

## In these hard times, we need new ideas

Funding gets tighter, and yet expectations on our police force remain the same.

The same applies to other public sector organisations. It means they have to change, find different ways of working and drive efficiencies.

We have seen some good examples of this in Suffolk, and we report another new idea today.

Suffolk police will start recruiting members of the public to become community volunteers – their “eyes and ears” in towns and villages.

They’ll have access to police stations and wear special tabards.

There will undoubtedly be some people who say this is “policing on the cheap”.

But when police resources are so stretched, having more eyes and ears looking out for crime in our towns and villages probably isn’t a bad thing.

Will it work? Who knows. We’ll be interested to see where this sits between Neighbourhood Watch and PCSOs.

But we welcome the fact that Suffolk Constabulary is trying to do something different, and hope it provides our police force with an additional tool to keep our county safe.

## Cornhill work vital for town

It’s a significant day for Ipswich – today, work will finally start on creating a new-look Cornhill.

This has been a long-time coming, and it is set to play a vital role in regenerating the town centre.

The hope is that it will create a focal point which Ipswich can be proud of.

There have been complaints from some over the necessity of this work, which costs more than £3million. Many people say that money could be better spent.

But this could be a vital building block in the regeneration of the town centre.

Despite the wonderful buildings which overlook the Cornhill, it’s tired and uninspiring. It could be so much better.

Ipswich is unlikely to get the continued investment it needs from retailers and restaurants unless the town centre environment improves.

This is an important step on that journey.

## Thought for the day

**PHILIPPIANS 4 V 6:** Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs and don’t forget to thank him for his answers.

# letters

## Listen to those who know

Sir, – As three highly contested planning applications for new housing in Fressingfield approach the planning committee stage it looks like a lot will hinge on the safety of our rural roads. The unsustainability of rural roads in relation to the forced and unnatural pace of major housing development in Mid Suffolk is unprecedented in its history.

The role of Suffolk highways was demoted from one of a statutory advisor to Mid Suffolk planning, to that of a key consultee, which does not absolve the authorities of a moral and legal duty to keep people safe. Yet everything in the planning process in Mid Suffolk is subject to a “presumption in favour of development”. It is at the root of troubles in the quest to get thousands of houses approved at almost any cost to communities. If the highways department are lacking in their duty of care for public safety in order to hit government housing targets, this is completely wrong and needs opposing. The current situation lacks transparency and effective democratic accountability. The planning process is unfit for purpose. Fressingfield, with only around 350 houses in its centre, has applications for hundreds of new homes. It has been misclassified as a “core” village because the facilities and services which actually exist were not checked. Other misrepresentations are found in the planning applications and developers’ reports.

Major concerns and objections from the parish council and campaigning villagers over road safety in relation to the three current applications resulted in a ‘highways review’ last Autumn. The traffic studies and reports are paid for by the developers. They could find nothing wrong. Their myth of several public buses a day persists in the reports. There is one a week. Moreover, other glaring realities on the ground contradict their findings. Anyone familiar with New Street knows its dangers. Pedestrians are pinned against walls and fences when two vehicles pass one another. They are also forced to cross back and forth and go into private gardens and drives to avoid traffic. In the longer Winter darkness walking to the shop is even worse. In the rain, roadside puddles increase pedestrian risks. There is no

## The Orwell Bridge problem

**Sir, - The problems of closures of the Orwell Bridge over the past few weeks certainly has added a bit of variety to the newspaper. In his page one story (EADT, January 25), Mr Geater has some information from ‘Weatherquest’ that has put the closures into some context. It would also be interesting to learn how other high-level bridges on major routes have been affected. There are a number one can think of - the Queen Elizabeth Bridge, the bridges over the lower River Severn, the Humber Bridge, the Forth Bridge and the Ness Bridge. All are located over estuaries which by their nature are exposed to strong winds. How many times have these bridges been closed in recent months and are the ways their occasional closures are managed, and the impacts of closure, in any way different from those of the Orwell Bridge? Further afield, how do the various major crossings between the Danish islands and southern Sweden perform? Risk assessment has to address three basic questions. What can happen? How likely is it to happen? If it does happen, what are the possible impacts and consequences? I have been involved in a number of projects where the forecasting and warning of severe weather and flood risk were involved, and know the whole subject is fraught with**

room for adding pavements along any of the roads. Bottlenecks and accidents are a regular occurrence. Lorries and farm vehicles get stuck. There are at least two main blind spots in each direction. On street parking for the shop and GP surgery exacerbates the difficulties of negotiating such a narrow main thoroughfare designed for horse and cart. Numerous small side turnings and private drives complicate matters further. No solution has been found to frequent dangerous speeding. In all, the road is notoriously hazardous. To think of putting any more vehicles and pedestrians onto New Street after 46 newly approved houses, large chapel and regional scout hut, constitutes irresponsible folly. With no public transport to speak of, a car culture is pervasive. Field paths or a roadside footpath, which can’t



difficulties, not least having to deal with public perception. One can be damned if one is right or wrong, ranging from accusations of being over-cautious or over-active in issuing statements. To place a little context on our local situation, how many hours is the bridge closed in percentage terms of a whole year? I suspect that this figure is very small, even minute, and the frantic, knee-jerk response demanding a northern by-pass I would suggest is out of proportion. Such a scheme would be vastly expensive, take years to come to fruition, and cause undue local disruption during construction, not to mention environmental damage. Instead of blaming poor design choices dating back to the 1970s, it has to be considered how much has changed since then, not least the hugely increased volume of traffic and the changed criteria imposed by the relatively new Highways

**Agency. Solutions involving variable speed limits for different types of vehicle before drastic decisions on total closure, would seem to provide the most suitable management approach. Heavy and high-sided vehicles would have to be taken off the road for limited periods, and other users would have to put up with strictly enforced speed limits, imposed by having a convoy system in some situations. This obviously goes against the grain for our impatient, selfish road users who seem to think that it is their God-given right to travel at the highest speed possible. A little bit of restraint and common sense could go a long way and avoid really major impediments like grid-lock in Ipswich and for many miles around, a situation where everyone loses.**

**JAMES DENT, Hadleigh.**

tells us that those who live with situations daily know them best and that the professionals and politicians would do well to listen carefully and engage fully when residents and their parish council say serious dangers do exist.

**SHARON LYTTON, Fressingfield.**

## How about something smarter?

Sir, – Speed the day when men wash and shave and say goodbye to the scruffy, unwashed half bearded look, which usually says “I can’t be bothered, it’s the in-look anyway”. A glance along most town centres reveals that