Cllr Julia Ewart – Independent Councillor Report

Kelsale & Yoxford Ward – June 2026

East Suffolk Council

This report provides a more detailed update on current developments across East Suffolk, with particular relevance to residents in the Kelsale & Yoxford ward. We continue to see a period of significant change in how services are delivered, how local government is structured, and how future development is planned.

At such a time, it is increasingly important that residents feel both informed and included, and that rural communities such as ours remain visible and well represented in the decisions that shape our future.

Representing Kelsale & Yoxford – Ensuring Inclusion for Rural Communities

As your Independent Councillor, I am very mindful that decisions made at district and county level can sometimes feel distant from everyday life in our villages. However, it is essential that communities such as Kelsale, Yoxford, and the surrounding rural areas are not only informed, but actively involved in shaping those decisions.

Rural areas often face distinct challenges—from transport and access to services, to maintaining community infrastructure and protecting the character of our countryside. It is therefore crucial that these differences are properly recognised, particularly as new policies and structural changes are introduced.

Alongside the work outlined in this report, I continue to focus on a number of key issues behind the scenes. These include ongoing planning matters across the ward, consideration of a proposed hydrogen transport scheme, and efforts to strengthen youth provision, ensuring that younger residents have better access to opportunities and activities within our communities.

These are not short-term issues, but they are important in ensuring that our ward remains sustainable, supported, and connected in the years ahead.

Planning Matters – Listening, Responding, and Representing Residents

Planning continues to be one of the areas where residents feel most directly affected, and understandably so. The impact of development, changes to premises, and long-term planning decisions can shape both the character of our villages and the quality of daily life.

At present, I am receiving fresh correspondence in relation to ongoing noise concerns at Blyth Barn in Huntingfield. This is clearly an issue that remains unresolved for some residents, and I will continue to raise and follow through these concerns through the appropriate channels.

I am also very aware that planning permission concerning The Griffin Pub in Yoxford has recently changed, and this is something I am currently reviewing as a priority. It is important to fully understand what these changes involve, and to ensure that any impacts—particularly for nearby residents—are properly considered.

More widely, I would like to reiterate that I am always open to hearing from residents. If something is affecting you or your area, I would encourage you to contact me. It is only through hearing directly from you that I can ensure your concerns are clearly and accurately represented.

The Local Plan – A Crucial Opportunity to Shape the Future

One of the most significant pieces of work currently underway is the preparation of the new East Suffolk Local Plan, which will guide development across the district up to 2045. [eastsuffolk.gov.uk]

The Local Plan is the foundation for future planning decisions. It will determine:

- Where new housing is located
- How infrastructure such as roads, schools, and services are planned
- How rural landscapes and village character are protected
- How growth is balanced with sustainability and environmental priorities

For communities such as Kelsale & Yoxford, this is a particularly important process. Decisions made now will have long-term effects, and it is essential that rural perspectives are clearly reflected.

A public consultation is currently open until 29 July 2026, allowing residents to contribute their views at an early stage. [eastsuffolk.gov.uk]

👉 **Further information can be found here:**
https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy-and-local-plans/new-local-plan

👉 **You can take part in the consultation here:**
https://eastsuffolk.inconsult.uk/localplanscoping2026/consultationHome

This stage of the process is specifically about identifying priorities, concerns, and opportunities. I would strongly encourage residents, local groups, and businesses to take part. If rural communities do not engage, there is a real risk that their needs may

not be fully reflected in future plans. PLEASE list all likely village work in the future to help secure funding.

Community Partnership – Strengthening Links Between Villages

At recent Community Partnership meetings, there has been a clear focus on how best to strengthen connections between villages and support shared community life.

Sam Kenward has highlighted the value of events that bring people together, particularly referencing the previously successful **"Cake Off."** Many residents will remember how well-attended and well-received this event was.

Its success lay not simply in the activity itself, but in what it enabled—it allowed residents from different villages to meet, exchange ideas, and gain a better understanding of each other's communities. In rural areas, where villages can sometimes feel quite separate, these opportunities are particularly valuable.

There is now strong interest in organising a similar event, likely in November, with the aim of recreating that positive sense of connection and shared identity across the area.

Supporting Community Assets – Kelsale Village Hall

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the efforts of the **Kelsale Village Hall Committee**, who are working extremely hard to progress their restoration project.

Village halls are often at the centre of rural life—providing a venue for events, meetings, social activities, and vital services. Maintaining and improving such a facility requires real dedication, and the work being undertaken by the committee is an excellent example of community commitment in action.

Their efforts are not just about maintaining a building, but about ensuring that the community continues to have a welcoming and functional space for years to come.

Council Engagement – Roadshows and Local Access

The Council's programme of roadshows continues to provide an opportunity for residents to meet councillors and officers directly.

These events offer a valuable chance to ask questions, raise issues, and gain a clearer understanding of how services are delivered. Given the number of changes currently taking place, I would encourage residents to attend where possible.

Local Government Reorganisation – Looking Ahead

Suffolk is moving through a process of Local Government Reorganisation, which will result in the creation of new unitary authorities.

While this aims to simplify governance structures, it is important that local identity and effective representation are not lost. For rural communities in particular, maintaining a clear and accessible voice within larger organisations will be crucial.

This is something I will continue to raise as discussions progress.

Waste and Recycling – Adjusting to a New System

The introduction of the Better Recycling service has brought significant changes to how waste is collected.

While the system allows more materials to be recycled and supports environmental objectives, it also requires some adjustment for residents. It will be important to ensure that the system works effectively for rural areas, where logistics can differ from more urban environments.

East Suffolk Council App – A More Accessible Way to Connect with Services

The introduction of the new East Suffolk Council app represents a move towards more accessible and responsive public services.

Rather than relying solely on traditional contact methods, the app brings together a range of key services into a single, easy-to-use platform. Residents are now able to check their bin collection schedules, receive reminders ahead of collection days, and be notified immediately if there are any delays or disruptions to services.

In addition, the app includes a recycling support tool, helping residents identify how to dispose of items correctly, even allowing users to photograph an item to find out which bin it belongs in. This is particularly helpful in the context of the new recycling system, where arrangements have changed.

The app also makes it easier to report issues directly, whether that relates to missed collections or local concerns, without having to navigate multiple webpages. It includes information on council facilities such as car parks and public amenities, as well as access to food hygiene ratings for local businesses.

Importantly, the app has been designed with accessibility in mind and will continue to develop over time. It represents a step towards a more connected and user-friendly approach to local services.

Community Funding and Local Initiatives

There are also a number of funding opportunities and initiatives available to support communities, including programmes aimed at strengthening local facilities, supporting activities, and enhancing the local environment.

While these initiatives may be varied in scale, they play an important role in enabling communities to remain active, resilient, and well supported.

Looking Ahead – Staying Visible, Connected, and Engaged

Across East Suffolk, we are entering a period that combines both significant change and meaningful opportunity.

For communities such as Kelsale & Yoxford, it is essential that we:

- Continue to engage with consultations and decision-making processes
- Take advantage of funding and local initiatives
- Maintain strong connections between our villages

Finally, while I have recently taken on the role of County Councillor for the Saxmundham and District division, I want to reassure residents that I remain fully committed to being out in the community, visible, and accessible at all times.

Listening to residents and representing your concerns will always remain at the centre of my work.

Cllr Julia Ewart
Independent Councillor for **Kelsale & Yoxford Ward**