

Councillor Liz Vickers – (Fakenham Lancaster South) March 2025

McDonalds in Fakenham

As this is a key development for Fakenham, I called the planning application in to the NNDC planning Committee (Development Committee). I thought it deserved to be considered by a wider body of Councillors, rather than planning officers alone, and, more importantly, to give local residents a chance to have their views heard. I welcome the job opportunities and choice that McDonalds will bring to Fakenham, but I also share residents' concerns about traffic issues, particularly the tricky junction at Holt Road/ Greenways Lane/ Thorpland Road. I will continue to lobby for improved traffic safety measures.

The building at 9 Norwich Street

This month I once again met the NNDC Director of Planning and Environment to urge the Council to find a solution to this dilapidated building. I am assured that progress has been made. However, as this is a live enforcement case, I cannot comment further at this stage. I have worked consistently to improve the streetscape around 9 Norwich Street and I am pleased that an end piece is now in place to stop litter blowing in, and that regular cleaning is taking place. These are interim measures, and I will continue to press the Council to resolve this matter.

Shop Fakenham

I was delighted to be invited to attend a meeting with Shop Fakenham. This Group has worked hard to enhance the shopping experience in Fakenham and build up independent businesses in the area. This is exactly how it should be – local people working together to help themselves and their community. I am proud to support them. They deserve the best possible environment to help their businesses thrive. Fakenham has a beautiful town centre - we just need to fix the eyesore 9 Norwich Street. I will continue to campaign to do this and urged them to help me. To this end they have started a petition asking NNDC to take action.

Pavement on Norwich Road (near the Whitehorse St mini roundabout)

Several residents have contacted me about the pavement in front of the new build houses. It remains a tripping hazard. I was informed that repair of the pavement was a condition of planning consent for the new buildings. I have asked planning officers to follow this up. They have told me that this is now in the hands of the County Council's Highways department and repairs should be carried out shortly.

Hempton Parish Council

Along with my colleagues Councillors Cushing and Fitzpatrick, we have been keeping this Parish Council open. Local residents have now been co-opted to the parish council and I have stepped down. With thanks to Cllr Fitzpatrick for all the dedicated work he has undertaken to recruit new parish councillors.

Heather Barrow Court (HBC)

A number of repair works and updates are needed at HBC. I have been liaising with Flagship Housing to help residents get this done.

Local Government Reform – Debate in Full Council

The Labour government's sizeable majority means that reform of local governance is inevitable. Norfolk has decided to be a pilot area, with the hope of having some influence over the format, rather than having a structure imposed on us. A consortium of Norfolk District Councils commissioned Deloitte to sketch out proposals. Deloitte's report sets out a choice of three options for Norfolk, a single unitary council, two unitary councils or three unitary councils.

The government has, in my view, railroaded Councils into an over ambitious timetable, requiring their first responses by the end of this month. Deloitte has done its best in the short time it was allocated but the report remains a sketch – very light on detail. It shows the suggested cost of implementing each of the options but gives no detail of ongoing effectiveness or costs, for example, what the likely impact on residents' Council Tax might be.

I want to see an arrangement that keeps the hands-on connection with local people and the community, which delivers excellent services at the lowest possible cost to residents and can remain stable and financially viable.

Whilst I sympathise with NNDC's early decision to choose the three unitary arrangement, I could not support it at this stage. At this point in time, I believe we simply do not have enough information to make a reliable choice on which is the best option. In my speech to full Council, I urged the administration to keep options open and not to be bounced into making a premature decision. I suggested a push back against the Labour government's rushed timetable and a firm request to government for more information and detail on which to make a reasoned choice.

NNDC Committees Attended

Development Committee; Overview and Scrutiny Committee; Governance, Risk and Audit Committee.