

District council report: Derek Davis, Ganges Ward (Shotley & Er Barton)

The devil, as they say, is often in the detail.

This is particularly pertinent when it comes to planning matters and we have seen with how complicated the Ganges development has been with some 36 different conditions needing to be satisfied. During this process various non-material matters can be amended, or things changed, which is what happened in terms of the swimming pool building[.L].

It is in such disrepair that the parish council and developer agreed that the £40,000 earmarked for a survey would be better off going to the parish to be used for the benefit of the community. That agreement was endorsed by planning officers and plans are advanced in the building being demolished so there would be virtually no chance of saving that aspect.

However, there is other space earmarked for community use within the site and if there was strong enough will and a way, then perhaps a community group could put together a campaign and action plan to build a brand new, purpose built swimming pool and leisure facility.

Another slightly less controversial issue, although still important to many, is the future of the Queens Head at Er Barton. As has been reported an appeal by the owners against Babergh's decision to refuse an application to allow a change of use, which would have meant the downstairs of the historic building being allowed to be used for accommodation.

However, there appears to be an appetite to bring the pub back to life and it will be interesting to see how that progresses.

On a different note, a planning application, (DC/20/03083) to build homes on land next to Er Barton Hall has promoted serious discussion, in particular with regards to the heritage and conservation aspects.

More details on all planning applications can be found on the website.

Locality award funding available

As more groups and organisations look to get back as normal as possible, this is probably a good time to remind their leaders of the Locality Award funding I have available for those within Shotley and Er Barton.

I'm delighted for example to be able to give £365 towards the Shotley Open Spaces' defibrillator project, whose fundraising has also been boosted by eight-year-old Emily Trotman who has raised nearly £400.

So don't be shy, get in touch directly, and tell me what it is for, and how much you are looking for. I don't have a huge amount, £2,000 in total, but as they say every little helps.

I'm not able to give a grant for individual sponsorship for charity fundraising, however worthy, but I'm usually more than happy to support you any other way I can.

Hedges and Trees

Babergh currently working, with partners, on mapping both districts so that we can identify where wildlife corridors need to be established or improved to link up sites.

In addition, we are seeking to plant more trees and hedgerows in order to encourage more wildlife, and not necessarily on our own land, and we have seen, for example

Golden Wood with the Viking Project, how well that can work but what we would like is more landowners to come forward with suggestions.

There may be funding available next year for hedgerow planting from DEFRA but we are awaiting confirmation of this. It may be possible for trees to be planted with the purchase and planting costs borne by the district council, although it could be the parish takes responsibility for the maintenance.

A Member task force group has been considering this initiative and the results of those meetings and discussions will be the subject of a Cabinet report in November, by my colleague Liz Malvisi.

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