October 2026 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Orwell Bridge

Following the Cabinet meeting, councillors agreed to develop a new business case to examine a range of options that could improve traffic congestion in Ipswich and address the resilience of the Orwell Bridge. I believe it is important to put all options on the table to find a long-term solution for Ipswich and Suffolk residents, particularly when the Orwell Bridge closes and congestion in and around Ipswich increases. Residents living around the proposed areas of the Ipswich Northern Route have faced uncertainty for many years and deserve clarity, as well as the opportunity to be properly involved in a meaningful consultation. However I have raised concerns about the option of building a tunnel, which was previously considered but removed from the previous business case due to it being the most expensive option. The report is welcomed, but in many respects it is the easiest part of addressing the traffic issues on the Orwell Bridge and in Ipswich. All options are on the table, nothing is properly costed and no community is yet directly affected. When a preferred option is chosen and costs are established, the administration will then have to nail its colours to the mast, and that is altogether more difficult. This is before we even get to Suffolk raising the likely £1 billion-plus required to introduce a solution. I'm also fearful that while a tunnel will be many people's preferred option, including, on face value, mine, it will likely be the most costly by some huge margin due to the underlying geology in the area – that of marine and river sands and gravels, soft clays and weak chalk. We're seeing elsewhere in the country how such conditions can lead to rapidly spiralling costs. Any chosen solution must be realistic, and Suffolk must not be promised a unicorn-style project that never materialises. Any solution won't begin construction until 2036 and won't be operational before 2040, so we also need to consider what can be done in the interim to alleviate the challenges motorists, hauliers and businesses face on a daily basis.

I was pleased to receive an assurance from the Cabinet Member that nearer-term, smaller interventions will also be considered alongside the long-term fix. We now want to hear exactly what those interventions are, how quickly they could be delivered and what they would cost. I will continue to monitor the development of the business case, insisting that communities are properly heard through consultation and that any solution delivered for Suffolk provides value for money.

Suffolk creates 648 new school and SEND places

At least 648 new school and SEND places have been created for Suffolk children and young people this academic year, including 243 specialist SEND places delivered through an £8.6 million investment in additional provision across the county. The new capacity includes 405 mainstream school places and 243 additional SEND places. The programme supports the council's newly published strategic priorities, which includes a commitment to give children and young people the best possible start in life by ensuring they can access the right support at the right time and in the most appropriate educational setting. It also reflects the council's ambition to strengthen local education provision and ensure that children and young people with additional needs can receive support closer to home wherever possible. The new mainstream capacity includes the relocation and expansion of Lakenheath Primary School, providing an additional 105 primary places, alongside the expansion works at Stowmarket High School, which is delivering an extra 300 secondary places. Rising pupil

demand in Lakenheath highlighted the need for additional school places to support a growing local population, while the Stowmarket expansion has been designed to meet rising demand for secondary education in the area due to increased housing growth in the town. New accommodation at Mildenhall College Academy is also becoming available this September to support increased pupil numbers and a pupil admission number of 270 students per year group.
Work will also begin this month on further expansion projects at Ormiston Endeavour Academy and Thurston Primary School, which are expected to deliver an additional 510 places when completed in 2027. Alongside this, Suffolk County Council has created a further 243 SEND places across special schools, specialist units attached to mainstream schools and small group provision. This is an investment of £8.6million. The programme will help more children and young people access the right support closer to home, providing greater stability for families and reducing the need for placements further from their communities.

Major improvements to begin on Main Road, Martlesham

Works start on Monday 19 October and will focus on the section between the A12 and Nunn Close. The scheme is part of the wider A12 Major Road Network (MRN) programme and forms part of long-term plans to improve connections between Martlesham, Ipswich and Woodbridge. The improvements will include upgraded junctions, improved crossings, and widened shared-use footways and cycleways along the south-east side of Main Road. The scheme will help residents reach employment areas, schools and community facilities more conveniently. It will also link with existing infrastructure in Kesgrave and planned improvements to the east of Ipswich, supporting a healthier and more sustainable transport network. Key elements of the scheme include two new parallel crossings near Blacktiles Lane and Nunn Close, carriageway resurfacing on the approaches to these crossings, drainage improvements, and a review and upgrade of street lighting. The existing carriageway will be narrowed in places to accommodate the new shared-use facility and help reduce vehicle speeds. Construction is expected to last approximately 20 weeks, and temporary traffic management, including traffic signals, will be required throughout the works to ensure the safety of both the public and the workforce. The scheme has been primarily funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), with additional support from the A12 MRN project and East Suffolk Council. Engagement with residents, businesses and stakeholders during summer 2025 helped shape the final design, and the scheme aligns with Suffolk County Council's Local Transport Plan and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. A potential second phase of improvements, covering the northern section between Nunn Close and Sandy Lane, may be delivered at a later date, subject to funding. For further details on the scheme, visit the Main Road Martlesham web page.

Locality Budget

If you are looking for funding for any community projects, please do get in touch as I am always keen to use my locality budget to support projects that have a direct community benefit, within my Division.

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