

Paper from SAFE for Annual Parish Meeting 2024

SAFE (Supporters Against Fressingfield Expansion) is concerned with getting the right houses in the right places. For them to be of good design and to complement the village of Fressingfield. We were formed in 2017 to coordinate objection to 3 proposed major housing developments totalling over 200 houses and this was shown to be in agreement with the vast majority of the residents of the village.

Soon after this the Neighbourhood Development Plan was generated by an independent group. The document was well received and received 86.6% support at referendum. The document was complimented on by outside assessors.

Communication of planning issues and applications are documented on our web site fressingfieldhousing.org and these are an important aspect of our activities. At present we have over 27,500 hits on the site.

We have continued to look at and document aspects of our infrastructure and where necessary communicate with the appropriate authorities. Flooding, sewage egress, water shortage, the environment and roads are all issues that are affected by more development.

Sewage overflow and flooding are well known to villagers and is recorded in the 2004 Parish Plan. However, events were not properly recorded. SAFE has taken an active role in recording these events and reporting them to Anglian Water, Suffolk County Council, and The Environment Agency. As a result of our actions Anglian Water relined the sewers. Whilst improving the situation it is not totally resolved. Since November 2023 there have been three episodes of serious flooding and sewage egress. This will be aggravated by more development as the sewer has only a finite capacity.

SAFE has been seriously concerned about the damage to the south west boundary on the School Lane site where a considerable amount of hedge has been removed. We are particularly concerned about the ecological, biodiversity and aesthetic implications of this. Our reporting of this has made us all aware of local environmental issues and the importance of hedgerows in the wider environment as exemplified by removing carbon from the atmosphere and supporting local economies. The importance of trees is also stressed in the NPPF para 136. The School Lane boundary now has a Tree Preservation Order on it.

SAFE is concerned over the loss of habit in the village and the significant impact on biodiversity that recent developments have had. There has been limited success in the implementation of the Government's "25 year Green Future policy," but now developers do have to demonstrate "Biodiversity Net Gain" in any development proposal. The Government has also committed to broadly maintaining its current level of food production, National planning policy sets a clear presumption away from developing high quality agricultural land where possible. Agricultural land is cheap to develop as opposed to brownfield sites We need to be vigilant that planning applications are not utilising high quality agricultural land (such as that in Fressingfield.)

Water is another area of concern. Essex and Suffolk Water are no longer permitting industrial units using large volumes of water to draw from the mains supply due to an overall shortage. Whilst houses are given a priority, we need to be mindful of any developments which may have implications for water security.

SAFE is a registered consultee for the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Local Plan (JLP). Part 1 is now formally adopted and covers the period up to 2037. This includes the strategic vision for the Authority and records the local policies under which the Authority will operate. (the full document can be seen on the SAFE web site). Part two is now being developed. This includes a "Call for Sites" process, which concluded on 2nd February 2024. This process will not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for development neither does it confer any planning status on the site, nor does it give any future planning status. The sites put forward for Fressingfield have not yet been published and the Local Plan will not be adopted until Autumn 2026.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities updated its NPPF in 2023. This can be read in full on the SAFE web site. In our village more development will not promote sustainable transport, meet the challenge of climate change or reduce flooding. It does not enhance the natural environment and new development may well compromise the setting of listed buildings. In Fressingfield we have 58 of these.

We continue to scrutinise new planning applications and appeals to ensure we have the right homes, of the right quality in the right place. We strive to make sure that the proposed benefits do not outweigh the harm.

Recently the Parish Council has sought to review the NDP. SAFE can see no reason for this and has used objective and logical arguments against significant changes to a fair and well-constructed plan which was widely praised and adopted only four years ago. The current plan is valid until 2036.

John Castro. On behalf of SAFE members, John Kelsall, Pam Castro, Warren Albers, Judy Cantrill, David Jacobs, Abi Maydon, Paul McCann, Michael Miles, Jenny Morris- Bradshaw.

15/03/24