charge – Reverend Eric Falla (installed 12th April 2021, Instituted 22nd March 2023)

Churchwarden - Michele Kenningale

Vacancy

Secretary – Michele Kenningale

Treasurer – Julia Buckmaster sadly resigned on 18th September 2023 The PCC wish to thank Julia for all her hard work and continued support.

New Treasurer's and Signatory's - Michele Kenningale and Angeline Whittaker (from 19th September 2023)

Deanery Synod Representative - Angeline Whittaker

Vacancy

Electoral Roll Officer – Vacant

Safeguarding: Rev Eric Falla

Health and Safety: Rev Eric Falla and Michele Kenningale

Designated Fire Officer: Angie Whittaker

Lorraine Wright,

Rita Palmer.

PCC Meetings

In 2023 the PCC held 6 meetings and therefore met the required regulations of at least four meetings in a 12 Month period. PCC Meetings were held on:

16th January, 21st March, 28th May APCM followed by PCC meeting, 10th July, 4th September, 6th November.

Induction and Institution of Rector The Reverend Eric Falla

On Wednesday 22nd March 2023 at St Mary's Church, Bramford, there was a A Service of Induction and Institution of the Reverend Eric Falla as Rector of the Benefice of Bramford with Little Blakenham, Baylham and Nettlestead by The Right Reverend Dr Mike Harrison, Bishop of Dunwich and The Venerable Dr David Jenkins, Archdeacon of Sudbury.

Electoral Roll

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Life Events 2023

Baptisms: One on 24th September 2023 (previous Baptism 23rd October 2022 which was the First Baptism since

7th

December 2014)

Confirmations: None since 1st November 1998.

Marriages: None

Note: The Marriage Register was deposited at Ipswich Registry Office in 2021 as per new guidelines. Prior to removal the last marriage documented in the Register was dated 6/11/2019).

Funerals: None (last funeral was on Wednesday 17th November 2021).

Church Services

Morning prayer is held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8:30am and a Sunday service with Holy Communion held on the 4th Sunday each month at 11am.

The return of regular services has positively increased since Rev Eric's arrival and PCC members give grateful thanks to those from our sister parishes who support us.

The tables below reflect monthly attendance although they may appear low, historically, the attendance numbers are consistent with those recorded at the start of the service register in 1977.

Morning Prayer

Morning Prayer 2023	Attendance	Morning Prayer 2023	Attendance	Morning Prayer 2023	Attendance
January 18 th	2	May 17 th	Not recorded	September 20 th	Not recorded
February 15 th	4	June 21 st	2	October 18 th	3
March 15 th	3	July 19 th	3	November 15 th	2
April 19 th	3	August 16 th	2	December 20 th	2

Table 2. Morning Prayer Attendance January 2023 – December 2023.¹

¹Sunday Worship

¹ St Mary the Virgin Church, Little Blakenham, Service Register.

Sunday worship is held on the fourth Sunday in the month at 11am.

Life since Covid is returning to some form of normality, including spiritually. We are pleased to report that all churches in the Benefice now receive full communion and have also replaced the traditional wafers with bread. Sunday worship is regularly supported by members from our sister parishes and our provision of post service homemade refreshments have become quite a social event and provides an opportunity to build relationships and have a chat.

There is 'giving basket' at the church at the font for donations all year round which are then distributed to local charities. We give thanks to those who have and continue to donate items.

Sunday Service 2023	Communicants	Attendance	Sunday Service 2023	Communicants	Attendance
January 22 nd	12	13	July 23 rd	24	25
February 26 th	8	11	August 27 th	17	18
March 26 th	15	17	September 24 th Baptism	20	48
April 23 rd	13	13	October 22 nd Harvest	15	16
May 28 th	15	19	November 26 th	15	18
June 25 th	15	15	December 24 th	No Communion	55 (including 7 children)

Table 2. Sunday Service Attendance, January 2023 – December 2023.²

Armistice Day, 11th November 2023



Sadly we were unable to provide a small service or dedication in 2023 to give thanks and remember all those who have lost their lives in the World Wars, especially our local man Percy Herbert Welham of the Suffolk Regiment who lived on Leather Bottle Hill and has a Commonwealth War Grave in our churchyard.

Children and Young Adults

We sadly have no young people presently who attend our church, this is an issue the PCC is keen to change and will be focusing upon over the next year and welcome and support any new members of our growing congregation.

Pastoral Care and Service to the Community

Pastoral care for one another and our wider community continues to be at the heart of our parish life. The contact numbers for the Vicar and Churchwarden are displayed on the church notice boards at the entrance gate and south porch, alongside the 'In Touch', ACNY, social media sites and the Benefice Facebook page for anyone with pastoral and safeguarding concerns.

Parish Safeguarding

The parish Safeguarding Policy is available for inspection in the parish church vestry. Eric is presently designated Safeguarding Officer, whilst the PCC attempt to find a willing candidate. Anyone with concerns regarding a safeguarding issue of children and vulnerable adults can contact Eric or the churchwarden.

Charitable Giving

Eric has introduced a 'giving basket' at the church font for donations all year round which are then distributed to local charities. We give thanks to those who have and continue to donate items. We also have an annual jumble sale and donate items that are not sold to various local charities.

Communication, Publicity.

The PCC recognises the importance of ensuring the church is open, welcoming and used by the community and visitors alike.

The PCC are keen for the church to be used not only for religious services but for reflection, social events and as a point of contact. The biggest challenge continues to be not only the reintegration of the church back into the community but attendance at services and volunteers to unlock and lock up.

Church Community Events are advertised with roadside Banners and Boards, ACNY, Nextdoor App, Little Blakenham Facebook page, Benefice page, Ipswich 24 and local shops and pubs.

² St Mary the Virgin Church, Little Blakenham, Service Register.

Community and Fundraising Events 2023

Monthly Coffee Mornings 10am-12noon 3rd Saturday each month in the Village Hall



PCC Coffee mornings were started in 2021 and held in the Village Hall to support our Parish Council colleagues. The PCC continually review the mornings and are please to confirm that they will continue for the foreseeable future.

Blakenham Woodland Garden Snowdrop Festival 11th February

Marcia Blakenham has done much to connect the two sister parishes of Little Blakenham and Nettlestead by inviting members from the two villages for the second year to host the refreshments on the first day of this event. The proceeds from the day were generously donated and divided equally between the two churches. Our gratitude goes to Marcia, and everyone who donated their bakes and were involved for their generous support and who made the day so enjoyable.



Blakenham Woodland Garden Snowdrop Festival 11^h February 2023

Annual Jumble Sale 29th April 2023



The PCC annual jumble sale is held in the Village Hall opposite the church and has become a well-supported event with both donations and attendance. The event is needed more than ever after Covid pandemic and recent severe 'cost of living' crisis. Following PCC and volunteer review, items now that are not sold are donated to local charities whilst others, namely branded/vintage items which we know will not achieve a reflective price at the sale are sold on e-bay.

Little Blakenham Village Fete and Dog Show 29th July 2023





Ride and Stride Bike Ride 9th September 2023



The Annual Sponsored Ride and Stride is a national event, held every second Saturday in September. Cyclists and walkers all-round the country are out making money for their local county Churches Trust.

The idea started in Suffolk and is the main source of income to Suffolk Historic Churches Trust which enable the Trust to make grants to churches and chapels of all denominations towards repair and restoration costs. Participants are sponsored for each place of worship visited between 9.00am and 5.00pm on Ride and Stride Day or with a donation, regardless of the number of churches visited. The money raised by each cyclist or walker is shared equally between the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust and the place of worship nominated by the participant.

As important as the participants are the many volunteers who give up the day to man the churches and chapels and sign in the cyclists and walkers as they arrive. Our church supports this event each year with a team of volunteers.

Harvest Supper 21st October 2023

The Harvest Supper was originally named the “Mell-supper” which refers to the last patch of corn/wheat standing. The supper is both a symbolic and historic event in rural communities and reflects a celebration and the giving of thanks for a successful harvest and abundance of food. It is a great social event which gives opportunity for communities to come together and share meals, stories and friendship.

This year we had the first Harvest Supper for many years, on the evening before our Harvest Festival. Despite much advertising it was a little disappointing that many in the community did not respond, but it was the first event so we are hoping as the community joins in more and more with church events this event in particular will be supported more.

Heartfelt thanks must go to both Lorraine and Steve Wright for all their hard work, the most wonderful cooking and the numerous trips Steve made from their home to the Village Hall with everything including the tableware. The evening was so enjoyable and a chance to catch up with each other and have a few giggles. Thanks to everyone who supported the event and came.



Harvest Festival 22nd October 2023

Our church continues the Harvest tradition of thanks for the abundance of food, through the donation of unperishable goods and toiletry items which are then donated to a different local food bank each year.

Volunteers decorate the church beautifully in traditional style. The front door wreath is made from corn grown in the village as are the corn dolly's placed on the outside of each pew. A Harvest loaf is also made by the churchwarden and was lent to our sister parish of Bramford for their own Harvest Festival celebrations.



Harvest Festival 2023

Christmas Bazaar 30th November 2023





Christmas Bazaar 2023

The Christmas Bazaar was held on 25th November this year and once again well supported, through handmade crafts and bakes, donations and attendance. PCC members were proud to hear the positive feedback regarding the church, quality of goods, food and mulled wine. We were also surprised just how many people had come from other villages to visit us, with some starting to become regulars.

Rev. Eric once again went above and beyond being so supportive and in the full spirit of Christmas, his speakers bellowing out songs of Christmas across the village.

The PCC and our volunteers regularly review all our events and this year after discussing with Rev Eric, trialled using the altar space which felt a little uncomfortable for us older people but it enabled us to have an extra stall alongside a refreshment area inside the church where people could sit and chat and even get up again and buy more! The feedback from this from both our visitors and volunteers was a positive one, many were especially glad to have a sit down with a warm mince pie, sausage roll, and a warm drink, the warm mulled wine chose to be very popular whether visitors bought items or not and a valuable cash builder.

It continues to surprise PCC members just how well this event is supported from not only residents but by those from other parishes alongside the generous donations we receive for all our events which ultimately makes such a significant financial difference to our church's fundraising, alongside raising the churches profile to the community and beyond and is definitely a social event that brings people together of which we are very proud.

Our grateful thanks go to everyone who donated items, baked, contributed, and supported us but especially Rev. Eric and the time he invests in all his parish churches, we are forever grateful to the difference you have made.

Carol Singing 15th December 2023



This was the third year the PCC held the Carol Singing around Little Box Meadow and The Beeches. Due to the village being spread out, we were unable to include Leather Bottle Hill and The Common as both areas are on busy main roads and have no footpath.

Eric 2021

Christmas Eve Service by Candlelight 18th December 2022.





Christmas Eve Service 2023

It is at this special time of year our village church truly comes alive, lit by candlelight, the church reflected its long history and how it may have looked many years ago. To encompass this history further we have reintroduced over the last three years a unique element to the villages history and Christmas service by playing the 'Little Blakenham Carol'.

The words were originally discovered by Pete Jennings of BBC Radio Suffolk, and Chairman of the Suffolk Pagan Society in a notebook started in 1891 by folklorist Charles Partridge who had quoted Revd John Jackson, Rector of Little Blakenham, who prior to his death in 1895 had taken down the words from an aged parishioner.³

Our attendance at the Christmas Eve Service has increased significantly over the last three years as the community becomes familiar with our events. Attendance in 2022 was 42 but this year, 2023 it was 55 including 7 children. We are therefore reviewing next year's service to make it more interactive and will offer children present the opportunity to participate if they wish to.

We were pleased that many stayed for the post service refreshments which included seasonal warm mulled wine and a host of classic Christmas homemade bakes.

Methods of Communication and Social media platforms used:

A Church Near You (ACNY), St Mary's Nextdoor App, Benefice Facebook page and the Little Blakenham Nextdoor/Facebook Page Eric also posts each month in the 'In Touch' magazine.

Posters and Banners to advertise events.

We also have a page dedicated to St Mary's on 'British Express' Tourism website to attract visitors and due to the hidden position of the church, a sandwich chalk board is used outside by the road to advertise when the church is open in an attempt to increase visitors, there is also a visitors book inside for feedback.

Professional Advisors

Bankers: Lloyds Bank, 13 Cornhill, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 1DG.

Insurers: Ecclesiastical Insurance Group, Beaufort House, Brunswick Road, Gloucester, GL1 1JZ

Architect: David Whymark, The Studio, Stack Wood Road, Polstead, Colchester, C06 5BA.

Independent Examiner: Harry Moore F.C.A, Chartered Accountant, 2 Lime Kiln Close, Claydon, IP6 OAW. (Retired this year)

Churchwardens' Report on the Fabric, Goods and Ornaments of the Churches



³ The village has its own version of an old carol, surviving the days when the churches standardised onto a common hymnal. Pete Jennings of BBC Radio Suffolk, and also Chairman of the Suffolk Pagan Society, found the words in a notebook started in 1891 by a folklorist called Charles Partridge. He was quoting Revd John Jackson of Little Blakenham, who had taken down the words from an aged parishioner. This had been published in "Suffolk Notes & Queries" No 121. Pete could not locate a version of the work locally, so researched at Cecil Sharp House in London, the headquarters of the English Folk Song And Song Society. The only thing Pete could find related to it was an Irish hymnal, which provided some similar verses and a tune, under the title "The Sinner's Redemption". Pete eventually offered the material to folk trio Artisan from Yorkshire. Enquiries by a former church organist uncovered the fact that a very similar version of the carol can easily be found in the New Oxford Book of Carols.

St Mary the Virgin, Little Blakenham is a Grade I listed medieval building situated high up on a hill yet in a tucked away rural setting and serves a population of approximately 295 souls.

Brief Church History

The church became Grade I listed on December 9th 1955, and consists of Nave, chancel, west tower, south porch. It has plastered rubble walling to body of church with freestone dressings.

The tower has exposed rubble walls of flint with brick and limestone inclusions. Plain tiled roofs (the tower roof is leaded with battlemented parapets).

The porch is probably of C15 origin, with moulded doorway and the remnants of side windows (all in freestone) and coupled-rafter roof; major repairs in brickwork are of C16 and later. Good mid C13 east chancel window of 3 stepped lancets under one arch, with pierced trefoils in the spandrels. On the inner face are engaged columns and on either side are large recesses with trefoiled heads and similar columns; in the survey of J.H. and Jas Parker (1855), both recesses had mediaeval figure paintings. A lancet in the east wall has 2 figures and freeze-work painted on the reveals; these were repainted in 1850. A mid C14 south chancel window has mask corbels. Extensive late C14 alterations include most of the 2-light windows, the south nave doorway and the plain unbuttressed tower. This has brick relieving arches above windows and a lion-head gargoyle on the west. The bell-frame is original, repaired in C16. Late C14 canted and boarded nave roof with moulded cornice; the chancel roof was probably rebuilt in 1868. Early C16 alterations include 2 chancel windows, priest's doorway and piscina.

Plain octagonal font, perhaps of c.1400. A painted coat of arms of James II, dated 1685. Other internal furnishings including Gothic box pews, are of 1868.⁴

Churchwarden's Report

Writing this annual report becomes a time for reflection and review. When I came into post at the end of 2019 I hadn't attended church for many years, the Vicar was leaving to lead a new parish and the churchwarden resigned, we were not only 'in vacancy' but were unable to hold services with communion and I had no-one to teach or guide me. This was followed by the challenge that Covid brought in March 2020 and subsequent church closure, it cannot be denied that at times there appeared to be an amalgamation of events preventing the start of raising the church's profile back into the community it served. The last four years has been a steep learning curve and despite these and ongoing challenges we continue to move forward in a positive mindset following the arrival of Rev. Eric Falla who supports and guides us through the ups and downs on our journey doing our best to ensure the building is here for future generations.

This year's summary has been a very simple one regarding the fabric of our church, we have much to do, namely fundraising, applications for grants, organisation of contractors to address the great urgency to commence the identified work needed regarding the East Wall, alongside planning and implementing an annual maintenance plan.

In August 2024 it will be 155 years since the church's last major refurbishment. In 1868, Rev John Jackson described the church *...In the course of years the church had been suffered to fall into so bad state of repair that it became absolutely necessary that something should be done. Both roof and walls were in a dilapidated condition, and it was very easy to suggest alterations in the internal arrangement of the church which would greatly conduce to the comfort and convenience of the congregation*.⁵

This major refurbishment cost £300, equal to £42,514.38 today, of which Rev Jackson donated £90 and the churchwarden Mr Josselyn £50. It appears however that Rev Jackson was 'canny man' and decided to 'get in quick' to raise the money required for the refurbishment through a steep rise in church rates in the same year church rates were abolished, oh how I wish we still had this tax still today. We now find ourselves heading towards a very similar position if finances for work needed and maintenance are not raised.

Church finances are the ongoing concern for all PCC's, but much of the deterioration here could have been prevented over the years. The combination of at some point in time non-breathable paint being applied on the internal walls and a layer of concrete covering the exterior walls has resulted in walls that are unable to breath which has resulted in internal areas of damp and deterioration particularly the south side Choir stall floor and north side back Victorian pews which has also not been helped by the raised soil levels specifically on the north side. Accessibility to the East wall to carry out any assessments or maintenance is also a challenge due to the boundary line from the Old Rectory abutting the gable wall. Internally the PCC keen for the church to be used by its community outside of religious services and are planning for the removal of the rotten back pews by the font to allow a more community inspired space to hold coffee mornings and other events and is a PCC priority for 2024.

Grants and Maintenance Plan

⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251408> Church of St Mary, Little Blakenham.

⁵ <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001325/18680829/078/0006> Restoration of Little Blakenham Church, The Suffolk Chronicle; or Weekly General Advertiser & County Express. - Saturday 29 August 1868, p.6

But what of the finances needed? I have attended some training events to learn the process of obtaining grants, however many grant applications require us to have 50% of the finances alongside a maintenance plan, because rightly no-one will invest if you do not have no maintenance plan.

I discovered our insurance company advertises one such plan called 'Maintenance Booker' but when contacted, they do not presently cover Suffolk. This lack of service in a county with such a significant level of Grade I and II listed churches is very frustrating. The maintenance plan is a PCC priority for 2024 but must be mindful that we need to source a contractor with the required credentials to work on Grade I listed buildings.

Organ In 2023 the PCC had the church organ professionally assessed for repair, the report highlighted that it was not financially viable. We are also unable to justify paying for an organist out of the money raised for repairs to the fabric of the church. The PCC therefore, took the decision to put the organ up for sale and if purchased the proceeds will be placed in the fabric fund and used towards the East wall repairs. We presently await a purchaser.

Bells

The temporary securing of our smaller bell carried out by The Suffolk Guild of Bell Ringers in 2022 remains in situ. We presently do not have the finances to rehang due to works needed on the East wall but are lucky to still have one working bell.

Churchyard maintenance

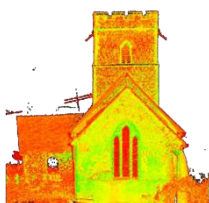
The churchyard remains large for such a small parish despite some of it being sold to The Old Rectory previously and continues to be difficult to manage despite a visit from Suffolk Wildlife Trust and a churchyard maintenance plan being implemented. Despite three years ago the Parish Council agreeing to the churchwardens request asking them to perform a cut and advertising for help from the community, the offers of help have been zero and work can only continue on this issue.

East wall

Following an Extraordinary PCC meeting on 25th November 2021, due to the concern over the possible deterioration of the East Wall, The Diocese, Building Control and Planning and Historic England were all informed and the church was placed temporarily on the. "At Risk" Register.

On 6th December 2021 the PCC instructed G. B. Geotechnics Limited, Cambridge to perform an inspection and on 7th December 2021 Moire Tell Tales were attached both externally and internally and monitoring commenced to determine the buildings stability, specifically of the East wall.

The church was removed from the register just before Christmas 2021 and Tell Tales readings continued for a short time, via photographs uploaded to G B Geotechnics Limited who then interpreted and advised the PCC and interested parties accordingly.



The next phase of the project was removing the shrubbery belonging to the Old Rectory which abutted the East gable wall situated directly on the boundary line of the church and the Old Rectory. This was cleared on 8th July 2022 (seen in the photo) to enable a high definition 3D laser dimensional scan survey of the chancel interior and exterior, map cracks and process data for base dimension and tilt, so drawings and report could be performed.

On 22nd September 2022 the final report from G. B. Geotechnics Limited was sent to the Diocese who forwarded to Edward Morton, a Conservation Accredited Engineer from The Morton Partnership Ltd to inspect and report further on the East Wall, he was met on the day by Rev Eric and all PCC members.

In Edward Morton's report he directed, "...it is important to initially undertake two trial holes as this will give some greater knowledge and understanding particularly regarding the east wall. These should be excavated by hand down to the base of the foundation, one at the south end of the east wall and one to the north side of the north-east buttress.

Ideally, some approximate levels should be taken from the east wall down to the courtyard area of the Rectory. This will allow a much clearer understanding of impact, if any, of the slope on the stability of the east wall. At the same time, it would be quite useful through ladder access to assess the masonry at high level to the east wall both internally and externally. This will hopefully provide better information about whether there is any voiding to the wall by tap testing, and also the stability of the internal masonry.... With the high-level inspection and trial holes completed, it may be found necessary to undertake further investigations such as boreholes and then soil testing to understand its characteristics – however, I would only suggest this is undertaken after the trial holes are completed... I suggested they would potentially need a faculty for any trial holes, and obviously they will need to engage a Structural Engineer to inspect. Any Engineer appointed should be conservation accredited under the CARE scheme, administered jointly by the Institution of Civil Engineers and the Institution of Structural Engineers.'

The increase in financial revenue through Eric's reintroduction of regular services and PCC fundraising events has enabled us to pay our parish share, insurance and electric bills and put some aside into our fabric account.

Although we are reconnecting through events with the community and presently find ourselves in a positive position financially, the PCC are fully aware we will need to be cautious with our public finances and need to use risk assessment in order to prioritise the most urgent maintenance and repairs needed with the assistance of grant applications.

2023 Priorities

- Promote the Christian doctrine through regular services and reintegrate our church back into the community and beyond. - Ongoing
- To support and work in partnership with Reverend Eric Falla - Ongoing
- Promote and deliver fundraising events to the community to assist building relationships, friendships, and financial resources to aid our churches financial stability - Ongoing
- Continue addressing List, A items on the 2020 Quinquennial Report - Ongoing
- Maintenance plan and the employing reputable contractors to carry out - Ongoing
- the management of the East wall continues to be an ongoing high priority and will continue into 2024 and beyond.
- Contactless donations: we presently borrow Bramford's card machine and they then transfer any money taken into our account - Ongoing
- Regular Giving via Direct Debit mandate was not achieved in 2023 but will be included in the PCC meetings and rolled out in 2024.
- The PCC are working towards raising our profile with children and young adults and witnessed 7 children at the 2023 Christmas service. We are therefore planning to introduce child participation into the 2024 Christmas service and reassess.
- Encourage and welcome new members to our congregation, volunteers, and PCC.

2024 Priorities

The PCC's main priorities for the next year are:

- Promote the Christian doctrine through regular services and reintegrate our church back into the community and beyond.
- To support and work in partnership with Reverend Eric Falla.
- Promote and deliver fundraising events to the community to assist building relationships, friendships, and financial resources to aid our churches financial stability.
- Continue addressing List, A items on the 2020 Quinquennial Report
- Maintenance plan
- East wall works
- Removal of rotten back Pews to enable a community space for Coffee mornings and events
- to improve the ability of the congregation/visitors to give contactless donations.
- Regular Giving via Direct Debit mandate was not achieved in 2023 but will be included in the PCC meetings and rolled out in 2024.
- To raise our profile with children and young adults
- Encourage and welcome new members to our congregation, volunteers, and new PCC members
- Appoint a new Accountant
- Appoint a new Architect

The Future

The largest challenge to the PCC like everywhere, remains the designated Parish Share. Whilst the PCC supports and understands the expectation that parishes will make a pledge to pay a certain amount for the year, it is a fine balance when you are a small parish and the fabric of the village church needs major investment in order to remain open and safe.

The arrival of Rev. Eric has been a blessing and a breath of fresh air. Eric has made an immense difference both spiritually and financially to each of his parishes in the Benefice, through his passion, leadership support and working above and beyond the expectation of his role. The increase in financial revenue he has brought through the return of regular services and his support at fundraising events has not only enabled us to pay our parish share, insurance and electric bills, but also to put some finances into our church fabric account for maintenance, repairs and hopefully grant applications.

In summary, Eric has effectively dusted off the cobwebs of previous mindsets and enabled his PCC's and parishes to not only get to know and support each other but specifically steered PCC's to have autonomy and confidence in their ideas for enhanced growth in their parishes through his support and guidance.

Whilst we have many challenges ahead of us and will continually climb a very steep hill, the PCC and its volunteers remain positive when reflecting and reviewing our yearly achievements. We are positively reintegrating again with our community through village annual events such as the Woodland Garden Snowdrop Event and the PCC's annual Jumble Sale, Fete and Dog Show and Christmas Bazaar and especially the Christmas Eve service, which is reflecting our community's engagement and growth at staple events in the villages calendar. This growth and productivity however is also reflected in our nominated parish share which grows also. In 2022 our share was £1,000 rising in 2023 to £1,500 both of which we paid in full and there will be a further increase for 2024 due to our increased activity.

PCC and Volunteer Membership and Recruitment

It must be acknowledged in this year's report that alongside finances it has been discussed among members our concern regarding our aging PCC and volunteer membership and who will continue our work when we are unable to continue due to our ages or ill health. It is recognised that without urgency to recruit new PCC members and volunteers there is a high risk that the church will be unable to continue with fundraising events, which in turn will only reflect further deterioration to the fabric of the building due to lack of finances and increase the risk of its closure in future years, leaving the village without a heart or spiritual care, it is a stark fact but reality and much recruitment promotion must be performed to address this issue by the PCC alongside existing volunteers.

Michele Kenningale
Churchwarden, Secretary and Treasurer.

Finance

We have no income from any lettings/rentals.

Financial Statement

Attached separately.

Introduction

I welcome the reader to this my third report on village life for the year 2023.

The role of a village recorder is to be on the look-out for items of historical interest which might be overlooked or lost forever and ensuring that the present is adequately recorded at local level and so is very much a survey of their parish.

Annually, each village recorder is asked to write a report of significant happenings in their area over the previous calendar year and look out for older records and to record reminiscences from the past. The report is then sent to the Suffolk Local History Council (a charity) to be deposited in the Parish Records at the nearest archive, Little Blakenham's are held at 'The Hold' in Ipswich and is where my first in-depth initial report of 2020 and subsequent reports may be accessed.



Little Blakenham is a scattered rural village located in the Hundred of Bosmere within the district of Mid Suffolk, lying four miles north-west of Ipswich and one mile west of our larger sister parish of Great Blakenham.

The village is long and narrow covering 1,054 acres of open rural countryside and valleys, stretching almost three miles from its south-west point by Flowton church to the north-east lying beside the River Gipping at Great Blakenham and Claydon.

The B1113, Bramford Road, runs through the eastern edge of the parish giving direct access to the town of Ipswich, A14, A12 and the villages of Great Blakenham, Claydon and Bramford where shops, pubs and recreational facilities can be found.

The village is dispersed into distinct areas consisting of what can be best described as a main area of settlement along Somersham Road, Valley Road and Leather Bottle Hill, with hamlets to the east and west namely The Common on Bramford Road and Inghams on Valley Road. Historical maps further evidence the scattered nature of the village through time and developments.



The Landscape, Geology and River Gipping

The village landscape is one dominated by valleys, the River Gipping and the legacy of extensive quarrying. The landscape we see today is in some parts man-made with many old quarry pits being filled in and landscaped sympathetically to reflect the areas natural features. Others have taken on new uses as fishing lakes, enhanced by the ability of the chalk to filtrate the waters and have become a haven for wildlife as nature reclaims them. Whilst single-track lanes and footpaths, remain as integral today as in the past to link small local communities to each other.

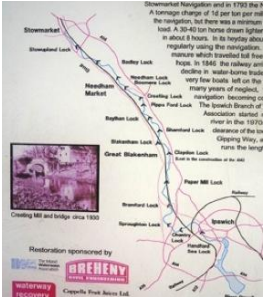


Geology

It is believed quarrying in the area started during the Roman era following the discovery of rich deposits of flint, sand, chalk and boulder clay. These raw materials from the glacial period are embedded throughout the area and it was specifically these components which accelerated the quarrying over time, due to the exact composition required for high grade cement. There were both chalk and clay pits in the village, alongside lime burning kilns, the earliest evidence of the industry here is in 1773. Maps of 1790 evidence further the quarries, kilns and brick works at Bramford. Although lime was used for building it was also used in large quantities for agriculture. Today, two large disused chalk pits remain in the village, both are on private land, with one a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest, (SSI) and still

contains two of the original lime kilns.⁶
One of Lt Blakenham disused Chalk Pits, 2023

⁶ <https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk> Historic England Research Records, Little Blakenham, Monument Number 1465807.



River Gipping

The river was once one of the major waterways in the region and runs along the eastern side of the village situated behind ‘The Common’. This area is the valley floor, and an area of rich grass and meadowland prone to flooding especially in the winter months. The river is not only a prominent feature of the landscape but has also been a focus of settlement since the Neolithic period and used as a transport route for goods and people alike. The earliest reference for its use is by the Danes in 860 who reportedly sailed up the River Gipping, whilst in 1065, stone for the great abbey at Bury St Edmunds was also brought up the river and in the 17th century the bells of Stowmarket church were transported down river to be re-cast in Ipswich.⁷

Village Population and Housing

In 2023 housing stock continues to be a mixture of Grade II listed homes, converted barns, cottages, semi and detached houses and detached bungalows alongside a few isolated farms. The last major housing development was on land previously belonging to The Red House in the late 1960’s known as The Beeches and is where the largest concentration of both housing and population is found. An update of housing in the village will be included for each area in this report.

Year	Inhabited Homes	Population
1901	36	156
1931	Not recorded	146
1951	40	150
1971	Not recorded – (The Beeches built late 1960’s)	300
2011 Census	Not recorded	295
2021 Census	120	287

⁹ ‘A Survey of Suffolk Parish History’, Little Blakenham, Suffolk⁸, Mid Suffolk District Council, 2011 Census.⁹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>. Little Blakenham 2021 Census (21st March)

Age Distribution and Gender

Age Distribution	2021
0-9 years	12
10-19 years	35
20-29 years	23
30-39 years	17
40-49 years	33
50-59 years	55
60-69 years	46
70-79 years	42
80+ years	13
Males Total	136
Females Total	144

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/> Age Distribution, Little Blakenham 2021 Census (21st March)

⁷ https://suffolkarchaeology.co.uk/reports-pdfs/2012_019.pdf p19

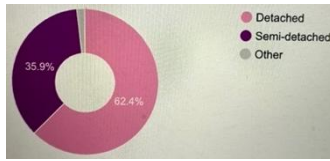
⁸ <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/media/pdfs/littleblakenham.pdf> ‘A Survey of Suffolk Parish History’, Little Blakenham, Suffolk.

⁹ <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/the-council/parish-profiles/> Countryside Villages, Little Blakenham, Housing and Population Data Profile. [Accessed 24 June 2022].

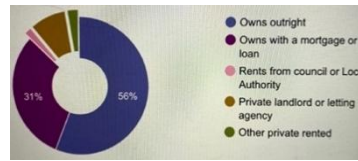
Property Ownership and Rented Status

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/> Little Blakenham 2021 Census (21st March)

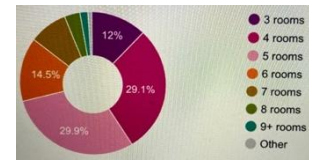
Type of Accommodation



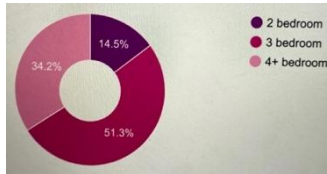
Ownership and Rented Status



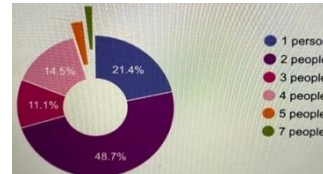
Number of Rooms



Number of Bedrooms



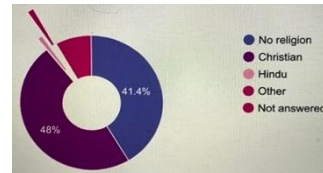
Number of People Living in a House



Ethnicity Groups



Religion



Village Developments in 2023

For many years, the village has changed little and has escaped the invasion of both urban and industrial development unlike its surrounding villages of Somersham, Bramford and particularly our sister parish of Great Blakenham, which has witnessed the largest changes through new housing and the commencement of building Port One Logistics Park.

Port One is an industrial development of commercial warehouses which has changed the local landscape forever and brought much concern to those living here, through not only the effect it will have on life with noise, light and visually but upon the village flora and fauna. Despite knowing it was advancing towards the village, this year we truly witnessed its effect on the eastern side of the village landscape as it moved across the parish boundary from Great Blakenham.

There are many challenges to being an historian, the main one is finding your sources, what has been written and spoken about before and especially photographic evidence to help build a picture of village life and its history through time.

Therefore, due to the rapid changes presently in the village, this report is lengthy due to a large amount of photographs to evidence these changes including from previous years to record how it was and how it is now in 2023 for future generations.

Port One Logistics Park



29th April 2023



Computer drawing of Port One Logistics Park.



The area it will cover Cottage Farm can be seen on the left.

The rapid advancement of the £750 million 'Port One Logistics Park' has been staggering over the last few years and as previously mentioned, has sadly changed a large part of the local rural landscape to the East and environment forever, Whilst the project is well known locally, there are many that are unaware of the extent of the building work happening behind the line of large fir trees on the B1113 Bramford Road as they drive along, basically if you don't walk the public footpaths then you have no idea what is happening.

At the commencement of the development we witnessed unbelievable high mountains of deposited soil which at one point could be seen from Bramford and the A14. If you didn't know you were in Suffolk you may have thought you were in France or Italy looking at snow-capped mountains especially on a sunny day which reflected the white toppings they had from the tons of chalk excavated.



22nd April 2022



26th August 2022



3rd April 2023

Last two photo's: Same view, looking across from Blue Barn Lane, Great Blakenham towards Pound Lane, Little Blakenham.



Photographs Left: 3rd April 2023
 B1113 heading towards Bramford, and opposite view towards Great Blakenham, the incinerator and its chimneys can be seen in the distance. The Common is situated on the opposite side of the line of fir trees and is directly facing the Port One development.
 Last photo: Inside the line of fir trees.



Above Part of The Common opposite the development.



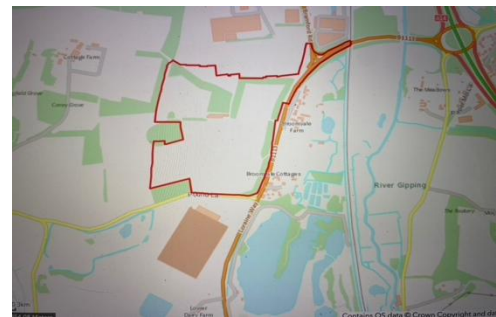
Further part of the Common: on the B1113 junction and Pound Lane. Cream House is Lakeside Cottage.

Left: towards Gt Blakenham
Right: towards Bramford

At this point in time, ten of the warehouses are now occupied. It is predicted that Port One will create 4,000 jobs on site and 2,000 jobs offsite once completed, with working patterns based on a three-shift work pattern and span over 40 different professions.

Working patterns and delivery times are a further concern to residents regarding HGV's delivering goods overnight between 7pm and 6am and the effect noise and light will have to not only residents but on wildlife, especially bats as the village has the largest roost in England which is within a SSSI and close to the development.

At the end of 2022 and beginning of 2023, Port One boldly made its entrance into the eastern side of the village landscape as it started Phase 2, which will include a 700 thousand square foot Mega shed and accommodate 165 thousand pallet locations and gives some idea just how large these warehouses will be and their impact on the landscape.



Picture 1. Port One Phase 2 entering Little Blakenham fields

Outline plan from Blue Barn Lane to Pound Lane

As can be seen in Picture 1, 2023 has witnessed the start of Port One's Phase 2 move from Great Blakenham into Little Blakenham and onto what was previously productive arable land. The line of fir trees to the right depict public footpath 21, used for generations and runs in a straight line from opposite the Woodland Garden, Cottage Farm down to The Common on the B1113. The square white building in the background is the Tomato Glasshouse, also situated on the B1113 and between the green field and the Tomato Glasshouse is Pound Lane. The field will have disappeared and be replaced with industrial warehouses by the time of my next report.

Record of Changes as Port One development moves across from Blue Barn Lane Great Blakenham to Pound Lane Little Blakenham.

A journey through the last few years walking along Footpath 21



31st January 2022.

12th October 2021

26th August 2022

Left: Gap in fir trees is on the brow of the hill, walking towards The Common and probably the last photo ever taken of the scene as shortly after the trees on the left of the picture are gone forever, along with the old Apple Shed situated after the brow of the hill. We can see in the last photo the increase in the mountains of deposited soil by the side of the footpath and the fluctuating heights of soil over time.



Above: 13th September 2021 – 31st January 2022 the progress of the warehouses can be seen on the right. In the field beyond the line of fir trees was the old Apple Shed.



Above: 24th July 2021 Over the brow of the hill towards The Common, known locally as the Old Apple Shed since demolished. Last photograph the preparation for the arrival of portacabins, the footpath runs behind the row of fir trees.



Above 25th March 2022 Above photographs both taken from Pound Lane looking towards Great Blakenham, this field will soon have warehouses on it. Right photograph same scene zoomed, the incinerator can be clearly seen at this point in the development. You can see that the development has moved up to the edge of public footpath 21 which runs the whole length of the picture in-front of the Old Apple Shed.

Same view as above 20th May 2023, the incinerator chimneys peeping over the skyline on the right gives some idea of the scale alongside, the redistribution of earth.



10th June 2021, 24th July 2021 and 13th September 2021. Middle photo shows close-up the gap in the tree line, seen in previous photo. Noticeable is one of the new warehouse's looming behind as if waiting for the trees to be felled.
 Unless you have witnessed the last few years, it is hard to project to the reader the vast change to the landscape between Great and Little Blakenham as Port One's progresses.



10th June - 24th July 2021 Public footpath 21 at the bottom of the hill, looking towards the Common

The tree line in front presently remains and screens the development from the B1113, I wonder if this line of trees will still be there when I report next year, or the next or the next...?



June 2021 Panoramic view: left is Great Blakenham, ahead the B113 and The Common and right is Pound Lane and the Tomato Glasshouse. The warehouse development will completely fill both these fields.



Last agricultural view ever of this field

24th July 2021 Left photo the same green productive arable field as Picture 1 and right looking towards Pound Lane and the Tomato Glasshouse. The last ever field full of wheat to be grown here and harvested



as seen in central photo, quite a historic moment in the history of the village.

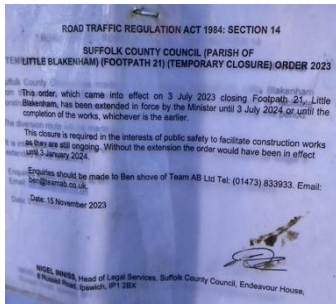
Public Footpath 21



1938, Cottage Farm plan, showing Public Footpath 21 direct to Broomvale Farm and The Common on the B1113.¹⁰



First photograph above 15th August 2021 and subsequent photo's 29th June 2023. Apple Shed gone and woodland now replaced with mountains of soil. A couple of days before Easter 2023, the footpath had been unlawfully closed, it was re-opened within 48 hrs following photos and a complaint being posted on social media. Port One performed an excellent job of flattening the footpath for walkers and erecting fencing and gates then followed the correct legislation and on 3rd July 2023, a temporary closure notice was posted due to the construction works, valid until the 3rd July 2024 'or until completion of the work's whatever is earlier'.



Left photo: Footpath from the B1113 Bramford Road looking towards the Woodland Garden beyond. The footpath has now been temporarily re-routed not far from the original site but it is now difficult to walk as it leads through the

debris under the fir and after rainfall it is particularly muddy walking up the hill.

We persevere and hope that highlighting that this footpath is both historic and used, it will be incorporated into the developers plans, time will tell.



Above, the same public footpath, photographs taken between 2nd May - 28th November 2023 with consistent soil changes on the left.



Left: 29th April 2023, the foundation for a warehouse can be clearly seen at the end of the footpath, alongside the changing levels of soil as Port One progresses across the fields



20th May 2023 – 22nd October 2023 half the way down the footpath, the footpath tree line can be seen on the right.



Pound Lane Cottage on



junction on the B1113, Lakeside the right.

Pound Lane: Port One warehouses 19, 20, 21 and 22 will come up to the right side of the lane as per site plan where the gap can be seen in the photograph.



Photographs taken 15th January 2024 from Pound Lane looking across the field towards the Incinerator at Gt Blakenham with Pound Lane and the Tomato Greenhouse behind the photographer. Public Footpath 21 runs between the new warehouse built and the line of fir trees.



Photograph taken from top of the field, looking towards the B1113 Bramford road with Pound Lane and the tomato glasshouse to the right. At the time this photograph was taken the re-routed footpath is running to the right of the portacabins with the original public footpath the opposite side of the portacabins behind the line of fir trees, thank goodness the trees presently remain. The empty field you see in all photographs is the green field you see in Picture 1 and is being used for Phase 2 of the Port One development and will not look like this by the time of my 2024 report.



B1113 Facing an existing entrance to the fields just before Pound Lane and towards Great Blakenham with the Common on the right,

Historically this entrance is used by walkers and dog walkers who live nearest to Pound Lane and furthest away from the actual footpath opposite Broom Vale further up as a safer route to access public footpath 21.

It will be interesting to compare the views and progression of this development in my next report.

Masons Landfill is a 70-hectare former quarry where waste operations have been ongoing since 1992 when it ceased to be an operational quarry and cement works. It accepts non-hazardous business and household waste, as well as hazardous waste such as asbestos - one of two sites in the county that does. Although the site is referenced as being in Great Blakenham, parts are also in the villages of Little Blakenham, Nettlestead and Baylham.

Masons Cement Works (also known as Claydon Works) and Quarry **Now known as Mason's Landfill Quarry**

A short piece of history in context of today



Ownership: 1913 - 29/2/1948 George Mason and Co.
1/3/1948 - 1999 Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers. Ltd (APCM) later known as Blue Circle Group.

Claydon. Cement Works viewed. From the southwest, taken 8/5/1971.¹¹



General View from the southwest and from southeast the rail siding and coal elevator.¹²

¹¹ Claydon Cement Works Historic England – NMR Aerofilms Collection, Catalogue number A210695, (8/5/1971)

¹² [The Engineer](#), **CXVII**, pp 310-312 (March 20, 1914).

...‘The locality was evidently intended by nature for the erection of cement works. The geological formation is most curious. Chalk and clay of exactly the composition necessary for the manufacture of high-class cement lie in juxtaposition in the same quarry, in one part of which there is a vertical face of chalk with the clay actually butting up against it. One may stand in a given place and take a spade full of chalk from one side and a spade full of clay from the other. The formation throughout the area is not quite the same as this, but chalk and clay of precisely the correct character will always be found in close proximity the one to the other. Hence it is only necessary to mingle the two constituents in the correct proportions in order to produce a slurry which, when burnt and ground, will be transformed into Portland cement of the desired quality.

...The quarry is situated at a distance of some 800 yards from the site chosen for the erection of the works. The reason for this distance is that the works as built are situated alongside the main line of the Great Eastern Railway between Ipswich and Norwich, from which a siding has been run on to the site for the ready delivery of coal and dispatch of finished cement. Having regard to the cartage which would have been necessary had the works been erected near the quarry...the problem arose of how best to convey the raw materials from where they were mined to the works. It was finally decided to mix them on the site and to pump the resulting slurry to the works. Accordingly, two wash mills have been constructed at the edge of the quarry, and the chalk and clay are brought to them in small tip wagons running on narrow-gauge lines. At the present moment, while the workings are still quite close to the surface, it is only necessary to propel these trucks by hand, but when the excavations grow in depth some sort of power haulage will be needed, and we believe that the form employed is to be an electric winch...’¹³



The cement plant near Claydon, Suffolk was completed in 1914 as a replacement of Mason's old-established Waldringfield plant. (seen in picture)

The old plant had used old-fashioned bottle kilns with the thin-slurry process, and using chalk brought from the Thames. Moving 17 km inland afforded an opportunity to use local chalk, and to abruptly update to rotary kiln technology. Despite the consultancy of Maxted & Knott, the plant was not of the highest technology, and although the company installed two further similar-sized kilns in 1923 and 1939, it could not compete with the industry leaders and so could never afford to upgrade to better

technology and work practices. The company was finally acquired by Blue Circle in 1948 and the plant was systematically upgraded with clinker production finally ceasing in February 1999.

Masons Landfill (Quarry) Today



Arial View of disused Mason's Quarry



Part of quarry September 2020



SnOasis Leisure project and Valley Ridge Leisure project

The first proposal to build SnOasis at Masons landfill site, Great Blakenham emerged in 2001 with plans for a leisure facility, huge snow dome and other holiday facilities. After many twists and turns in 2020 a revised proposal with new investors called Valley Ridge was proposed and full planning permission given. However, in 2022 the landfill waste company Viridor - now Valencia, was granted an extension.

During the process, Valley Ridge had made it clear that it would not be able to operate a viable holiday park next to a waste tip and that it would have to walk away if the extension was granted.

As a result, during 2023 the Valley Ridge proposal was formally abandoned and the land is now up for sale although planning permission granted in 2020 still applies - but it is thought unlikely that anyone would try to build a holiday resort so close to a waste tip.

¹³ ‘A new cement works near Ipswich’, *The Engineer*, 117, pp310-312, March 20, 1914.



So what is next for Mason’s landfill?, it appears the creation of a 6.8 hectare Solar Farm, by Valencia Waste Management Limited Application: SCC/0083/22MS 9/2/2022

Solar Farms and Panels

Bramford Solar Farm, Enso Energy, through its subsidiary company Bramford Green Limited, is proposing to develop a solar farm and battery storage facility on land south of Church Farm, Somersham, Ipswich, IP8 4PN and land east of the Channel, IP8 4JL.

Many raised objections with Suffolk Preservation Society raised strong objections to the proposals due to the visual, heritage and landscape impacts and loss of good quality agricultural land. They also raised concerns regarding the cumulative impact with two further proposed solar schemes in the vicinity. Arguing that the sense of place of an area extending more than 4km east to west would fundamentally affect those using the lanes and footpaths around Bramford, Flowton and Little Blakenham.¹⁴

Screening opinion for installation of 200 KWp photovoltaic solar panels Inactive Landfill Site, Blood Hill, Somersham Solar 200 KWp 1405/11

Pending Village Sign



Planned site for Sign on Somersham and Valley Road junction.

Little Blakenham has never had a village sign, so in 2021 I proposed to the Parish Council that a sign should be designed and erect to mark the Queen Elizabeth II’s Platinum Jubilee sadly following Queen Elizabeth’s II death in 2022, the sign will now commemorate King Charles III assension to the throne and will be erected on the junction of Somersham and Valley Roads.

The sign depicts the villages Grade I listed St Mary the Virgin Church, whilst the Suffolk Horse, ploughman and wheat represent the villages agriculture history and the Suffolk Horses which are in the village today. The Bats represent the bat colony which live in the old kiin tunnel situated within one of the villages disused chalk pits. Whilst the ‘Ipswich Journal’ newspaper represents the Jackson family who were its proprietors and owned land in the village alongside two members of the family, Stephen and John were Rectors here. The snowdrops represent Blakenham Woodland Garden set up by John Hare 1st Viscount Blakenham

Fundraising for the sign was achieved through two very generous large donations from the District Councillor John Field and the County Councillor Chris Chambers alongside a private donation from a resident who wished to remain anonymous. Many thanks to them all.

Village Housing and Developments 2023

The Common

Situated on the eastern edge of the village, The Common, has the B1113 at the front of the properties and the River Gipping and mainline railway to the rear. The area contains both older houses, many which have been extended and renovated, alongside newer detached houses and bungalows. The area also contains Blakenham Lodge and ‘Broomvale Business Centre’. A cluster of Grade II agricultural barns once known as Broom Vale Farm which belonged to the estate of Blakenham Lodge and in 1990 were renovated into office studios.

¹⁴ <https://www.suffolksociety.org/sps-news-december-2023-and-january-2024-campaign-bulletin/>

For sale 5 bedroom 4 bathroom 2 reception rooms £495.000



Described as a Period Cottage, the property occupies a "tucked away" position, accessed by a small lane set off the road, occupying a secluded and peaceful position, backing on to Suffolk water park.

House Extension

3 The Common



Erection of two storey extension, new parking and turning surface, and render brickwork to rear of dwelling.

Redevelopment

Knotty Ash, 7 The Common change of agricultural building to residential Granted 28th November 2023



From The Common on the B1113 the main part of the village is accessed via Pound Lane and onto Somersham Road, Valley Road and Leather Bottle Hill.

The Main Settlement



Ariel View of the main settlement, Somersham Road running in front. The hamlet of Inghams top left and the old quarries top right.

Homes For Sale on The Beeches

For Sale 4 bedroom 1 bathroom £450,000 (2nd April 2024)



For Sale 2 bedroom 1 bathroom, Bungalow £299,995, 11 October 2023



The Red House



Sale catalogue drawing July 1891.

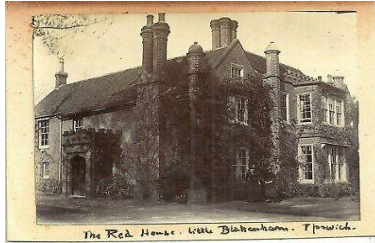


Photo unknown date



Sale Photo 1949

A Brief Insight

It is presently unknown the exact date that the 'Red House' was built, it can be best described as originally a 'gentleman's house' and has attracted some notable people to live here. The earliest reference to the property is presently is from a newspaper article dated 10 June 1848, with Mr Benjamin Morgan and his wife Lucy Ann Morgan living here.

In the 1950's the Red House was sub-divided into four dwellings. On the west side became Parkside and Greenways, south side Meadowside and the east side has remained known as Red House.



West: Parkside 2018



West: Greenways 2020



South: Meadowside 2020



East: Red House: 2020

For Sale 2023 Meadowside 3 bedroom 2 bathroom 2 reception rooms In Excess of £420,000

This property was listed 23rd March 2023 reduced 19th April 2024 and remains unsold



Cottage Farm



Ariel view of Cottage Farm, out-buildings and estate homes. (Google Earth)

In 1938 the auction sale particulars of Cottage Farm describe the property as: *The Small Country Estate of 'Cottage Farm', situated in the parishes of Great and Little Blakenham. Comprising of a medium sized country house with garages and stabling, two cottages, farm premises and 129 Acres 1 Rood and 27 Poles of arable land, pasture, Woods and plantations. Formerly a stud and plaster built and plain tiled Suffolk Farmhouse. It has been enlarged and improved without spoiling its original attractive character.* It was purchased by Geoffrey Walter Hodgkinson of Camden Grove, London for £2,750.

Cottage Farm has been home to the Hare family since its purchase in 1951 by John Hare 1st Viscount Blakenham's, his daughter-in-law, still lives at the house.



Rented in 2023

New Business The Old Dairy, Cottage Farm.



At the end of 2023 Tosier Chocolate makers departed the premises and a new business making granola started up in the same building named The Old Dairy. They have also opened up a welcomed small café (open Friday, Saturday and Sunday until 3.30pm)

At Somersham Road we take a right turn onto Valley Road which leads to Nettlestead, Baylham and Somersham.



Valley Road leading off Somersham Road, leads to The Grade I listed church and Village Hall

Grade II, The Old Rectory

Historic England 9 December 1955, Amended 24 January 1986, Historic England Source ID 1263027, Legacy ID 433494.



The Rectory Unknown Date



The Old Rectory 2008



The Old Rectory 2022



South Side of the Old Rectory with the



East wall of the church in the background showing the considerably lower depth. (2022)

The Rectory Barn (2022)



North side view (2022)

Original Bell



West side view (2022)

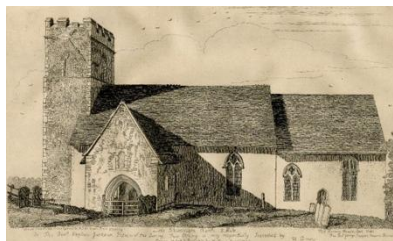
The former Rectory has been built in 3 main stages, C15, mid C17 and early C19. The earliest range to the rear has a timber frame core and externally C17 work in red brick now painted. The entrance front to the east was stuccoed in C19, with a band at first floor and moulded cornice at eaves. There are twin C17 Dutch gables, slated roofs with internal chimneys of red brick. The sash windows are early C19 with cambered heads, two windows have side lights and hinged louvred shutters. The early C19 entrance doorway is slender with sunk panelled pilasters, moulded and dentilled open pediment and segmental fanlight with radiating bars and C20 glazed door. To the right of entrance is an early C19 extension one window wide, added when the front elevation was remodelled. A 3-bay C15 cross-wing is now at the rear. It has a crown post roof, 2 plain octagonal crown posts have 2-way bracing. A partition wall has a blocked doorway with 4-centred arch head. The C17 range along the south side probably stands on the site of the C15 open hall, whose rafters it reuses in the present roof. The original servant's bells remain in the hall entrance as do many other original features as the house has been enlarged. Parish Council Meetings prior to the village hall being built were held in the rectory barn and the Rectory grounds has a long history of being the venue for the annual village fete.

Little Blakenham Church Village Fete and Dog Show 29th July 2023



Grade I Listed St Mary the Virgin Church

Historic England, 9 December 1955, Source ID 1251408, Legacy ID 433495



St Mary the Virgin 2023 and pencil drawing by H. Davy September 1837, Interior photograph, unknown dat

Little Blakenham Church Services

Sunday Service with Communion 4th Sunday in the month at 11am

Morning Pray 3rd Wednesday in the month at 8.30am

Church Coffee Morning

3rd Saturday in the month 10am-12noon in the village hall opposite.

Little Blakenham Carol and Christmas service



It is at this special time of year our village church truly comes alive, lit by candlelight, the church reflected its long history and how it may have looked many years ago. To encompass this history further we have reintroduced over the last three years a unique element to the villages history and Christmas service by playing the 'Little Blakenham Carol'.

The words were originally discovered by Pete Jennings of BBC Radio Suffolk, and Chairman of the Suffolk Pagan Society in a notebook started in 1891 by folklorist Charles Partridge who had quoted Revd John Jackson, Rector of Little Blakenham, who prior to his death in 1895 had taken down the words from an aged parishioner.¹⁵ Our attendance at the Christmas Eve Service was 55 including 7 children compared to 42 in 2022 as the community becomes familiar with church events. We were pleased that many stayed for a chat and the post service refreshments which included seasonal warm mulled wine and a host of classic Christmas homemade bakes.



Village Hall is situated opposite the church.

The Parish Council are presently in talks with Port One regarding the building of a new village Hall.

Hamlet of Inghams

Inghams is a small hamlet north-west of the main village past the church on Valley Road. It contains Inghams Farmhouse and south-east of the farmhouse is an original timber framed red brick barn, constructed approximately 100 years ago (unlisted). Further along Valley Road can be found a few other properties all secluded from the view of the road, comprising of a semi-detached Victorian workers cottage, a converted barn, house and bungalows and some old agricultural buildings.

For Sale Freehold £75,000 3 Acres of meadowland listed 1st December 2023.



In 1837 Nine Acres was owned by Firman Josselyn and occupied by himself. Today it is two fields either side of Valley Road. The land

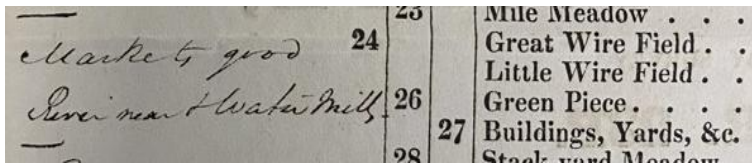
for sale above abuts the churchyard and was once church glebe land. As a result, it presently has a Church of England covenant attached, which states that it can only be used for grazing and is home to several sets of badgers which are protected alongside other wildlife.

¹⁵ The village has its own version of an old carol, surviving the days when the churches standardised onto a common hymnal. Pete Jennings of BBC Radio Suffolk, and also Chairman of the Suffolk Pagan Society, found the words in a notebook started in 1891 by a folklorist called Charles Partridge. He was quoting Revd John Jackson of Little Blakenham, who had taken down the words from an aged parishioner. This had been published in "Suffolk Notes & Queries" No 121. Pete could not locate a version of the work locally, so researched at Cecil Sharp House in London, the headquarters of the English Folk Song And Song Society. The only thing Pete could find related to it was an Irish hymnal, which provided some similar verses and a tune, under the title "The Sinner's Redemption". Pete eventually offered the material to folk trio Artisan from Yorkshire. Enquiries by a former church organist uncovered the fact that a very similar version of the carol can easily be found in the New Oxford Book of Carols.

Blakenham Parva Mill

At one point in time the village had a mill, it is not known whether it was wind or water.

1893 Saturday 15 July – *THE STORM* – Saturday's evening storm has left a memento in the appearance of a tree standing near the mill at Blakenham Parva. This was struck and much shattered, but no other damage was done.¹⁶



The article not only confirms the village had a mill but also its location, on land named Green Piece consisting of 5 acres, 1 perch and 15 roods.¹⁷ In 1891 Henry Rand living on Leather Bottle Hill is a Millers Labourer.

Leather Bottle Hill

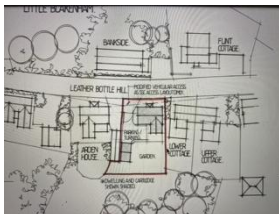


Ariel view of Leather Bottle Hill 2021

Leather Bottle Hill is situated on Somersham Road, here the natural landscape of the valley forces a sharp decline in the road towards Lower Somersham Road. Either side are a small cluster of dwellings, many dating back to the 1800's, all have been renovated, extended or both. The name, Leather Bottle is taken from the old public house which was once here, now known as 'Bankside' and a reminder that the use of glass for ordinary purposes was an expensive luxury.

West towards Somersham & East towards Ipswich

New Detached Home commenced in 2022, externally is now completed, internal fixings underway.



From Leather enter onto Lower Road where The Piggeries, Elm and Elm can be found on The Elms tucked



Bottle Hill we Somersham Old Farm Barn Farmhouse the left and away from



view on the right.

Planning Refused received 23rd March Refused 4th July 2023

Leather Bottle Cottage, Creation of 1 no. new dwelling house by way of: conversion and extension of existing domestic annexe, and erection of detached garage.

Footpath 43 runs through the site

Grade II Listed The Elm's Farm (c.1914)

Historic England 24 January 1986, Source ID 1251403, Legacy ID 433492.

30th June 1914 Sale Particulars

¹⁶ <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/00000715/009/0002>, The Storm, Mill at Blakenham Parva, The Ipswich Journal - Saturday 15 July 1893, p.2 [accessed 10 February 2019]

¹⁷ SRO (I) HE402/1/1835/9, Particulars and Conditions of Sale, Manor and Freehold Estate at Little Blakenham, Auction Mart, London, 25th June 1835, item 26, Green Piece, 'River near Water Mill'.

Freehold property known as The Elms Farm, in the parishes of Little and Great Blakenham, Bramford, Somersham, Bayham and Nettlestead, comprising residence, agricultural buildings, cottage and two sets of Barns.¹⁸

AN ATTRACTIVE

FREEHOLD PROPERTY,

KNOWN AS

“The Elms Farm,”

LITTLE BLAKENHAM,

In the Parishes of Little and Great Blakenham, Bramford, Somersham, Bayham, and Nettlestead, comprising—

A COMMODIOUS RESIDENCE,

Standing on high ground, and away from the Farm Buildings, in white brick and slated, containing—

Entrance Hall; Dining Room, 19 ft. by 15 ft. 9 in. by 11 ft. high; Drawing Room, 17 ft. by 13 ft. 9 in. by 11 ft. high; Breakfast Room, 13 ft. by 12 ft. 3 in.; Vestibule or Cloak Room; Kitchen; and Back Kitchen; Store Room; and in the Basement—Ale and Wine Cellars. On the First Floor, approached by Principal and Secondary Staircases, Six Bedrooms, measuring respectively 13 ft. 6 in. by 13 ft. 13 ft. by 14 ft. 2 in., 10 ft. by 14 ft. 2 in., 13 ft. 10 in. by 14 ft. 5 in., 13 ft. 10 in. by 13 ft. 6 in., and 14 ft. by 13 ft., with Two Dressing Rooms.

The Out Offices, brick built, are Coal House, Two Closets, Brew House, and Store House. Good Supply of Water by Pump from Well.

There are **RIDING STABLE** and **COACHHOUSE**.

The Agricultural Buildings,

Abutting upon the high road, comprise—Brick built and slated Barn, with asphalt floor; Chaffhouse, Yard, and Open Shed; Cart Stables for 12, timber on brick piling; Yard with Two Open Sheds; Four Loose Boxes; 3-hay Cart Lodge, timber and tiled; and Riding Stable for 1; with a stud and plaster and tiled **SIX-ROOMED COTTAGE**, with good Water Supply.

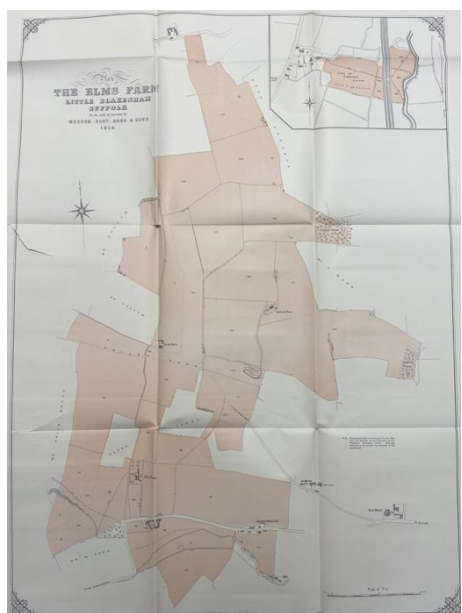
TWO SETS. OF OFF-PREMISES.

At “**Valley Barn**,” a Timber and Thatched Barn, with Yard, Two Cattle Sheds, and Three Loose Boxes, with Well of Water; and

At “**Ingham’s Barn**,” a Timber and Thatched Barn, Yard with Three Open Sheds, and Pond of Water, with

19

***At time of sale, the property is leased to Mr Isaac Jackson for 8 years expiring October 11th 1917 with a rental of £183 19s 0d per annum and sale particulars state ‘Possession may be had at Michaelmas 1915, by agreement with the tenant’ alongside, ‘the timber on the property will be included in the sale’.**



Central: Concentrated plan of The Elms and the Elm Farmhouse complex with Somersham Road in-between.



Google Earth
The Plan included: Elm Farmhouse bottom left, Valley Barn top left and Inghams Barn top right.

The Elms



¹⁸ SRO (I) HD2833/2/SC242/32/16, The Elms, Little Blakenham, Sales Particulars 30th June 1914
¹⁹ SRO (I) gC 046/1, SC242/32 The Elms, Little Blakenham, Particulars and Conditions of Sale, Tuesday 30th June 1914. C Bond (R. Bond and Sons) Sale Particulars, 1912-1917. Note on Sale Particulars: Sold to M.G Hale for £3,000

The Elms date unknown



The Elms date unknown

The Elms Front aspect 2018



The Elms side and rear aspects 2018



The Elms

The Elms is now a restored five-bedroom Georgian family house which includes a previous barn converted into a housing annexe accommodation. The house sits on an elevated plot and consists of four acres, a substantial reduction from 1914 when the estate consisted of 290 acres, 3 Roods and 20 Poles. It also consisted of 'VALLEY BARN' a Timber and Thatched Barn, with yard, Two Cattle Sheds, and Three Loose Boxes with Well of Water; and 'INGHAMS BARN' a Timber and Thatched Barn, Yard with Three Open Sheds and Pond of Water.

Grade II Listed Elm Farmhouse

Grade 2 listed (list entry number 1251403).
Listed 24th January 1986.



Front view and rear views 2nd September 2014
Front view 2019 rear view 2021



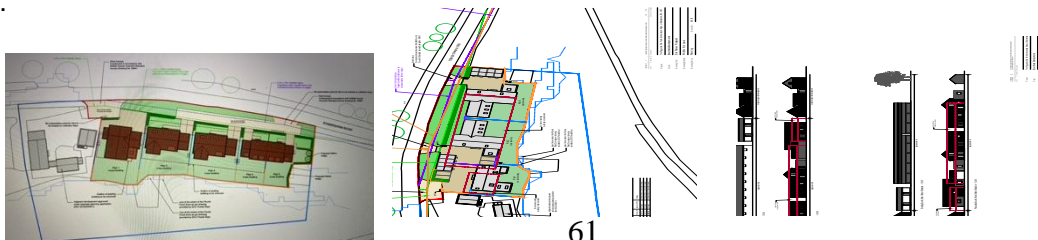
Elm Farmhouse is situated in an isolated position on the south-west side of the village on lower Somersham road opposite The Elms. It has a complete typical 17th century timber frame and is plastered. The left-hand gable was rebuilt in the 19th century together with the external end chimney to the right. It is estimated that over 50% of its traditional farm buildings have been lost. It is believed that the house was once larger than it is now, in 1914 it is listed as containing six rooms.



Left photo Aerial view: (unknown date) Left the Grade II Listed Elm Farmhouse, then Elm Barn, a curtilage listed building associated with it. Alongside a cluster of agricultural buildings including the Old Piggeries on the right.
Right Photo: Rear view photograph of site taken 15th July 2021.

The Planned Re-development of the Site
(Excluding Elm Farmhouse)

Prior Approval was authorised by Mid Suffolk District Council on 23rd September 2020 for the change of use of the former agricultural buildings to residential dwellings, planning reference DC/20/03170. The approved plans outlined the conversion of a range of former piggeries to create five dwellings, comprising a terrace of four essentially identical two-bedroom dwellings, together with a separate, detached three-bedroom dwelling.



Left: original plan for development of the Old Piggeries August 2022 and right revised plan June 2023.
 (Elm Farmhouse and Elm Barn are excluded in these plans the site is 0.39 hectares)

In June 2023 following comments from the Council's Heritage Team, the development was amended to 3 dwellings, along with the design.

Plot 1 a 3-4 bedroom property will face north towards the Highway

Plot 2 a 3 bedroom property and Plot 3 a 5 bedroom property will stand back-to-back, facing west and east respectively

Statement of Heritage Team: ...'The design of all three dwellings would largely resemble agricultural barns in form, but would also accommodate more contemporary details to reflect its modern construction and clearly signify that the dwellings are a newer addition to the row, when viewed against the historic buildings to the west'.

'New hedges are to be planted along the site frontage. The site frontages would largely consist of the driveway, much like the neighbouring Elm Farm Barn. Each rear garden would be grassed, as existing. Each plot would be separated by a combination of timber fencing, again as seen at the neighbouring Elm Farm Barn, with some smaller portions of brick walling.'

Photographic Record of Elm Farm Barn, Agricultural buildings and Old Piggeries pre-



development

(Above) Elm Barn and below existing agricultural buildings and The Old Piggeries.
 Elm Farm Barn, top photo 2017 and Agricultural buildings below 2019



29th December 2020



25th March 2021

Date unknown below but remains in March 2021 (photo)



21st April 2021



8th May 2021.



8th June 2021 Rear view of The Old Piggeries

29th May 2021



12th June 2021 front aspect Somersham Road and Elm Farm Barn



July 2021 Sale agreed signage



Prior to demolition, one of the old Piggery barns had a sign affixed the main door, indicating that the premises had been occupied by 'Gabriel, Wade and English Ltd' This company was a timber importer/merchants with branch offices all around the country and were active between 1760-1952,



Outside another of the barns was a hydraulic log splitter and immediately to the east a large partially infilled pit. Photos taken 16th May 2022 - 11th December 2022



Elm Farm Barn (Grade II Curtilage Listed)

Progress of the restoration, renovation and extension of Elm Barn now known as Sorrel Barn by Beechlake Developments

Elm Farm Barn is an agricultural curtilage listed barn, to the Grade II Elm Farmhouse, it sits alongside. The barn appears on the first edition OS maps so predates 1840 and is therefore at least 140 years old, whilst the presence of hit-and-miss brickwork forming ventilation holes suggests it was likely a grain or hay barn. The barn was part of a wider assembly of farm buildings which have since been demolished. These originally formed two courtyards and the barn would not have been visible from the road, due to the presence of an additional much larger barn on the roadside. The barn therefore appears to be the last remaining of the earlier barns on the complex and the brick construction dates it to much later than the age of Elm Farmhouse. Elm barn sits alongside four former agricultural buildings known as 'The Piggeries' which date from the 1970's. Both the Barn and Piggeries have been disused since 1993 when the piggeries closed.

Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent was granted by Mid Suffolk District Council on 22nd September 2020 for the change of use and conversion of a curtilage Listed barn from an agricultural building to a residential dwelling, planning permission and listed building references DC/20/03150 and DC/20/03151.

*'Additional land, to the south, may be available by separate negotiation, although any sale of additional land will be accompanied by a covenant stating that it can only be used for amenity or garden purposes and will be subject to the necessary planning change of use if it is to be used as garden land.'*²⁰

²⁰ The Piggeries & Elm Farm Barn Somersham Road Little Blakenham Suffolk IP8 4NF , A range of modern agricultural barns with permitted development for conversion to five dwellings, together with a traditional Suffolk Barn with planning permission for conversion to a single dwelling, in a rural location within Little Blakenham. Guide Price £500,000 Freehold Ref: P6580/J <https://media.onthemarket.com/properties/10129362/1357719884/document-0.pdf> accessed 12th April 2023,



Elm Farm Barn July 2017 and 16th May 2022



25th January 2022 Front and rear views



9th May 2022



16th May 2022



27th August 2022



27th December 2022



28th January 2023 Front and rear views, Elm Farm Barn completed and the start of demolition and clearance on the next phase the building of Horsenden House.



15th April 2023 Elm Barn sadly now renamed Sorrel Barn.

For Sale: Sorrel Barn, £895,000 (Agents: Clarke and Simpson, Framlingham, Suffolk)



1st photo finished house, followed by Computer generated pictures.



Photo's front and rear
April 2023: Sale Agreed

Horsenden House

Progress of the building of Horsenden House by Beechlake Developments
2nd Property to be Built on the site



Central Photo: Original Agricultural Building
To be demolished

Front and rear views of the pre and post
demolition and clearing of site.
September – 27th November 2023



Sorrel Barn (previously Elm Farm Barn) to
right and site to become Horsenden House.



7th December 2023



12th January 2024 Roof on

Horsenden House, Guide Price £895,000 (Agents: Clarke and Simpson, Framlingham, Suffolk)



Computer generated front and
rear aspects (For Sale 3rd May
2024)²¹



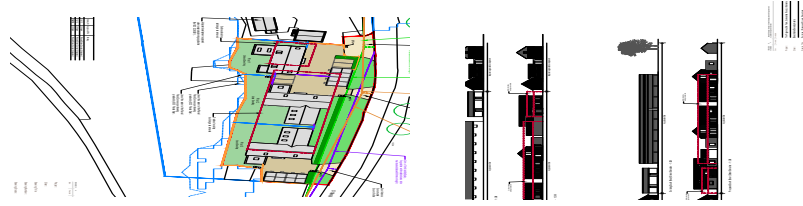
Sales Particulars 4 bedroom 4 bathroom

Horsenden House extends to approximately 227sqm (2,448sqft) of living accommodation plus a detached double cart lodge in the driveway. A stunning, large, light and airy hallway greets you through the front door with an impressive, vaulted ceiling and a beautifully crafted bespoke solid oak staircase to the first floor. Outside the main driveway is block paved and provides parking for several cars and the house sits on a very good-sized plot of nearly one third of an acre. The rear of the house faces south and has a large patio and lawned gardens.

²¹ <https://www.clarkeandsimpson.co.uk/properties/little-blakenham-ipswich-suffolk-p7338j>

The Old Piggeries

Next phase of the development



4th April 2023, the old piggeries front view from Somersham Road and 15th April Rear view from public footpath



11th March 2023 the start of the demolition of the Old Piggeries, the large Willow tree has been felled and site starting to be cleared



27th September 2023 Piggeries demolished, front view from Somersham Road

This part of the development will be updated in 2024 Village Recorder Report

Grade II Listed Rose Cottage

Historic England 24 January 1986, Source ID 1250943, Legacy ID 433493.



Rose Cottage 1986



Rose Cottage 2021

Rose Cottage is situated on the edge of the village known as 'The Wash' and dates to the mid or late C16. 2-cell cross-passage entrance, Timber-framed and plastered. Slated roof, with late C16 or C17 external end chimney of red brick to left, serving hall. A second chimney was added to the service end in C19. C20 casements at ground floor, C19 casements at first floor. C20 gabled entrance porch with pair of framed and battened doors. The C16 inner doorway has its original arched head of aepressea 4-centred form. The open fireplace to the hall is blocked, but with broad cambered lintel exposed. In the chamber over the hall is an open truss with arch-braced tie-beam. The roof was rebuilt in C19 and the twin service rooms are now amalgamated.

Village Amenities

Little Blakenham continues to have very little in the form of amenities.

The Village Hall and Playing Field



The Village Hall and Playing Field are situated in Valley Road opposite the church. The playing field also acts as a car park for users of both the village hall and church.

The Parish Council rents the land from the Church of England at the rate of £200.00 per annum.

Playground (situated at the back of The Beeches)



The land used for the playground was given to the parish at a 'Peppercorn Rent' of £2 per annum by 1st Viscount Blakenham John Hare in the 1980's and continues today.

This year following discussions with the Parish Council we finally saw the reintroduction of a baby swing and there are also talks regarding reintroducing a slide which was previously removed when the playground was last updated. It is well used by the few children we have in the parish.

Postal Services

A royal mail post box is situated on Little Box Meadow, Valley Road. Collections are Monday to Friday at 9am and Saturday 7am. There are also post offices inside the Co-op Bramford, One Stop Claydon and in Ipswich.

Library Van

Suffolk Libraries run this and the Library van calls onto the The Beeches every fourth week on a Thursday between 9.15 - 9.30am.

Petrol Stations There is a local garage at Somersham, which repairs vehicles and has petrol pumps. The next closest petrol station can be found at Asda just off the A14 approximately 2 miles away. However there are stations all around the area.

Transport

Public Bus Service The 111 route runs Monday to Saturday with 4 outward journeys' from Hitcham to Ipswich, and 4 return journeys with no service on Sunday's or Public Bank Holidays. The service is provided by Suffolk County Council, via the bus operator Mulley's. There are two bus stops in the village one adjacent to The Beeches and another at the bottom of Pound Lane on the B1113.

Trains The main train station is in Ipswich with further stations at Needham Market which has a slightly more limited service as not all trains stop at the station and Stowmarket.

Taxi's – can be booked through various firms in Ipswich, Needham Market and Stowmarket.

Schools and Higher Education

There are local primary schools at Bramford, Somersham and adjoining Primary and Secondary schools at Claydon which also provides Higher Education. Suffolk College and University of Suffolk can also be found in Ipswich.

Shops - There are no shops in the village.

Locally there is a Budgens in Great Blakenham, Co-ops in Bramford and Claydon and a Community Shop in Somersham. Major supermarkets can be found in and around the outskirts of Ipswich.

Anglian Retail Park (opposite Asda) contains the stores, The Range, Dunelm, Smyths Toy Store, Go Outdoors, Carpet Right, Hammonds Cars and Jump.

Whilst inside Asda an Opticians and Pharmacy can be found.

Food

Bramford, 1.8 miles away has a fish and chip shop, Indian and Chinese takeaway but do not deliver.

Claydon has a fish and chip shop and sandwich shop named 'Fresh Fills'

Offton also has a fish and chip shop attached to the Lime Burners Pub.

On the Asda complex just off the A14 is a 24 hour McDonald's

Whilst at Anglian Retail Park (opposite Asda at Whitehouse) can be found, Burger King, Tim Horton's, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Costa.

Pubs

The nearest pubs are The Duke of Marlborough Somersham, The Cock Bramford, The Lime Burners Offton and The Crown and also The Greyhound in Claydon.

Sports Facilities can be found in Somersham, Bramford, Cycle Speedway at Great Blakenham, A Football Club at Whitton, and also at Needham Market, Stowmarket and Ipswich.

Cinema's

Can be found in Stowmarket and Ipswich.

Village Attractions **Blakenham Woodland Garden**



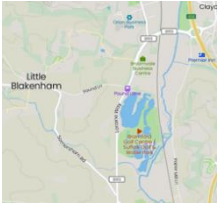
Open 1st March til 30th June 9.30-16.30 daily

In 1951 John Hare, MP for Sudbury and Woodbridge purchased the wooded hill next to his home 'Cottage Farm' surrounded by old disused chalk pits and developing the garden became his solace. John Hare left politics in 1982 and became 1st Viscount

Blakenham. When resident Viscount Blakenham use to occasionally let the very few children of the village swim in his pool during the hot summer months. Following his death, the garden was made into a charitable trust to ensure the survival of his plant collection and was carried on by his son Micheal Hare, 2nd Viscount Blakenham, a life-long environmentalist, increased his father's stock further of rare, unusual and un-named specimens from auctions at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, where he was Chairman and also of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The garden attempts to strike a balance between what is cultivated and what is wild.

Nearby Attractions

Suffolk Water Park, Quiet sports, Golf Centre and Cafe Bramford



This area is a commercial fishery, its fishing Lakes are open 7am-6pm daily. There is no public access around the lakes. Bramford Golf Club is next to the Water Park, and open on a pay and play basis. Facilities include driving range, club house, excellent nine-hole course and pitch and put, The Waterfront Café is also on site and open 8am-3pm daily.

Employment

The village offers few employment opportunities outside of agriculture, with most employment found in the surrounding area of Great Blakenham, Claydon, Ipswich and surrounding areas.

Sterling Suffolk Glasshouse (Tomato Greenhouse)



Situated on the B1113 between Little Blakenham and Bramford.

Broomvale Business Centre



Complex comprising of listed old agricultural buildings which belonged to Broovale Farm, now a business park and home to several businesses Office buildings and different This year a Bridal shop and Vets also set up trading from the complex.

Port One Logistics Park



To be updated in next report.

Thank you for reading.