CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT FRESSINGFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Infrastructure

INTRODUCTION

Infrastructure is the facilities and system that serve a country, city or other area and encompasses the facilities necessary for the economy, households and businesses to function. In a community it includes such things as roads, transport, water, sewage, open spaces and healthcare.

We have owned a house in Fressingfield since 1993 and moved here full time in 2000, it being our sole residence.

During that time, I have observed and been affected by the shortcomings of the physical infrastructure

In the adopted NDP Fres 3 (March 2022) and the revised draft Fres 4 (January 2026) it states:

- 'New developments will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that sufficient supporting infrastructure is available to support the needs of that development. Where an infrastructure deficit currently exists, new development should not exacerbate that deficit.

There is significant infrastructure deficit in Fressingfield. The deficiencies are as follows:

INADEQUATE SEWERAGE PROVISION

- Currently there is a 'foul only' sewerage system in Fressingfield it was built in 1946. It runs along the centre of Low Road, and it is joined by a further sewer pipe close to the War Memorial draining some of the upper part of the village and is then pumped along the Weybread Straight to the sewage treatment plant in Weybread.
- Surface water drainage should be totally separate (but it is not).
- Overflow of the foul only sewer is first formally recorded in 1985 in correspondence between Norman Reynolds (of Bridge Cottage, Low Road), the local MP (Michael Lord), the then Chief Executive of Anglian Water (Peter Bray), and Mid Suffolk District Council, acting as the agent for Anglian Water.
- After investigation it was concluded that 'the Council feels unable to solve the problem'. Sewage egress occurred about twice a year. A mixture of water and sewage surcharged out of the manhole covers. The important point is that any surface water in Low Road (with or without sewage) passes directly into the Beck

via road drains on the north side. The only help offered was that Anglian Water would help clear up any deposits remaining after the surcharge.

At present the situation has not changed. Initially there were sporadic, poorly documented reports. In 2016 there are records of two incidents. In 2017 two incidents were photographed, but not reported. Systematic reporting commenced in April 2018. From that time details and photographs of known incidents have been reported to the Environment Agency. Between April 2018 and October 2021 15 episodes were reported. In October 2022 major works were undertaken by Anglian Water (see later), but since then a further nine episodes have occurred (full list appended). There may have been other episodes overnight which would not be reported. Any egress coming from the manholes will inevitably drain into the Beck and contaminate the water course. Reporting to the Environment Agency is important as it constitutes contamination of a water course.

The duration of these incidents is variable but is on average about six hours. The longest recorded was 27 hours in December 2019

Environment Agency Flood Incident Numbers

2 April 2018	1602704
6 October 2019	1744172
1 October 2019	1743034
14 November 2019	1754353
27 November 2019	1757626
7 August 2020	1834809
25 September 2020	1851349 (Anglian Water 57968909)
20 November 2020	1863477 (Anglian Water 58179677)
4 December 2020	1868511 (Anglian Water 58256966)
23/24 December 2020	1872804 (Anglian Water 58337816)
5/6 January 2021	1876466 (Anglian Water 58379563)
14 January 2021	1879315 (Anglian Water 58414646)
28 January 2021	1885370
29 January 2021	1885168
5 October 2021	1999862 (AW 59592060)

Major work undertaken by Anglian Water in October 2022

20 October 2023	2196521
2nd November 2023	2200802
2 January 2024	02233999

18 February 2024	02232748 (Suffolk County Council Flood Report 00453643)
26 May 2024	02271170 (Suffolk CC Flood report 00473225)
1 October 2024	02310839 (Suffolk CC Flood report 00491577) (AW 26391435)
20 October 2025	02437490
14 November 2025	02443030 (AW 28470973)
22 November 2025	02445010

(subsequently, tankers have been used to reduce the sewage in the system as a temporary measure)

The major work undertaken by Anglian Water in October 2022 involved relining the main sewers and laterals in Low Road. Tree roots in the sewer were also removed. This work was to make the sewers watertight and prevent the ingress of surface water into the foul only sewer. Investigation by Anglian Water have demonstrated that historical surface water drainage from individual homes are discharging into the foul sewer.

Suggestions have been made to solve the problem of sewage egress.

- screwing down the manhole covers. This can cause back pressure into houses with retrograde flow of foul water into sanitary ware
- fitting non-returnable valves to the manholes. This would transfer the problem to another part of the system
- increasing the diameter the pipework. In summer when flows are slower this would result in blockages and smells
- Providing localised sewage treatment plants for individual new properties. This would have no impact on the current situation but would result in the problem not being compounded. Unfortunately, the Environment Agency will not grant a permit for localised treatment plants when it is practical to connect to an existing mains system, as historically private treatment plants are more prone to pollution events
- to remove historical rainwater connections from individual houses. There is no budget for this, nor legal powers. Soakaways are the alternative, but they are costly to install, need maintenance and do not work well on clay
- to install water butts. These would only make a minute contribution, and they overflow at times of heavy rainfall.

Pressure flow recorders have been installed in the sewers since 2022. These help localise a problem, but are not in themselves a solution, and at times of high input into the sewer are unable to isolate specifically the problem area. At all times recorders at the pump station have shown normal working of the pumps with no defects.

Medical consequences of these overflows is potentially serious.

In May 2018 the then Director of Public Health at Suffolk County Council wrote

‘I would agree that the situation relating to sewage leaks is not acceptable and unpleasant. - I have informed Public Health England of the situation.’

The senior case officer at MSDC, Vincent Pearce, in his report to committee in November 2018 concerning three major planning applications in Fressingfield wrote.

'The pollution of parts of the village and the Beck, however occasional, with raw sewage, sanitary products and toilet paper is unacceptable pollution that will only worsen with significant levels of new development connecting to the Fressingfield foul water system. As it becomes increasingly common to experience extreme weather conditions in the UK it seems ridiculous and completely unacceptable to expect local people to endure what at times looks and smells like a medieval living environment.' (para 4.13.11)

In order to have an up-to-date assessment on 17 December 2025 I had an informative meeting with two senior engineers (PD and PT) from Anglian Water arranged by the CEO's office to discuss the long-standing problem of sewage overflow in the village. The last episode was on 14 November 2025 and despite a tanker being used to remove seven loads of fluid from the pumping area in Harleston Hill there was still sewage egress in Low Road. In future when heavy rain is forecast 2 tankers will be in attendance. On 9th January 2026 two tankers were deployed and again on the 15th of January 2026. This manoeuvre is designed to reduce the volume & frequency of overflow **BUT IT IS NOT A LONG-TERM CURE.**

The cause of sewage egress is surface water ingress entering the closed foul only system. Despite extensive investigations, all the entry points cannot be identified. A spring, water running along the outside of pipes, illegal roof connexions are some identified reasons for water being in the wrong place. There may be other reasons BUT Anglian Water stated that IT CANNOT BE TOTALLY CURED and the aim is to reduce the frequency of overflow. To this end multi-disciplinary teams of workers from Anglian Water, Highways, the Inland Water Board, Environment Agency and others will cooperate.

The sewerage has a finite volume which if exceeded will overflow. Changing the positions of connexion to the system will have no effect.

More buildings will increase the likelihood of more overflows. In each new house there will be an average of 2.5 people per house each person producing 145 litres of foul water per day. If this enters a system that is already full it will cause more overflows, more frequently.

Having considered all the evidence Anglian Water have acknowledged that sewage egress in Fressingfield is a real problem which can be improved but cannot be completely cured and it will be made worse by more building, therefore not complying with policy FRES 4 in the current draft NDP.

(NB All of the information in the above section concerning sewage egress was obtained by personal contact with Peter Simpson the former CEO at Anglian Water, Sally Cooper Executive Assistant to the CEO, and senior engineers Paul Thurling and Paul Daynes, as well as personal observation)

Anglian Water are not a statutory consultee for individual planning applications, but they are consulted on the development of Local Plans.

The information contained within the draft NDP on the sewage issue is generic and not specific to Fressingfield.

SURFACE WATER FLOODING

Fressingfield is subject to surface water flooding, which at times can be severe. Older, long-term residents remember that children at the old school finished early when heavy rain was forecast, 'The Low' being an area often subject to deep flooding.

The village of Fressingfield is subject to flooding because it is surrounded by hills, Buckingham Hill, Harleston Hill and Church Hill. All the hills drain down towards Low Road and discharge surface water through highways drains into the Beck.

Over- topping of the Beck occurs and floods Low Road and Cratfield Road. Sewage discharging from the manhole covers adds to this. Flooding can occur in summer as well as winter.

Flooding is under- reported by residents because of a fear of affecting insurance premiums.

More building will inevitably increase the amount of hardstanding and roof areas. It is critical that the surface water hierarchy is strictly adhered to. Sustainable drainage systems are difficult to achieve in Fressingfield because of the underlying heavy clay. Whilst developers are required to conform to the drainage hierarchy there will always be concern as to how robust implementation will be and in the long-term whether the necessary maintenance will be undertaken.

WATER SUPPLY

The Hartismere Water Catchment Area supplies water to Fressingfield. At present non domestic supply is restricted because of water shortages. This restriction will limit business opportunities. Use of boreholes may impact other borehole supplies and is not encouraged.

The Suffolk Water Recycling, Transfer and Storage Project have recently been subject to public consultation. The project is dependent on good supplies of water from the River Waveney. The moratorium on new nondomestic supply due to lack of water is anticipated to be lifted in approximately 2032/33 or later.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Despite the best endeavours of the staff there are difficulties with the medical centre. The surgery is situated in New Street with a branch surgery at Stradbroke. It is a dispensing practice. The catchment area is 115 square miles. There has been a large amount of new development in the area with a significant amount of increased population. The surgery no longer offers a service for 'life-threatening conditions' and there is no 'First Responder' service in the village. Any serious emergency necessitates a 28-mile journey to the nearest hospital.

In 2000 routine appointments were offered with a GP the same day or the following working day. Such appointments are now commonly delayed for three weeks. There is no doubt the practice has experienced a massive increase in workload which will only increase with further building.

There are no universal footpaths to the surgery making the journey difficult and hazardous There is no public transport to the surgery for the majority of patients the only way to get to the surgery is by private car. Car parking is inadequate. Staff use the same car park, consequently parking on New Street commonly occurs adding to the congestion in New Street.

The suggestion to improve the situation is a) to make more use of the Stradbroke surgery. b) use physician associates.

No data are supplied to support these suggestions. Certainly, observational assessment of Stradbroke shows the waiting area, dispensary area to be no larger than Fressingfield and the number of consulting rooms less.

There may be problems for some travelling to Stradbroke, and it will certainly affect the carbon footprint.

There has been no assessment of the car parking space at Stradbroke which is shared with the swimming pool, playing fields, tennis courts and functions at the village hall. Proper assessment at different times and seasons would be beneficial.

More houses mean more patients and the ability to cope needs proper assessment and objective answers.

There is no information on dentistry, although it is in the index.

TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS

Fressingfield has NO public transport and very few local job opportunities. For the majority the only way to go to work is by car. Some senior students entering and leaving the village must drive or cycle

The Highways Assessment of potential sites document does not consider travel for work, travel for secondary school education etc.

There is very limited opportunity for local employment. Motorised transport is required to get to work

There are many concerns about the dangers of walking in the centre of the village, particularly in New Street and the Jubilee Junction, but walking on the Weybread Straight is also problematic. Within the last month there have been three accidents, two where cars have gone into the ditch., just outside the village, and another car has damaged the concrete and steel fence in Low Road.

More houses mean more vehicles and statistically more accidents.

BIODIVERSITY AND GREEN ISSUES

Recent housing developments have further eroded the Green Spaces within the Settlement Boundary. Fressingfield has 58 listed buildings, and it is their setting and that of the village which will be ruined for future generations if inappropriate development is approved. The

NDP highlighted the view of the village from the Stradbroke Road as an important vista. This has already been altered by inappropriate tree removal.

Long term climate change predictions (2025) indicate warmer wetter winters and hotter drier UK summers with more frequent intense weather extremes. This has implications for sewage egress, flooding, and water shortages.

DO MORE HOUSES RESULT IN REGENERATION OF A VILLAGE?

We know of NO evidence to support this. For example, in Fressingfield since we bought our house in 1993 there has been considerable development including John Shepherd, Samuel Vince, Post Mill. Carpenters Yard, The Laurels, The Low, Midnight Mill, School Lane, Red House Farm and other small infills. During the same time, we have lost ~ the Post Office with its bakery and general store, Fulham's general store, the garage and coal merchant, the antique restorer, all bus services, the village football team, the inter-village sports day, the pantomime - all gone. There have been few additions, although The Shed is a very welcome new facility.

SUMMARY

In this paper I have outlined several important infrastructure deficits in Fressingfield and how they would be seriously impacted by more development. Of particular concern are the lack of public transport and the over-loading of the sewerage within an increase in sewage egress if development takes place. As there is no cure for this I believe development cannot be supported and should not be permitted.

Dr. John Castro