# July 2026 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

## Residents deserve answers over A140/A1120 link road proposal

I have raised concerns over plans to progress the proposed A140 Major Road Network (MRN) scheme, questioning whether the construction of a new link road represents a long-term solution to traffic and road safety issues in the area. While acknowledging the need to address congestion at the A140/A1120 junction, I am seeking clarity on the evidence supporting the scheme, its impact on local residents and businesses, and whether alternative options have been properly considered. This junction has been a problem for many years and has been on Suffolk County Council's radar for a long time. Local residents deserve clarity on the proposed timetable, the options that were considered, and what compensation and support will be available to those directly affected. Most importantly, people should not be left facing years of uncertainty about the future of their homes and communities. I'm not convinced this scheme alone will deliver the improvements that residents and road users want to see. If it does proceed, we must also take the opportunity to address longstanding speeding concerns, including through improved road markings and the reinstatement of a speed camera. Many questions remain unanswered and I believe local people deserve clearer answers before the scheme progresses any further.

## Alarm raised over solar project wiping out Suffolk farmland

I have raised significant concerns over the proposed EcoPower Suffolk solar farm and battery energy storage project in Mid Suffolk, warning that residents are being asked to comment on a scheme without having access to the full facts. As the consultation launched, Conservative councillors have immediately identified 11 grounds for objection, comprising 60 individually evidenced concerns, across five major themes:

- The developer's own experts contradict its claims about environmental impact.
- Almost 1,000 hectares of Suffolk's best farmland could be lost for up to 40 years.
- Serious questions remain over the safety of the proposed battery storage facility.
- The project is proposed in an area already facing severe water pressures.
- Residents are being asked to judge the scheme before full information about its risks is available.

At first glance, this statutory consultation from EcoPower leaves more questions than answers. Important surveys on wildlife, archaeology and landscape are still missing. In places, we can see the value of early engagement, and I applaud local town and parish councils for engaging so fully to this point and securing some concessions. However, a lot more needs to be done, and we still have huge concerns over the transport impacts, the damage to the Mellis conservation area, listed buildings, tourism, rights of way and our natural environment and landscapes. Moreover, the battery storage proposals — in the area of a public drinking water source — seem wholly unsuitable. We will be offering to work with local parishes, to help them shape their response, and ensuring the County Council's response is suitably robust. Councillors are encouraging residents and businesses to take part in the consultation and ensure their views are heard. I've had my serious doubts about

this proposal from the very outset. While calling themselves EcoPower Suffolk, we need to be clear that this is not a local scheme — it is an international project from a company headquartered in Israel. Do they really understand Suffolk and our communities? When they make a simple copy-and-paste error in today's documents, referring to consulting the 'Surrey Wildlife Trust' for a Suffolk scheme, I have to question their professionalism and whether this is just a lift and shift of another project. From a rural perspective, seeing that 87 percent of the scheme, nearly 2,500 acres, is our best and most versatile farmland fills me with dread, and on those grounds alone it should be refused. As a nation, we need to ensure that farming pays — we cannot blame the landowners who are struggling to make ends meet due to this awful Labour government. I will continue to hold Suffolk County Council's Reform UK administration to account throughout the process, insisting on a thorough and robust assessment of the proposal, ensuring residents' concerns are heard and that full information about the potential risks and impacts is made available to local communities.

## Welcome news on CQC “Good” rating for Adult Social Care

Suffolk Conservatives have welcomed the Care Quality Commission’s (CQC) latest assessment of Suffolk County Council’s Adult Social Care services, which has once again awarded the service an overall rating of “Good.” The assessment reflects the significant work undertaken by my previous administration to transform Adult Social Care, strengthen services, and ensure they remained sustainable for the future. Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger, former Cabinet Member for Adult Care at Suffolk County Council and current Deputy Group Leader, said: “I’m really pleased to see Suffolk receive this recognition from the CQC. I know just how much hard work goes into delivering Adult Social Care, and this report reflects the dedication and professionalism of our staff and partners, who make such a difference to people’s lives every day. Having served as Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care during the period covered by this inspection, I’m particularly pleased to see the recognition for the focus on helping people remain independent, the strength of our safeguarding arrangements, and the way services work together. The report also highlights areas where we know there’s more to do, particularly around waiting times and support for unpaid carers, and it’s important that the council continues to build on this strong foundation.” We congratulate the Adult Social Care staff and partner organisations on this positive assessment and thanks them for their continued dedication to supporting Suffolk residents and hope the current administration will continue building on the strong foundations put in place to ensure residents receive the high-quality care they deserve.

## New office suite for Leader at Endeavour House

The Conservative Group at Suffolk County Council has raised serious concerns following the release of Freedom of Information documents detailing changes to office accommodation for the Reform UK administration at Endeavour House, including more than £15,000 in costs itemised against the creation of a new office for the Leader of the Council, Cllr Michael Hadwen. The documents show that senior officers were discussing the Leader's requirements within days of the new administration taking office, with one noting that the Leader had "already chased" the office moves and "will be expecting some solutions sooner rather than later". The overall project is estimated at £18,484.31 excluding VAT, a figure which does not include video-conferencing equipment that was still being priced separately.

The Conservative Group believes residents deserve a clear explanation as to why this level of expenditure is justified at a time when council finances remain under pressure and Suffolk County Council is due to be abolished under Local Government Reorganisation. Reform came in promising to save money but one of their first acts looks to be splashing out around £15,000 on a new office for their leader, including thousands of pounds on kit and wiring for a special button so he doesn't have to get up from his desk to open his door. Endeavour House already provides office accommodation and workspace for councillors to carry out their duties. Taxpayers will rightly question why thousands of pounds are being spent on changes that appear to have more to do with personal aggrandisement than the delivery of frontline services.

Cllr Matthew Hicks, the previous Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

"The previous office served me perfectly well for eight years, and a similar room has been perfectly adequate for leaders over the last twenty years. Why does Cllr Hadwen think he needs a £15,000-plus leader's suite? The fact that public money is being spent so he doesn't have to get up and open his own door, like everyone else in that building does, beggars' belief." I am calling on the Reform administration to publish the final cost of the project including all IT and video-conferencing equipment, to identify the budget from which it is being funded, to explain under what authority the expenditure was approved without any member-level decision, and to demonstrate how it represents value for money for Suffolk taxpayers.

## Work on a new Suffolk Minerals and Waste Plan now under way

The existing Suffolk and Minerals Waste Plan was published in 2020 and is now in the process of being updated. The plan plays a vital role in supporting economic growth, protecting the environment and ensuring communities continue to benefit from well-planned development. The first stage of work on a new plan is a 'call for sites' survey which is now open and closes on 27 July 2026. It invites landowners, operators and others to suggest possible sites. This helps the county council understand what land is available and where development could take place, before any decisions are made. Once adopted, the new plan will set out how Suffolk will provide for a steady and adequate supply of minerals - such as sand and gravel - alongside identifying the infrastructure needed to manage waste. However, there are a number of stages to go through, including further public consultations and Examination, before the new plan is formally adopted likely in late 2029. More information can be found ion the SCC website.

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