

AUTUMN 2011

County Councillor **ADRIAN GUNSON** REPORTS



Alpington, Ashby St. Mary, Bergh Apton, Thurton and Yelverton

HOBART HIGH SCHOOL - GCSE RESULTS

I am delighted that the GCSE results at Hobart this year have improved significantly from last years, which themselves were very good. In fact 80% of youngsters got at least 5 A* to C subjects at GCSE and 70% got at least 5 A* to C including Maths and English this year. I would like to congratulate John Robson the Head Teacher who retired in July, all the staff and parents and youngsters themselves on these excellent results.

ALPINGTON

I have reported that a section of road in Reeders Lane is sinking, probably as a result of heavy lorries and/or the clay subsoil shrinking due to the dry weather. I have asked the Engineer to patch this to prevent cars grounding on the centre of the road which is higher than the wheel tracks. This stretch of road is about halfway between the Burgate Lane junction and Dairy Farm. I hope that this work will be done quite quickly.

THURTON - OLD SCHOOL : PLANNING APPLICATION

As many residents know a planning application has been submitted in respect of the old school at Thurton for it to be used as a children's nursery. I am delighted that after two years in which the old school has not been used since the building of the new school, and during which period the old school has started to look somewhat derelict, that some use might now be found for it.

I am concerned about the traffic problems that the proposed use could cause in Ashby Road and, indeed, I have had many discussions with the Highway Engineers regarding this issue. The basic point is though, it is not a change of use in planning terms; in other words the Nursery School is regarded as the same in planning terms as a primary school, and this means that the Highway Department cannot ask South Norfolk District Council to refuse planning permission on highway grounds even if that were justified.

It is true, of course, that there will be additional traffic and there may be some clash of timing between the times of the parents taking their children to the nursery and the times of parents taking their children or collecting them from Thurton School but all that can be done is to draw the attention of the applicants to the problems, and this has been done by the Highways Department and the Parish Council. I know that the applicants are taking account of some of the comments that have been made and if planning permission is granted, will work with the Highways Engineer and the village to minimise any problems occurring.

ALPINGTON - GILBERT CLOSE

My attention has been drawn to the fact that there are several potholes in Gilbert Close roughly halfway between the Church Road junction and the end of the cul-de-sac and also some road damage around the junction with Church Road. I have reported these to the Highway Engineer and they will be dealt with in due course.

ASHBY ST. MARY - LOW COMMON : LARGE HOLE IN ROAD

I am grateful to a resident who reported to me the large hole which developed in the road between the culvert at Low Meadows and the first property in Low Common. This was a very large hole and not

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dissimilar to the holes that have developed in the past at the Sandy Lane end of this road and also near the present hole and must be due to some underground movement of water or rabbits, etc., moving stone under the road so that the tarmac has nothing to support it. Anyway the Highway Engineer treated it as a matter of urgency and it was repaired within 24 hours of my reporting it.

BERGH APTON - LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - HOUSING LAND ALLOCATIONS IN VILLAGE

South Norfolk District Council is currently consulting Parish Councils about further sites which have been submitted for housing allocation by developers, landowners and others. So far as Bergh Apton is concerned the County Council owns some small-holding land and suggested that a very small part of this land might be used for house building in the next 15 years, and perhaps for affordable housing, as the affordable housing recently built in Bergh Apton was on County Council owned land.

It became clear that the County Council's suggestion had been badly misinterpreted by many people in Bergh Apton and it was never the County Council's suggestion that housing should be built on substantial areas of the small-holding land in Bergh Apton. It was only thought that some very small part of that land might be appropriate, depending on the views of South Norfolk Council and local inhabitants. In any event there are a number of other sites, with no connection with the County Council and in private ownership, which have been put forward for development in Bergh Apton.

I felt that the County Council involvement was being so badly misunderstood that it was preventing reasonable discussion and consultation locally on the other and possibly more likely sites for housing put forward in Bergh Apton.

I, therefore, persuaded the County Council to withdraw all of its land in Bergh Apton from any consideration for inclusion in the Local Development Framework as being suitable for housing in Bergh Apton. This means that there is no County Council land being put forward for housing in Bergh Apton.

LANGLEY SCHOOL

The A Level results at Langley School were excellent with a 99.2% pass rate and 62% of entrants achieving grades A or B. At GCSE for the second year running, Langley achieved over 90% 5 A*/C's and as many as 40% A*/A's. I would like to congratulate Dominic Findlay, the Head Teacher, all the staff, the parents and youngsters on these excellent results.

The school has had a busy year with numbers rising to 550 students. The dining facilities were completely refurbished providing a first class kitchen facility, and the sixth form common room and work areas were refurbished as a result of increased numbers coming to the school in year 12 where there are now 150 students in the sixth form.

I would just mention that over the summer the school hosted 300 Belgian language students for six weeks. They contributed to the local community in many ways finishing with free plays for local people which achieved quite high attendance numbers.

Bursaries and Scholarships are available as usual for year 7, 9 and 12 entry pupils.

SOUTH NORFOLK HOUSING PLANS FOR LODDON/CHEDGRAVE

In August, the District Council announced its proposed allocation of houses to Loddon and Chedgrave in the 15 year Plan which is currently out for consultation. The idea is that in addition to the houses to be built on the Express Plastics site that there should be a total of between 100 to 200 new houses built in the two communities which are considered as one for these purposes.

This figure excludes individual or infill plots which become available, and also any land that is used for affordable housing is not part of the total. I feel that in addition to the development of the Express Plastics site this number is high for Loddon/Chedgrave, in view of the fact that the infrastructure is already overloaded; in this connection I refer particularly to the High School where numbers are already in excess of the design figure for the school and there is one mobile on site, the road congestion at the bypass junctions where a roundabout is desperately needed, at least at the George Lane junction, and other infrastructure such as sewerage where it appears to most residents and myself that the current system is overloaded.

LODDON - FORMER EXPRESS PLASTICS SITE - PLANNING CONSULTATION

As I reported in the summer edition of my newsletter, Taylor Wimpey were considering another planning application for this site off Beccles Road. This planning application has now been submitted to South Norfolk District Council. The total number of houses proposed is 87 houses; the new layout of the development makes it more attractive, gives better car parking facilities and also blends better with the environment of the mainly Victorian houses on Beccles Road and the countryside to the south of the development.

I do have concerns about the highway aspect, and particularly the speed of traffic on the Beccles Road and the footway access into the town. I have tried very hard, supported by the Parish Council, to get Taylor Wimpey to agree to another vehicular activated sign which flashes '20' when drivers are exceeding that limit and which could be placed at the beginning of the extended 20mph speed limit and this has finally been agreed.

Along with the Parish council I tried also to get some crossing control i.e. Pelican or similar, where the pedestrians from the new development would cross near the speed table at Farthing Green to get into the town and the schools in Kittens Lane. However, the likely pedestrian flow was not judged to be high enough to justify any extra traffic calming or control at this point. Incidentally, the 20mph speed limit will be extended from Beccles Road down Low Bungay Road as far as the junction with Davy Place and also in Davy Place itself, since it is felt by the Highways Department that some people, including youngsters, will choose to get to the schools by walking along Low Bungay Road and up Davy Place to cross High Bungay Road. I am not sure about this line of thinking myself; in any event, I do not think it is desirable to encourage pedestrians to cross High Bungay Road at the junction of Davy Place as visibility, even on foot, is very limited looking towards Loddon.

FASTER BROADBAND

Norfolk's Broadband Project team is working with the Government's

UK team to procure a national framework contract which will be available for all local authorities to use to secure the delivery of improved Broadband.

At the same time in Norfolk the County Council team is meeting businesses and community representatives to estimate the demand so that we can have a project in Norfolk which is more attractive to potential suppliers, as the greater the demand, the greater the level of private sector investment is likely. Specific procurement in Norfolk will start early next year and using the national framework, the Norfolk contract should be in place by September 2012 with work beginning early in 2013 and the whole project completed in 2015.

THURTON / ASHBY ST. MARY - LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - POSSIBLE SITES FOR HOUSING

South Norfolk District Council is currently consulting about further sites which have been submitted by land owners and developers for housing. As residents will know there are two additional small sites put forward.

I do not believe, that because of the situation with regard to the A146 and lack of facilities in the villages, that any significant estate type development is appropriate, although small scale infill is reasonable.

There is continuing concern expressed to me about the problems of crossing the A146 as well as the worry, despite the bollards I got erected, of children walking alongside the road between Vale Road and the School.

I discussed with the Parish Council the idea that a vehicle activated sign flashing 40mph at speeding vehicles on the Norwich side of the Ashly Road junction would be helpful and I am backing the Council's request to the County Council for this sign. It would be a step forward if we got this sign, but it will not remove the basic problem caused by the A146.

ALPINGTON/YELVERTON - LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - POSSIBLE SITES FOR HOUSING

South Norfolk District Council is currently consulting about further sites which have been submitted by land owners and developers for housing. As well as the sites discussed a year ago, there are also sites in Dranes Lane and Wheel Road which have been put forward.

I have remarked in my Newsletters before that I do not feel that Alington/Yelverton are appropriate villages for estate housing development in view of the lack of facilities and infrastructure.

I feel that only small scale development on infill plots is feasible without destroying the character of the villages, but I shall be interested in hearing the local views expressed to the Parish Council and South Norfolk District Council which is the Planning Authority.

TROWSE TRAFFIC LIGHTS

I mentioned in my last newsletter that the green phase was very indistinct at the Bixley Hill traffic lights coming out of Norwich towards Loddon. I am pleased to say that this was remedied in July and this phase is now very strong and easily visible to drivers. Some of the white lining on the by-pass is faint and I have asked if new lines could be laid before the winter.

ASHBY ST. MARY - CHURCH ROAD : POTHOLES

I reported the potholes which had developed in the summer in Church Road where it joins Green Lane. These potholes were repaired in August but further problems have developed with the road surface in this area as small parts of it are sinking, possibly due to the effect of the dry weather on the subsoil. In any event, I asked the local Highways Engineer to look at the road himself and he has done this. As a result some bigger patching work has been arranged for a few sections of this road during the autumn.